CURATION AND THE ARCHIVE: ENTANGLEMENTS OF DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

Curatorial practices have been subject to heightened levels of visibility and inquiry in recent decades. Concurrently, cultural commentators have noted a creative, scholarly and cultural turn toward the archive. The archive now represents at once a potential site, resource, subject and metaphor for curation. In parallel, shifting intellectual, social, economic, technological and professional conditions have generated new opportunities and imperatives for engagement between curatorial practices and archives. However, despite the prevalence of archive-related curatorial activities taking place across a broad range of cultural areas, the nature of these practices – and the discursive frameworks and conditions that underpin them – remain under-examined. Previous analysis of this area has relied on discipline-specific approaches, privileging certain definitions, contexts or forms of practice, and particular subject positions and curatorial outcomes.

This study counteracts this trajectory by analysing ideas of archives and curatorial practices across different discourses and fields of activity, including archival and curatorial practices, museum studies, history, art history, contemporary art, cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy and digital humanities. Three projects curated or co-curated by the author provided an initial springboard for the research, prompting reflection on the dynamics between vulnerability, opportunity and responsibility that arise when working with archives in a curatorial capacity. Expanding outward from this, the study takes a 'bricolage' approach that draws on both discourse and practice theories. It addresses first how archives are conceptualised and used both inside and outside of the archive profession. Second, it examines these ideas in relation to curatorial discourses as they operate across three areas of practice: *curatorship* (working under the logic of the museum), *curating* (under the logic of the temporary exhibition), and *the curatorial* (under the logic of the curatorial project, platform or resource). By comparing and contrasting discourses through this tripartite model of curation, the research shows how each of these curatorial orientations engages ideas of the archive in different but overlapping ways. It demonstrates how a number of interconnected intellectual, socio-political and technological changes in how information is generated and mediated have further diffused and elaborated curatorial and archival practices in ways that deepen their entanglement. Reading across different discursive areas, the research brings together previously unexamined correspondences and configurations. Key presuppositions, terms of practice, areas of negotiation and tension that condition curatorial handling of the archival are also illuminated. The study provides a wide and rigorous overview, analysis and structural modelling of curatorial practices in relationship to the archive.

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Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

29 July 2019

Dated

Chapter I. Introduction

i. Background and Justification for the Study

This research project emerged from a combined sense of curiosity and unease brought about by working with archival material in a curatorial capacity. In the years leading up to the development of this research, I curated or co-developed a number of projects that made use of archival material and drew on different archival imaginaries both in explicit and tacit ways. These projects took place in art museums, galleries and institutional archives in the UK and in Canada. Over the course of their development, I grappled with the affective and emotional weight of archives, and negotiated uncertainties around the curatorial use and generation of archival records. I experienced intellectual, moral and practical conundrums. I came to understand these experiences as a meaningful and productive part of curatorial engagement with archives. It was with this practice-based experience in mind that I responded to a call for research proposals for a PhD studentship in Archive Studies at the University of Brighton in 2012, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The topic was "Archival Studies: History, Theory, Practice" and research proposals were invited from a broad spectrum of associated fields. My proposal focused on examining the professional and personal tensions, vulnerabilities and opportunities of working at the intersection of curatorial practices and the archive.

In particular, this thesis is shaped by three archive-based projects I curated or co-curated between 2007-2015. These projects prompted reflection around the dynamics between vulnerability, opportunity and responsibility that can arise when working with archives in a curatorial capacity. The projects in question are two temporary exhibitions I curated that drew from and featured archival materials, in 2007 and 2013 respectively, as well as an ongoing, interdisciplinary institutional archive project I have helped to steward, which contains significant activities that could be characterised as archive curation. (Fuller reflections on these projects can be found in Appendices i-iii, and a discussion of their role as part of the methodology for this project found in Chapter II.)

The first project (project A) was an exhibition entitled *Misfits (What are living beings compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?)*, held at an independent, artist-run gallery in Vancouver in 2007. The exhibition comprised a display of three miscellaneous 'orphaned' museum objects and their archival records that I found in an unofficial storage space of the Vancouver Art Gallery while working as a Registration Assistant. I curated these three disparate items (two paintings, and a print), along with their packaging and labels, as an exhibition in a nearby makeshift gallery space called the Bodgers & Kludgers Cooperative Art Parlour. The second project (project B) was a temporary exhibition I curated as a freelance curator, entitled *Along Some Sympathetic Lines*, which took place at the Or Gallery in Berlin (23 February – 27 April 2013). The exhibition took as its theme the presentation of archives and documentation – broadly understood – in gallery spaces, and was divided into two parts: artworks by British artist Martin John Callanan were displayed in one room, and a selection of my personal family 'archive' material in the other. The project sought to explore how the representation of material as 'archival' can provoke questions of curatorial handling, authorship, creativity, and accountability in the context of the contemporary art gallery. The third example, project C, is the Slade Archive Project. This interdisciplinary project was led by the Slade School of Fine Art in collaboration with University College London's Centre for Digital Humanities (2012-2015). The aim of the project was to investigate how digital tools could be applied to simultaneously augment records from the Slade's institutional archive, support new art historical understanding of the school's artistic and social landscape, and foster awareness of, and engagement with, the archive collections. One of the project's more visible outcomes was the piloting of a crowdsourcing website where members of the public were invited to identify sitters featured in historical annual class photos. This subproject deepened questions around collaboration and caretaking at the intersections of digital archival and curatorial activities. The development and reception of each of these projects raised questions that I sought to address by the thesis.

Curatorial and Archival Turns

However, these specific instances of practice evolved from, and were experienced as part of much more widespread and expansive conversations. My interest in

examining this area was also a response to having witnessed the rise in profile and the increased cultural currency of both archives and curation across a widening range of contexts. Curatorial practice is now recognised as an expanded field of cultural, creative and commercial activity that extends far beyond its traditional museum and exhibitionary frameworks (Bhaskar 2016; Martinon 2013; O'Neill 2012a). With this has come the erosion of many familiar touchstones of practice. Particularly since the 1990s, the nature of the curatorial field – its lexicon, its historiography, and its theoretical and professional frameworks – has been the subject of growing levels of interdisciplinary inquiry and scrutiny. The English-language literature addressing curatorial practice from this period to the present day reveals many attempts to define, position and historicise curation as a distinct area of cultural production. Concurrently, many cultural commentators have noted an increased attention to the archive in contemporary life, and what has been described as a cultural, scholarly and artistic turn toward the archive (Buchanan 2010; Enwezor 2008; Foster 2004; Simon 2002; Stoler 2009). Technological, socio-political and economic developments impacting the forms of cultural mediation and information production and exchange, have further loosened conventional definitions, forms and frameworks for these practices.

Yet despite the growing range of archive-based curatorial activities taking place, the discursive, practical and professional conditions underpinning these activities have not yet been thoroughly examined. Previous research in this area has tended to adopt discipline-specific approaches and presupposes or privileges certain contexts and forms of practice, and particular terms of accountability, professional profiles and curatorial outcomes. Moreover, the nature of the *relationship* between archives and curatorial practices has been equally unstudied. Although the kinship between archives and museums is well established, the links between archives and museum curation specifically has been naturalised as part of their common collecting and institutional frameworks and values (e.g. Martin 2007; Robinson 2012, 2018).

By comparison, the characterisation of the relationship between *curating* and ideas of the archive remains attached to particular discourses and areas of practice focused on the making of exhibitions. While it has been shown that curating the archive constitutes a contribution to and alteration of the archive on which it works (Richter

and Drabble n.d.; Yiakoumaki 2009), the literature pertaining to curating has typically focused on the archive as source for artists, and art historical exhibitions and projects (e.g. Crookham 2015; Foster 2004; Greenberg 2012; Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013). Consequently, these discussions link archives to artistic practice and authorship. Moreover, they show a tendency to take the ontologies of both curation and the archive as highly variable but self-evident. Therefore, as useful as these studies may be, they are limited in scope. They also put into play contradictory terms of reference by which to understand how the archival and the curatorial interrelate.

A Question of Terminologies

After an initial period of surveying the literature in this area, the inconsistent use of related terminology became apparent. Authors from different fields of practice employ the same lexicon with different focus and underlying presuppositions. For their part, archivists have written of how the archive has been misconstrued outside of its conventional professional spheres, and its definition stretched beyond recognition (Breakell 2008; Caswell 2016; Schwartz and Cook 2002; Theimer 2012). This tendency can be observed in the discourse around archive-oriented curatorial practices, which allows for – and at times contributes to – the handling of the archive as a fluid construct.

Like the term 'archive', the word 'curation' and its associated terms are also characterised by a degree of flexibility. In the literature consulted for this research, discussions on the nature of curation often turn to etymology, with commentators pointing to two root terms for curation: 'to cure' (*cura*), and 'to care' (*curare*). A closer look at the roots of this vocabulary shows that three central elements underpin curation: a) the *act* or activities of caring for, or being in charge of, something or someone and their related affairs, and the *nature* of that responsibility (guardianship or spiritual care); b) the *object or subject* of that care (of vulnerable people, artefacts and collections, animals, places or institutions, and their related affairs); and c) the *context* in which this care takes place (ecclesiastical, legal, commercial, educational, cultural, museological).[1] This variable constellation of potential foci and contexts of

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[1] The Oxford English Dictionary traces the term 'curation' back to the definition of a curator. In contemporary usage a curator is a person "in charge of a museum, gallery of art, library, or the like; a keeper, custodian", with its roots following two etymological lines. The first iteration comes from the

practice reflects the multifarious nature of curation. Yet this flexible lexicon also means that when usage is mobilised according to particular subject areas, institutional or historical lenses, as is typically the case, discussions tend to support different concepts of curation in ways that naturalise specific practices and overlook their underlying discursive formations. Thus, the ability to understand how these terms and concepts are mobilised, contested or reworked in different contexts emerged as a core research imperative for this project. What was meant by the term 'archive'? By 'curatorial practice'? What did I mean in my own usage of the terms?

At beginning of this research project I also held rather fluid definitions of both archives and curation. As a researcher, curator and oral historian with a growing interest in archives, I could mobilise, construe and misconstrue according to my own logic, and to the requirements and opportunities of a given project. Over the course of this study I have come to refine my use of the term '*an* archive' (or plural 'archives') to mean a specific repository or corpus of archival records preserved according to archival principles, as will be outlined in Chapter III. By contrast, I use 'the archive' in single quotations marks to refer to the more generalised and metaphorical construct that has come to mean collected historical documentation and its psycho-social practices, as will be described in Chapter IV. I use the term 'curation' to mean the varied forms of practice related to the activities of selection, arrangement, stewardship and use of cultural materials and related information towards its research and public presentation. Moreover, I employ the terms 'curation' and 'curatorial practices' synonymously.

However, it is the nature of the language to have slippage and I therefore also assume a certain variability with my use of this terminology. Furthermore, curatorial and archival vocabularies themselves will be fleshed out and put into question over the course of this thesis. Overall, I have not assumed or worked towards singular

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Anglo-Norman word *curatour* of French *curateur*, and describes a guardian of the affairs of a person legally unfit to conduct themselves, such as a minor or one suffering from mental illness. The second iteration of the term, derived from the Latin word *curator,* meaning a clergyman, pastor or curate who has "spiritual charge" or "cure of souls." By contrast, the more secularised modern usage denotes a custodian or keeper, "a person who has charge; a manager, overseer, steward" of virtually any*thing*: of objects, institutions (including the law) or places (grounds), establishment (for instance, an innkeeper) or animals. ("curator, n.". OED Online. Oxford University Press [accessed July 03, 2014], http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45958])

definitions for these terms, but rather seek to extend a deeper understanding of how this lexicon functions, interconnects, and is being mobilised in this terrain. For this reason, I ask the reader to set aside any expectation of a conclusive definition for either term 'curation' or 'archive'. Instead, I ask them to appreciate the variation of meanings embodied through these terms, and their related contexts and conditions of practice, as part of the very fabric of this research.

Structuring Fields of Practice

At the outset of this project I was faced with a range of potential entry points for this research. In seeking to address the connections between archives and curation, the study is, by its logic, interdisciplinary. Furthermore, these two areas are at once specific, and highly variable and wide-reaching. On the one hand, both areas of practice are highly disciplinary and vocational. They are centred around particular subject-area expertise, and/or specific cultural collections and professional protocols. On the other hand, they are characterised by diversity.

Although curation is typically concerned with specialist knowledge and collections, different areas of practice draw on a broad range of methods, topics and artefacts from various disciplinary traditions, which are themselves subject to elaboration and debate. Similarly, although the archives are grounded in specialised professional practices, 'the archive' is also at the nexus of interdisciplinary activity (Manoff 2004). Moreover, by virtue of the fact that both are practices of cultural mediation, a certain amount of boundary traversing typifies their fields of practice. The digital environment has further diversified the landscapes of practice for both archives and curation, and further layered their potential points of interconnection and overlap with other arenas. These qualities made setting parameters for the study a challenge. Plotting the coordinates for these different areas of practice became part of the research process itself. In order to move forward with the research, different discourses needed to be delineated and positioned in relation to these diverse and overlapping fields of practice. It required an analytic framework. Therefore, stepping back from particular examples of practice to trace the overarching but multivalent and relational nature of archives and curatorial practice became a core strategy in the research.

Disconnections between theory and practice also condition this discursive terrain, ones which I have also experienced along my own professional trajectory. As a graduate student in Curatorial Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the theoretical debates around the political potential and obligation of curatorial practice weighed heavily, but were invariably unresolvable. In my role as Curatorial Assistant at the Vancouver Art Gallery, I came to understand that ambitious curatorial theories were in many ways at odds with the many pragmatic demands of a collections-based museum. In contemporary art spaces in Vancouver, Berlin and London, the explicit theorisation of curatorial activities was held with some suspicion, despite being *de rigueur*. Working in the context of arts organisations and higher education institutions in the UK, the different institutional, disciplinary, and pedagogical imperatives place different accents on curation, and the promise of digitising archival representations engendered tacit, and often pragmatic and unaccounted for, curatorial responsibilities. Yet rather than view curatorial theory and practice as in opposition, I understand them to be two sides of the same coin, and approach their related discursive tensions as an important quality of this research.

Contemplating Practice-led Research

At the beginning of this study, I envisioned directly formulating the research around the three aforementioned projects and their respective topographies. Each of these projects problematised the ways in which sites of curatorial activities (museum, gallery, university, archive) and forms of practice (curator, archivist, artist, researcher, administrator) intersect as part of the increasingly diverse range of activities being undertaken in this crossover area. Each project, in different ways, garnered its value in part by the productive tensions in play *at the intersections* between curatorial practices and archives.

However, given the dearth of clarity around the nature of the relationship between archives and curation more generally, I came to understand the imperative to reorient the study to facilitate a wider, and less particularised approach to the topic, one that could incorporate personal experience with a lighter touch and could 'make strange' my own assumptions and familiar fields of practice. Together, these insights re-

directed the study from the initial goal of articulating the challenges and vulnerability of working with archives through individual curatorial practice, to focus instead on the broader cultural, curatorial and archival fields of practice writ large.

Nonetheless, the process of critically reflecting on the three projects mentioned above, as chronicled in the appendices, gave initial form to the research terrain and assisted in the development of a working structure for identifying different areas of practice. Rather than handling these case studies as the basis for the research and thereby privileging my perspective and experiences, these curatorial projects functioned as one of many reference points within the broader discourses being analysed. In other words, they have provided me with a preliminary device and shadow source material by which to explore the subjective and situated nature of curatorial engagement with and through archives, but they do not themselves function as the terrain or outcome of the research.

However, as will become clear throughout this thesis, the theme of vulnerabilities in curatorial and archival practices and entities remains a vital current throughout this research. By vulnerability I mean the possibility of people or entities being harmed, either physically or emotionally. Vulnerability signals uncertainty, risk and exposure relating to people, objects, stories, relationships, experiences, practices and knowledges. Yet it also signals points of potential care and connection.

ii. Research Questions and Aims

A number of research questions were developed from these observations:

- How is the archive conceptualised and mobilised in different curatorial contexts?
- What is the nature of the relationship between curatorial practices and archives?
- How can this relationship be understood through a tripartite model of curatorship, curating and 'the curatorial'?

The two-pronged orientation of this study posed challenges. On the one hand, the project sought to understand the *relationships* between archives and curation. On the other hand, it sought to clarify how archives, and different notions of 'the archive', are being mobilised through curation in different fields of practice. Over the course of the research, I came to understand how these questions are co-dependent. In order to understand how curation and archives are interrelated I needed to examine the different ways archives were being conceptualised across various areas of curatorial practice. In order to clarify how archives are understood and deployed in these various contexts, I needed to grapple with the nature of the relationship between archives and curatorial practices overall.

To that end, Chapter V focused on the *relationship* between these two facets of cultural production. The latter half of the thesis (Chapters VI, VII, VIII) concentrates on how archives and concepts of 'the archive' are understood and mobilised in different curatorial contexts, thereby deepening the inquiry into the nature of the interconnection and *entanglement* of these two areas.[2]

Drawing on these guidelines, the following aims for the study were set:

- To develop and structure a research project that facilitates a critical overview of curatorial practices in relationship to the archive
- To test the working theory that different contexts of practice for curation conceptualise and handle the archive in different ways
- To design and test a tripartite model of curation as an analytic framework for this research.

iii. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The research builds on existing discipline-specific studies and commentary around archives and curatorial practices by analysing their discourses comparatively across different fields of practice. In order to attend to the variable and interlinked

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[2] After formulating my thesis, the theorisation of the term 'entanglement' in anthropology and material culture was brought to my attention (e.g. Ingold 2010). My use of the term here refers more generally to the condition of being tangled, enmeshed or interlaced in ways that cause impediment and from which extrication is difficult; a circumstance which complicates or confuses a matter.

conditions of archival and curatorial discourse in an expanding landscape of practice, I have made use of a 'bricolage' approach, which combines different vocabularies and methods from three theoretical paradigms. First, discourse theory has provided the primary frame for my analysis of the literature, and the work of Michel Foucault a touchstone. Second, the paradigm of practice theory has enabled me to situate the literature in relation to different fields of practice. Here I draw on the work of sociologists Pierre Bourdieu (with particular reference to his concept of fields of practice) and on the more recent work of social learning theorist Etienne Wenger-Trayner and his 'communities of practice' theory. Third, practice-led theories have been drawn on to integrate facets of the aforementioned practice-based projects (projects A, B, C) into the research design. A consideration of the benefits and limitations of the work of these theoretical frameworks informs the project's methodology, and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

The research has been divided broadly into two parts. Addressing the ontology of the archive, I first consider how archives are understood and described in the literature produced from within the archive profession as well as from a broad range of sources authored by scholars from outside of the profession (Chapters III, IV and V). In the second part of the thesis, I link this archival discourse with that of curation. I introduce a tri-partite model by which to position curatorial discourse across three distinct areas of practice: *curatorship* (working under the logic of the museum), *curating* (under the logic of the exhibition), and *the curatorial* (under the logic of the curatorial project, platform or resource in the expanded and distributed terrain of knowledge and culture production). Comparing and contrasting these areas using this analytic model brings to light the variations and continuities in the ways in which archives are understood and mobilised across different areas of curatorial practice (Chapters VI, VII, VIII).

iv. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter II expands on the theoretical framework and methods for the study sketched above. Chapter III and IV examine the multifaceted discourses pertaining to the archive: first, analysing the discourse from within the archive profession (Chapter

III), and second, as more expansive and increasingly abstracted notions of the archive are extended through scholarly discourse across a number of areas in the arts, humanities and social sciences (Chapter IV). Chapter V considers the discourse around museological and archival 'convergence' as a starting point to address areas of interconnection, overlap and difference between curatorial and archival activities, concerns and contexts of practice. This chapter bridges the two parts of the thesis.

Chapter VI examines the discourse of *curatorship,* which assumes the museum as the centre point on which curatorial practice pivots. The museum is the organising principle and central site of practice for the curator, and its institutional concerns shape ideas of curation and the use of archives therein. As will be shown, a number of archival constructs (archive as research resource, the museum archive, and the museum-as-archive) circulate as part of this discourse, providing foundational connections between curation and ideas of the archive. In chapter VII, the focus turns to the discourse centred on the verb *curating*. Here ideas of curatorial practice privilege the work of exhibition making. In this discourse, the emphasis shifts from institutional practices, to individual curatorial projects and reputation. As this chapter will trace, it is in the arena of curating as exhibition making that the archive becomes increasingly visible as a curatorial resource, medium and product, most explicitly through questions of creative practice. Lastly, Chapter VIII takes the emerging discourse of *the curatorial* as a starting point to address the expanded contemporary landscape for, and of, curatorial practices. Despite being in its infancy, the concept provides a useful entry point to compare the curatorial deployment of archives across a number of wide-ranging fields of practice, including those in visual arts, digital humanities, media and information studies, and into the digital landscape more widely. These discussions demonstrate how both archival records and ideas of 'the archive' serve as a significant touchstone and platform for curatorial activities in unstable ground.

Although this modelling of discourse provides a useful analytic framework, it is offered as a schematisation that can only approximate the complex set of terms and conditions that shape curatorial practices. In developing and applying this structure, I do not mean to assert a linear development of curation (from conventional curatorship, to curating and developing into an expanded landscape of the curatorial).

It is important to emphasise that curatorship, curating and so-called curatorial activities, in both their practical and theoretical iterations, continue to operate and evolve simultaneously. While these discourses and fields of practice stress different aspects of the constitution of the curatorial field, they are none-the-less reliant on each other as ongoing points of reference, both stated and implied.

v. Sources, Scope and Parameters of Study

This research is centred on recent and current curatorial and archival practices and the discourses that surround them. The majority of the texts consulted were published between the 1990s and the present and therefore situate the research findings as a consequence of this historical framing. A broad range of sources were consulted, derived from many different perspectives across a number of fields of practice, but these are primarily English-language, peer-reviewed academic and professional publications, with case studies focused on a local area of practice in the UK, Europe and Canada. In the main, the study examines the literature around curatorial and archival activities and constructs and does not focus on the related reception of these archive-oriented curatorial projects, but understands this as an area for future research.

Led by the imperative to provide a critical overview of curatorial practices in relationship to the archive, the decision was taken to study a wide range of literature in order to compare and contrast discursive patterns across broad areas of activity. As a result, particular projects are presented as indicative and I have set aside the detailed analysis of specific curatorial projects and their visual records as a pre-existing and separate area of study. Given the aim of this research to cast a wide net over divergent discursive arenas, forensic investigations of individual projects would be both unwieldy and risk detracting from the broader correspondences within the literature.

Moreover, a central task of the project is to foreground what is tacit in the literature by tracing particular tendencies, themes and areas of contention across variable terrain. Images have been excluded from the main body of the text in support of this

aim. The dedicated focus on written texts allows for a roughly comparable data set through which patterns could be identified across heterogeneous areas of practice. Furthermore, the inclusion of images would establish a dialectic between image and text, introduce additional layers of information to address, and encourage the integration of visual methodologies. It would engender further decision making around which images to incorporate, and how to do so, when and to what end. Given the variety of the potential research material, this would risk extending an uneven and subjective approach to source material, and diffusing the research away from overarching patterns and macro perspectives. Moreover, given the breadth of the study and the volume of examples touched upon, the analysis of written texts alone has provided ample information to attend to.

This decision was taken recognising that supporting visual documentation for the examples drawn on has been published elsewhere, and would be therefore be available to the reader should this be of interest. An exception is with the appendices, where visual material associated with these projects is not readily available to the reader elsewhere. Further elaboration on the methodological approach to source material can be found in Chapter II.

Furthermore, this project does not offer an historical study. Rather, it looks at salient patterns, themes and debates in order to develop a critical and contemporary overview of curatorial practices that engage with archives, archival practices and constructs. So while the study positions the discourse historically, it does so with a broader interest in understanding these as evolving practices in the present.

vi. Central Arguments and Conclusions

This research project develops and tests an analytic framework in order to clarify the nature of the relationships between archival and curatorial discourses, and to deepen understanding of how the archive is approached as the subject of curatorial attention. Through cross-disciplinary analysis, I identify three broad areas of curatorial discourse and practice and show how each of these deploy different, but overlapping, notions of the archive. The tripartite modelling of curation brings to the fore how archival constructs, practices and entities are conceptualised, mobilised and

produced through curation in ways that may otherwise be framed as self-evident. Key presuppositions, conditions of practice and central areas of tension, negotiation, opportunity and responsibility which condition curatorial handling of the archival are identified. In reading across fields of practice, this research brings together previously unexamined correspondences and configurations, and prompts new perspectives and insight into the particular, but divergent, contexts for curatorial practice in engagement with archives.

At the same time, this study also illuminates the interconnected nature of these two areas of cultural practice. By comparing and contrasting their respective terrains of practice, significant points of intersection, exchange and entanglement can be delineated. It outlines how they function as mutually-validating cultural frameworks. Moreover, the research traces how technological, socio-political and economic conditions have rendered curatorial and archival practices more diverse, dispersed, and their related subject positions and points of agency and accountability harder to discern. I argue these developments have added further complexities to the nature of this interrelationship, which render its contours harder to grasp.

Having shown the dynamic and complex nature of this landscape of practice, this thesis argues for cross-disciplinary critical vigilance around the rhetoric and mechanisms by which ideas of the archive are being deployed through curatorial activities. This imperative is particularly urgent in light of the value of the archive in cultural imaginaries, and the acknowledged ubiquity, and heightened and visible role of archives and curatorial practices in contemporary cultural environments.

Chapter II. Theoretical Framework and Methods

i. Introduction: The Researcher/Curator as *Bricoleur*

This project emerges from the assertion that the relationship between archives, notions of 'the archive', and curatorial practices has not yet been adequately accounted for. It seeks to disentangle the different threads that weave archives and curation together, and to analyse and locate these in the broader contexts of practice in the arts, humanities and social sciences, particularly those areas where archives and curation have been deemed to be increasingly relevant.

The groundwork for the study's theoretical and methodological framework is built on a number of observations made by scholars with respect to these two intertwining fields of practice. First, curatorial and archival practices are recognised as interdisciplinary and highly variable in nature, despite subject area focus. It follows that a study seeking to understand the interconnections between curation and the archive necessitates surveying texts across and through different fields of practice; it must be cross-disciplinary. Second, curatorial practices are context-specific and shift across different fields of practice and historical periods. How archives have been understood and utilised as sources and subjects for curation is similarly contingent. Describing and locating ideas of curation and archives in relation to these variable contexts is therefore an important task of the research. Third, the terms 'curation' and 'archive' and their derivatives denote different things in different contexts. Identifying, comparing and contrasting the discourses as they cluster around these terms is a useful strategy to illuminate their operations. A focus on discourse helps bring into relief the presuppositions that underpin these concepts and reveal how they are mobilised in contemporary western cultures. At the same time, archival and curatorial practices in themselves produce, mediate and reinforce knowledge and knowledge paradigms. They simultaneously reflect cultural discourse *and* constitute part of its very scaffolding. This duality calls for a critical and reflexive approach, one that appreciates the affective and dynamic nature of discourse as it is socially constructed and deployed. Finally, archival and curatorial activities represent

theoretical and practical endeavours. The study thus warrants a framework that allows for an analysis of theoretical and practical facets of these fields of practice as interconnected pursuits.

These observations set into play a number of theoretical and methodological issues for negotiation. They also point towards different potential research pathways and methods and suggest that the use of multiple theoretical perspectives would benefit the researcher. It is in this sense that I draw on the analogy of the *bricoleur,* described by Claude Lévi-Strauss, to describe my orientation as a researcher, curator and archive custodian (Lévi-Strauss [1962/66], 2004). The *bricoleur* 'makes do' with what is to hand, using the heterogeneous tools and materials available. Applying this to a research environment, the bricoleur-researcher combines available methods and materials in the construction of a *bricolage*, a "quilt" or "montage" (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 4), which allows the researcher to draw on a range of interpretive paradigms in ways that facilitate an interdisciplinary position and gives credence to the interactivity of the research process.

Embracing this idea of research as a creative and critical construction and *bricolage*, I have drawn on a number of over-arching theoretical perspectives to construct a methodology for this project. First and principally, discourse theory, drawing in particular on the work of Michel Foucault, has been used to identify and analyse discourses that relate to ideas of curatorial practices and archives. Second, practice theory has been used to locate these discourses in relation to different contexts of practice. Here I have made use of foundational ideas from the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. I also make use of the more recent work of social learning theorist Etienne Wenger-Trayner through his 'communities of practice' theory. Third, I have drawn on the practice-led research paradigm to bring insights from my own previous curatorial projects into the fold. Finally, the overarching paradigm of cultural studies, with its focus on cultural practice, texts and subjectivities, has been drawn on throughout (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 13).

Using multiple theories and methods, and leaning on multiple intellectual traditions and perspectives in this way implicates the researcher in different and often competing ontological, epistemological and methodological traditions (Denzin and

Lincoln 2011). It also requires careful attention to the roots, purpose, position and language of each theory. The resulting research 'bricolage' does not aim to resolve these discords or to offer a singular, complete or systematic account of curation in its relationship to the archival. Rather, it provides a way into the many layers of discourse circulating in this multifaceted, evolving and generative terrain. The researcher-*bricoleur* rejects approaches that pin single research methods onto single theories, and which risk reproducing the very rationalities that a self-reflexive and interdisciplinary inquiry seeks to interrogate (Kincheloe 2001, 2005). The resulting study represents a process of testing and "making strange" familiar ideas (Gee 2005a), a process that simultaneously identifies, unsettles and scrutinizes discourse, but also draws on it and affirms it anew.

ii. Analysing Discourses Around Curatorial Practices and Archives

Before addressing how these discourses have been studied, it is important to first outline the theories of discourse that underpin the research methodology, recognising at the same time that the term 'discourse' itself is contested (Macdonell 1986; Mills 1997; Gee 2005a; Rose 2012) and that the complexity and breadth of discourse theory and related methods means that a full consideration of this paradigm falls outside the scope of this project. In large part, the methodology of this project stems from the conceptual insights offered by Foucault's formulation of discourse, acknowledging in turn that his ideas are indebted to the long tradition of the philosophy of human communication and social relations (Macdonell 1986; Gee 2005a; Jaworski and Coupland 2006). For Foucault, discourse describes the way language – broadly understood to include images and signs – produces meanings and, by extension, forms of practice, knowledge and power (Foucault [1972], 2002). Discourse both reflects and generates particular forms of knowledge about things and the world (epistemologies), which structure our thinking and our actions. Discourses are generated, circulated and sustained through texts, artefacts, images, social practices and institutions. Pivotally, for Foucault, it is discourse, not the subject, nor the thing itself, that produces meaning, and meaning is required to produce knowledge (S. Hall 1997, 45). Discourses comprise statements (not sentences, but 'utterances') that can be seen to cluster around particular effects and

which are traceable as 'discursive formations' (Foucault 2002, 41). Detecting a discursive formation is possible because ideas, ways of thinking and behaving, work systematically and productively in particular contexts (Mills 1997, 17). Only those statements that are productive, that is imbued with meaning and effect in social contexts, are considered part of discourse (Macdonell 1986; Mills 1997).

The particular power of discourse lies in not only the accounts it generates but in how these accounts are constructed as natural and truthful. Power and knowledge implicate one another because knowledge is produced out of the power struggle to determine which version or account will be authorised, sanctified, circulated and put into practice (Foucault [1977], 1995). Accordingly, discourse is socially structuring: it governs what we talk about, the ways we talk about it (or not), and how we conduct ourselves in relation to this knowledge. The more powerful forms of discourse, the more impactful and socially effective, are reflected in what Foucault called "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1971). Less powerful discourses may be marginalised and subjugated. In this sense, discursive power is not only persuasive and productive; it is also repressive. Discourses are specific to particular historical periods and conditions. They come to represent a cultural order, or *épistème* that sets the terms for the way of thinking and the nature of knowledge of a given era (Foucault 2007). Discursive formations are naturalised as part of these cultural orders and the relations between statements may not be known to those making statements (Foucault 2002). Therefore, the purpose of studying discourses is to elucidate and denaturalise discursive formations so as to better understand their workings.

Problematising Discourse as a Theory and Method

Although Foucault laid out a broad methodological programme for conducting what he called 'archaeologies' of knowledge (Foucault 2002; Scheurich and McKenzie 2005), his approach is characterised by vagueness and inconsistencies, and is centered on abstract concepts that remain difficult to study empirically (Barrett and Bolt 2007; Jaworski and Coupland 2006; Mills 1997).[3] Furthermore, discourse has

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[3] Foucault describes discourse as multi-faceted and recognised that his analysis varied. He treated discourse "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group

become a focal point for a series of interdisciplinary approaches with very diverse aims and strategies within linguistics, sociology, anthropology, critical theory and literary and communication studies (Jaworski and Coupland 2006). The term 'discourse analysis' represents a wide variety of research methods, which interpret and deploy Foucault's ideas – and indeed the very idea of discourse – rather differently (Jaworski and Coupland 2006).

Some analytic approaches focus on patterns of language and their linguistic structures, characteristics and operations, defining discourse analysis broadly as the study of 'language in use'. Subsequent perspectives have extended analysis to emphasise the *social context* of language in use (Jaworski and Coupland 2006; Paltridge 2012). Given this variation, discourse analysis can be localised to singular texts or conversations, or be more global and abstract. James Paul Gee distinguished between conceptualising: a) discourse as language in use, that is, social languages, different ways of speaking and writing and the linguistic approach to their study; and b) 'Discourse' (which he denotes with a capital 'D') that extends to the social systems and conditions that structure what can be said and thus what knowledge can be produced (Gee, 1990).

This study is orientated towards the latter meaning of the term with the recognition that some focus on specific instances of language and text are required to ground generalisations into more concrete textual phenomena (Jaworski and Coupland 2006). However, the analysis extends outward from the study of language at the level of individual texts, in order to seek patterns of use and effect in broader swathes across different contexts of practice. For this reason, I distinguish the central method of this study as a *study* of *discourses* around curatorial practices as they relate to concepts of the archive, rather than a strict *discourse analysis* towards a systematic account of the structural patterns of written or spoken text. Rather than focus solely at the

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of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (Foucault 2002, 90). His archaeological method has been described as a "complex set of concepts, including *savoir*, *connaissance,* positivity, enunciations, statements, archive, discursive formation, enunciative regularities, correlative spaces, enveloping theory, level, limit, periodization, division, event, discontinuity, and discursive practices" (Scheurich and McKenzie 2005, 845). These ideas were developed in his four 'archaeological' works: *Madness and Civilization* (1961/1988), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963/1994b) on the origins of modern medicine, and *The Order of Things* (1966/1973a), on the roots of modern human sciences, and in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (first published in French as L'Archaeologie du savoir" in 1969, translated and published in England and the United States in 1972), which retrospectively lays out his archaeological method (Foucault 2002).

micro-level, with fine-grain or forensic analysis of texts, it locates a range of texts as part of discourse operating in related communities, fields and landscapes of practice, and aims to bring clarity to their operations in relation to ideas and manifestation of archive-oriented curatorial practices. The dynamic between taking a micro approach by closely examining specific examples of text in use, and taking a macro approach by surveying broad, intersecting discourses and related fields of practice, therefore represents an overarching, but productive tension within this study.

Analytic Strategies and Tools of Inquiry

Gee offers a number of "tools of inquiry" by which to engage in an analysis of discourse. He suggests focusing on significant themes, debates, motifs or ideas that extend over time and that operate, circulate and emerge through social languages and discourses – what he calls "Conversations" with a capital 'C' (Gee 2014). Tonkiss advises researchers identify key terms, arguments and representations, the meanings being mobilised as claims to truth and how these link to other texts and arguments – that is, their intertextuality and complexity (Tonkiss 2004, 2012). This approach may also include locating meaning behind patterns of emphasis and silence, absences and omissions, as well as studying how social actors speak and are spoken about, and tracing points of authorship and agency within texts.

Another strategy is to look to the institutions that produce, maintain and circulate discourse (Macdonell 1986). According to Foucault, the effects of discourse can be traced in part by analysing the specific conditions and sites of its production (Rose 2012), for example institutions of law, education, medicine and the media (Foucault 2002, 1977). As institutions of knowledge, archives, museums and universities (three key sites for this study) constitute powerful discursive systems deeply implicated in the production and enactment of regimes of truth. By extension, curatorial and archival practices are both derived from and contribute to the discourses of the cultural, economic, political and social arenas in which they can be said to operate. It is not surprising then, that a Foucauldian perspective of the institution has profoundly influenced the critical analysis of the museum and the archive since the 1980s, as will be discussed in the chapters that follow. Because many scholars have positioned their analytic lens on the apparatus and technologies of these institutions,

this project does not seek to reproduce this work, but rather builds on these writings to help illuminate particular conditions of entanglement between curatorial and archival practices, while also treating these writings as part of the discourses being scrutinised by the overarching critical drive of the project. The study aims to describe different discursive formations in play at the intersection of curatorial and archival practices, but also to hold these at a certain critical distance, setting them in relation to each other to denaturalise their apparent naturalness.

Determining the Sources and Scope of Study

With these tools in mind, over 1,000 publications relating to curatorial practices and archives were surveyed. The source material can be delineated along a number of overlapping fields of practice:

a) Academic disciplines that rely on, and have developed from archive and collections-based research methods, in particular history and its sub-fields such as history, art history, anthropology and the human sciences, dating roughly from the 1980s to the present. These publications are authored by academics, peer-reviewed and oriented towards scholarly readers.

b) Museum studies and archival studies, dating roughly from the 1980s to the present. Additionally, a number of professional, practice-based manuals were consulted to understand practical standards, professional protocols and areas of debate, and to provide a counterbalance to the more historical and theoretically oriented texts. On the whole, these publications are directed towards curators, archivists and related museum and information professionals with subject-area expertise.

c) Modern and contemporary visual art and art history, dating from the 1970s, with the bulk of sources consulted dating between 1990s to the present. Related to this, contemporary art journalism and exhibition publications were also consulted. In this context, the notion of a 'peer reviewed' publication is handled more loosely to allow for the inclusion of published interviews, symposia, exhibition documentation, and web-based journals edited by notable figures and institutions in the field. Writings on the topic of 'the

curatorial' as an expanded field of practice, dating from 2009, have also been drawn on from this body of literature.

d) Interdisciplinary or hybrid areas of practice that address curatorial and archival practices as their method and/or subject, both tacitly and explicitly. These include publications emerging from heritage and memory studies, media studies, and digital humanities over the last twenty years.

e) Non-academic areas of practice, where questions of the archive and curatorial practice have come to the fore in relation to digital archive-based resources, and creative and commercial digital platforms outside of academia. Included in this category is a small sample of recent publications that comment on expanded ideas of curation and archives outside of museological and exhibitionary frameworks (e.g. David Balzar's 2015 *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*). These sources are intended for more general readership.

Although these texts represent different genres and thus presume different subject positions and apply different conventions towards a particular purpose (Swales 1981, 1990), with a few exceptions, the bulk of the sources consulted are peer-reviewed published writings. Documentation produced in relation to exhibitions, projects or other programming, including websites, published interviews, symposium proceedings and lectures that were reviewed were typically encountered by way of references in academic publications.

Although a handful of earlier sources were surveyed in order to trace traditions behind curatorial and archival practices, roughly two-thirds date between 1990– present. The 1990s marks a transitional decade for articulating the role of curation in discourse production, particularly through the development of critical museology. As will be shown, it is also a period when ideas of the archive are elaborated as both source for and subject of critical analysis in the arts, humanities and social sciences more broadly, and when the conceptual and linguistic expansion of the terms 'curating and 'archive' gathers pace. I have addressed these developments as they have been debated through the English-language academic, archival, museological and creative arts discourses in Europe, North America and Australia. The study is therefore heavily focused on, and biased towards, Western and Eurocentric

discursive terrain. Additionally, projects from Canada and the UK have a strong presence in the research because of their associations with my own communities and histories of practice within this same geographic, cultural and linguistic arena. The dominance of these reference points infuses the research with a strong biographical thread and regional accent.

In terms of method, academic literature was consulted as a starting point. This was led by basic keyword searches, the review of titles and abstracts, and study of seminal texts and anthologies. In this early phase of research, publications were sought out that purport to offer an overview of a given area of practice; or to delineate current debates; or to define archives, curatorial practice, or the role of the curator or archivist therein. These sources would often point, in turn, to salient case studies or examples of curatorial or archival practice (exhibitions, web-based archival resources, artist projects and so on), which could be consulted by reviewing related documentation and discussions.

During this process, key concepts, themes, motifs and representations were identified. Attention was also paid to how different ideas were naturalised in the discourses and how these related to particular sites of practice (such as the museum, exhibition, archive, university). In addition, the assumed characteristics of quintessential practitioners and cultural agents (e.g. curator, archivist, artist or historian) were also considered. Identifying such patterns within the discourses also helped bring into relief deviations from the norm, and to what is considered outside or on the margins of a given area of practice. Related to this, concentrating on the points of debate and controversy within the literature brought into relief a number of fault lines that run through curatorial and archival practices – unresolved tensions that are indicative of the broader social and political 'conversations' in play (Gee 2014). These fault lines include tensions between theory and practice, and their ideals and realities; between ideas of the expert or professional, and the amateur or the interloper; between dominant and marginal forms of practice, and conventional and novel ones.

Throughout the research process, notes were taken to capture topics, scope and range of each text (both stated and tacit), as well as the different applications of

terminologies and contexts of practice. Mind maps were produced to work through the ideas and emerging conclusions and a reference manager was used to track and compare sources. The classifying and structuring of these notes led to the formation of a working structure for the thesis, which was continually refined during the writing process. Indeed, throughout the study, writing has been used as a method by which to retrieve, delineate and collate, refine and reflect on the research findings. In this sense, the work of articulating, structuring and narrating the argument has been used as a form of exegesis.

Giving Structure to the Study

The study has been divided broadly into two parts in order to give structure to the analysis of the multifarious but interconnected discourse. The first section, Chapters III and IV, V, set the stage by presenting an analysis of the discourse relating to archives and concepts of 'the archive'. It first examines how archives are understood and discussed in the literature arising first from within the archive profession and archive studies (Chapter III), and secondly, analyses sources authored by scholars from outside of the profession (Chapter IV). Chapter V addresses a number of recognised points of overlap between these two fields of practice, and bridges the first and the second parts of the study. Chapters VI, VII and VIII then interweave these different critical portraits of archives and archival fields of practice with the discourse around curation. The literature pertinent to curation has been mapped across three distinct discursive spheres: a tripartite model that schematises practices under the headings *curatorship* (working under the logic of the museum); *curating* (under the logic of the exhibition); and *the curatorial* (under the logic of the curatorial platform/resource in the expanded and distributed landscape of knowledge and cultural production).

This structure suggests discourses can be neatly mapped across different contexts of practice. Yet discursive formations are not units with clear boundaries (Gee 2014) and the parameters of what actually constitutes discourse are unclear (Mills 1997). Researchers run the risk of subsuming all and any under its heading (Rose 2012). It is for this reason that this study focuses on academic literature and projects with a footprint in related publications. The sources consulted explicitly claim the archive

or curation as their subject (through keywords, abstracts or titles), and the authors' positions themselves as participating in a relevant community of practice.

Accounting for Questions of Agency, Identity and Self-Reflexivity

Even with the insights garnered by the methods of studying discourse, a number of limitations come into focus. Foucault's theories of social structures do not adequately account for the specific place of human agency (Ortner 1984) and tend to foreclose notions of resistance and change (Scheurich and McKenzie 2005; Grosz 1994). For Foucault, the individual is constituted as *an effect of power*; subjects and subject positions are "constructed with, not outside discourse" (S. Hall 1996, 17). As Stuart Hall argued, Foucault's theory of discourse production implies the production of subject and subject positions that *presupposes* a process of identification. Yet it does so without accounting for the motivations of these subjects and their terms of identification.[4] Therefore, Hall suggests Foucault's theories of discursive production need to be complemented with an account of the practices of "subjective self-constitution" (S. Hall 1996, 26). What becomes apparent when reviewing the literature is how curatorial practitioners are active and self-defining agents, and that how they self-identify through their practice varies significantly. Thus, as will be shown, identification and position-taking are part of, not separate from, the curatorial discourses under question.

A second challenge colours a Foucauldian approach to discourse. Foucault rejected the idea that analytic methods can be used to explain practices and reveal some intrinsic truth (Rose 2012); instead he focused on how discourse *constructs* the interpretation of truth (Foucault, 1979). Thus, the degree of reflexivity that can truly be achieved through discourse analysis has been questioned. Countering this idea, others presuppose the constructive and constituting forces of language and argue that that any study of discourse, employing these same linguistic tools, has *an obligation* to work from a stance of self-reflection (N. Phillips and Hardy 2002; Tonkiss 2004).

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[4] Throughout this study I use the terms 'identity' and 'identification' in the sense that Stuart Hall has, to describe "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (S. Hall 1996, 19). As Hall summarised, the concept of identity as fixed, originary, integral and unified has been deconstructed by various intellectual projects, most notably post-colonial, feminist and queer studies. Scholars have shown how identification is a dynamic process and identities are "never singular, but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (S. Hall 1996, 17).

This thesis works from the belief that a study of discourses cannot do away with these paradoxes, but can instead acknowledge the constructed character and context of discourse production (N. Phillips and Hardy 2002). It is with this understanding that I worked towards "a certain modesty in analytic claims" and, within the study, aim to foster internal validity and openness to debate (Tonkiss 2012, 418), recognising at the same time, that, as a research-practitioner, I take a critical stance towards the very discourses that saturate my thinking and practice.

Thirdly, discourse and practice are mutually constructing and influencing elements of human activity and meaning making; in relation to both curation and archives they constitute two sides of the same coin. Although discourse theory acknowledges practice as part of discourse, it does not readily account for the nature of practice, nor does it offer tools to situate discourses in particular arenas of practice. In this regard, the integration of practice theory into the theoretical framework offers an important vehicle to account for how curatorial activities manifest through practice that are also, in part, a means of "subjective self-constitution" as described by Stuart Hall.

iii. Linking Discourse and Practice: Drawing on Practice Theory

Although practice theory is more multifarious than unified in its vision, certain beliefs tie it together. First, practice theorists understand practice as a dialectic between social structuration and individual agency, as mutually impacting and constituting forces of human action (Ortner 1984; Schatzki 2001). Cultural sociologist Andreas Reckwitz positions practice theory as a subtype of cultural theory, which takes practice as its smallest unit of analysis, over single actions or normative structures (Reckwitz 2002). In contrast to other branches of cultural theory that place emphasis on the human mind, on discourse or on social interaction, practice theory is concerned with "praxeology" itself (Reckwitz 2002).

Most practice theories share an understanding of practice in its broadest terms as "arrays of human activities" (Schatzki 2001), which include discourse, communicative actions, routinised activities and ways of understanding (Reckwitz

2002). Practice theorists understand these activities simultaneously as socially responsive and informing, and internally embodied at the level of the individual, and are physical and psychological in nature (Ortner 1984). So although practices can be particularised at the local level, practice theorists also share the belief that phenomena of human experience, understanding and activities both occur in, and are components of, the wider field of interconnected human practices. Practice theorists are also concerned with the temporal structure of practice and its processual nature (Bourdieu 1977). Furthermore, they share the belief that practice is materially mediated by artefacts and objects that arise out of and revolve around shared beliefs and practical understanding (Schatzki 2001). In this way, practice theory allows for the presence of material culture as a component of practice.

The theories of practice described above support a number of presuppositions of this project: that curatorial practices, in their connections to the archive, are at once embodied, social and individual, processual, object-mediated, and subjective self-constituting forms of cultural activities that are developed, sustained and negotiated through discourses that structure knowledge and our experience of it. Conversely, the characteristics of these practices can be retrieved through a study of the discourses that produce and reflect them, and that these discourses can be situated in relation to different fields of practice. In other words, in conjunction with the study of the curatorial and archival discourse, this project aims to develop an account of the fields and communities of practice that interconnect curatorial practices and archives (Schatzki 2001, 11).[5]

Delineating Fields of Practice

In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a 'field of practice', in tandem with his theorisation of practice writ large, is an important touchstone. In particular, Bourdieu's specific analysis of the cultural field – most notably through a consideration of the sub-fields of literature and art – has become an important reference point for scholars seeking to understand the social workings of cultural

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[5] Schatzki summarises analyses of practice that either "develop an account of practices, either the field of practices or some subdomain thereof (e.g. science), or treat the field of practices as the place to study the nature and transformation of their subject matter" (Schatzki 2001, 11). This thesis focuses on the former approach.

practices (Bourdieu 1984, 1993b; Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1997). Bourdieu theorised 'fields' as distinct social arenas and specialised domains of practice (for instance, as economic, cultural, educational and political fields). These fields develop and sustain their own forms of knowledge and symbolic, cultural and social capital. Fields operate under their own 'logic' – that is, they function according to an objective set of social relations and regulations. Fields are hierarchical, with agents struggling to defend or improve their situation and to gain control of capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1993b). In the cultural field, this struggle over position is often expressed in the conflict between established traditions and novel modes of practice (R. Johnson 1993). For Bourdieu, practice is the means by which social hierarchies and class distinctions are manifest, naturalised and maintained. Social arrangements are unconscious and are rationalised through practices that legitimise hierarchies. 'Habitus' is the embodiment of this structuration and results in our inclinations to behave in ways that are neither calculated nor simply obedient, but nonetheless produce and shape our activities and perceptions (Bourdieu 1977, 72).

Bourdieu's theories provide a counterpoint to Foucault's idea of discourse as the principal factor in the production of meaning. He argued that Foucault's over-emphasis on the function and effect of discourse risks ignoring, for instance, "the internal logic of cultural objects, their structure as languages" and the social groups that use them (Bourdieu 1993a, 181). Bourdieu argued that the task of the sociologist is to "know [the] specific laws of operation" of a given field in order to make sense of the struggles between the agents in the field, the structure of the works themselves, and the structure of the particular field (Bourdieu 1993a, 182–83). His theories expand our understanding of practice to include the idea of "the system of common references" that gives the field its rationale and structuring power, the logic of a field that encapsulates the "space of possibles". This "space of possibles" determines the condition of the field and sets out the "universe of problems, references, intellectual benchmarks … in short, all that one must have in the back of one's mind in order to be in the game" (Bourdieu 1993a, 176).

Bourdieu's concepts, however, are not without their contradictions and ambiguities, as critics have noted (e.g. DiMaggio 1979; Warde 2004). Even so, a Bourdieusian lens draws attention to the structural characteristic of the curatorial and archival

fields of practice, to the power struggles, and to the positions and agents that produce and reproduce their practice; all of which give shape to curatorial and archival activities and outcomes. His studies have shown how institutions like museums and galleries promote practices that enact social stratification and social orders through their hierarchical systems of accreditation and valuation, extending notions of taste, class, social authority and power (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1993a; Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1997). Curators and archivists (albeit to a lesser extent), have both been assigned a position of power in the cultural field, with the right to legitimise a given definition of a cultural artefact or archival record or event. At the same time, they also elect and define the agents in the field entitled to take part in this process of legitimisation. They are cultural intermediaries and central 'agents' in reproducing the particular and arbitrary terms that make up the logic of the cultural field (Bourdieu 1993b, 42).

Although this project sets out to account for the characteristics, power plays and agents at work in the fields of curatorial and archival practice, this study does not propose a sociological study based on empirical research and the analysis of sociological data (as Bourdieu's studies were). It does not assume a researcher's distance, but rather understands the researcher as a participant in the practices under examination. Indeed, Bourdieu's model abstracts practitioner's motivation and actions as a consequence of social structuration (DiMaggio 1979; King 2000). This approach does not address the processes of identification pivotal to individual position-taking that, as will be shown, constitute an important facet of current discussions around curatorial practice. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theories do not account for the potential hybridity of positions in the field – for instance, the capacity for a cultural agent to be a curating archivist, or an artist/curator, or to participate in fields of practices that are entangled. Nor do they account for the interconnected nature of fields and sub-fields themselves. In order to give weight to these facets of the field of practice, two other theoretical perspectives have been drawn on, as will be discussed next.

Locating Communities of Practice

Whereas Bourdieu's theory of practice describes the largely subconscious production of social stratification (DiMaggio 1979), Etienne Wenger-Trayner's Communities of Practice (CoP) theory describes how practices are produced by the practitioners over time through an active negotiation of meaning. The theory moves beyond ideas of practice as discourse and social structuration, to address the individual experience of meaningfulness and identity as important facets in the social production of knowledge.[6] Furthermore, drawing on CoP shifts focus from the broad swathes of social structures and fields of practice, to attend to the local aspects of knowledge production that are negotiated within and between communities and their "domains of practice", and thus offers an additional vocabulary to help describe and situate the critical contexts for curatorial practices in their relationship to the archive.

First coined as a term in the late 1980s by Wenger-Trayner (formerly Wenger) and Jean Lave, a 'communities of practice' is defined as a self-governed learning partnership among people who share the challenges and interest of a particular endeavour or enterprise (Wenger 1998). By interacting together through this common interest, individuals learn from and with each other and contribute to the continued vitality, application and evolution of a given practice. As part of the processes of determining these communities, participants define a "regime of competence", that is, "a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognise membership" (Wenger 2010, 180). Although communities develop from mutual engagement and vision, they are not characterised by homogeneity or harmony, but by the interpersonal relationships among community members, which may or may not be in alignment.[7] In this sense, communities of practice are always political; the power to define competence and, by extension, the power and to welcome or reject a new claim to competence, is a central currency in practice.

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[6] Wenger-Trayner defines practice as "a competence derived from a collective learning process that creates continuity across time and space" (Wenger 2013, 7). He views discourse as both part of a community's repertoire and a characteristic of practice (Wenger 1998).

[7] Although Wenger-Trayner has himself been careful to outline the limitations of the vocabulary he has chosen (see in particular Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002), the term 'community' has proven to be problematic due to its evocation of concepts such as belonging, harmony and, indeed, membership (Fuller 2007; Gee 2005b). Wenger-Trayner argues that activities and relationships at work in communities of practice do not necessarily entail positive or smooth processes; dysfunction, constraints and conflict may also form part of the practice (Wenger 1998).

As will be shown throughout this study, contemporary curatorial and archival discourses cluster around a variety of such communities of practice, each coalescing around different, but often overlapping, learning histories and spheres of activity. Members of a given curatorial 'community' share an enterprise, develop an understanding of their priorities, and continually define and redefine the criteria by which they recognise membership. The tripartite modelling of curatorial discourse and practices in particular, helps organise and conceptualise different discourses that manifest not only along a broad curatorial field of practice, but more locally through many interacting and overlapping communities of practice. In recent years Wenger-Trayner has broadened his attention from discrete *communities* of practice to the interconnections between such communities within wider *landscapes* of practice, to better reflect the increasing specialisation and multiplication of overlapping fields in contemporary western culture (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 15–16). This notion of a landscape of practice serves as a useful additional metaphor to describe an expanded archival and curatorial terrain of practice, as will be shown in Chapter VIII.

The shared enterprise that characterises communities of practice generates boundaries, both tacit and explicit (Wenger 1998). Continuity and discontinuities of practice are negotiated through *boundary interactions* – moments of engagement to determine if, and how, the perspective of one community is relevant to that of another. With competing regimes of competence, values, repertoires and perspectives at play, boundaries are places of tension, confusion and misunderstanding, but also contact zones with significant potential for innovation (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 17–18). Indeed, as will be shown in the following chapters, many critiques levelled at curators relate to activities that are situated at, or can be seen to test, the boundaries between different communities of practice. Furthermore, in an overarching way, boundaries constitute the central terrain of this project because in its essence, the engagement between curatorial practice and the archive engenders boundary interactions. These boundaries may be visible or invisible; perceived or real; formally defined or colloquially understood. Adopting the idea of boundaries of practice as learning assets (Wenger 1998, 2010), the boundaries of communities and fields of practice (perceived, presupposed and

contested), and hybrid forms of practice, become important counterpoints to the prototypical and dominant modes of practice naturalised within a given discourse.

The use of Communities of Practice theory as a conceptual framework and theoretical vocabulary, a "contingent system of interpretation", brings clarity to the nature of curatorial practices in their relationship to the archive (Reckwitz 2002, 257). It helps to situate archive-oriented curatorial practices in their particular localised arenas, and well their manifestations across a wider landscape of practice. The CoP framework provides a vocabulary to refer to various boundaries of practice as they are socially and professionally defined, reinforced or contested. In doing so, the theory also facilitates consideration of how curatorial engagement with archives can provoke ways to explore and define curatorial competency, accountability and professional identity. Finally, it integrates, rather than side-steps, the individual practitioners in the negotiation of meaning and identity. Yet while CoP accounts for individual practice, it does not focus on specific instances, forms or intricacies of practice. With this limitation in mind, practice-as-research theory offers a final element of the theoretical and methodological bricolage for this project.

iv. Practice as Research: Accounting for Individual (Creative) Practice

Whereas the study of discourses, mapped in relation to different contexts and domains of practice (communities, fields, landscapes and their boundaries), constitutes the primary focus of this thesis, as described previously, the three aforementioned practice-driven projects I developed, or co-developed also offered a point of departure to begin to think about ideas of curation and the archive. (See Appendix i, ii, iii for a fuller account of these projects.) Each of the three projects can be located at the intersection of curation and the archival, and each emphasised one of the three different curatorial approaches examined in the discourse analysis: curatorship, curating, and *the curatorial*.

Project A, the exhibition *Misfits (What are living beings compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?),* set up an encounter between three idiosyncratic museum objects and their records and highlighted the interpretive space between the museum object and its documentation. Engaging, in particular with the discourse of

curatorship and critical museology (Chapter VI), the project arose from an interest in ideas of curatorial caretaking as they extended from behind-the-scenes in the collection stores and in the public domain of the gallery; in ideas of authorship and representation (both intended and unintended); and in notions of amateurism and professionalism in curatorial practices. Project B, the exhibition *Along Some Sympathetic Lines*, evolved in particular from the discourse of art curating and curating as exhibition making (Chapter VII). Informal comments from visitors pointed to how the exhibition provoked concerns around the definitions and mobilisation of archives, the nature of curatorial position-taking, collaborations and hybrid practices, and the role of creativity, truth-telling, storytelling and caretaking therein. In Project C, the Slade Archive Project, the perspectives of digital humanities and the expanded landscape of the curatorial were highlighted (Chapter VIII). The crowdsourcing subproject brought about concerns with collaboration and caretaking at the intersections of archival and curatorial activities in the entwined analogue and digital environments. The absence of a project curator or archivist were particularly felt given the project's focus on participatory and digital approaches that are highly generative, distributed and ultimately ephemeral.

The use of these projects as a research tool and source material has been informed by practice-based or practice-as-research (PaR) approach. PaR describes a theoretical and methodological framework used principally in the visual and performing arts.[8] Unlike a Foucauldian perspective, which views practice as an effect of discourse, or the work of Bourdieu and Wenger-Trayner who consider practice as the locus of social structuration or learning, advocates of PaR examine individual practice for the specific forms of knowledge that are produced and that become retrievable as critical creative inquiry. Through PaR, research questions raised by practice can also be explored and responded to *through* practice (Gray 1996; H. Smith and Dean 2009). Proponents of PaR assert that the traditional schism between theory and practice is a false one and look for ways to encapsulate knowledge that incorporates the expertise

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[8]Although these terms can be used interchangeably, scholars make distinctions between 'practice-led' to denote an investigation in which practice leads to research insights, and 'practice-based', which presupposes creative work as a form of research unto itself (H. Smith and Dean 2009). More recently, Nelson has advocated the use of "Practice as Research" (PaR) to reflect how practice and research overlap and interlink and to avoid the implication that the knowledge always follows unidirectionally from practice (Nelson 2013). I use these terms fluidly while recognising points of difference have been asserted.

of both the researcher and the practitioner (Gray 1996; Nelson 2013). Practice-led theory does not propose a methodology; instead, it offers researchers a framework on which to build new research strategies according to the nature of the inquiries and practice in question, while drawing on methods used in creative disciplines (Haseman and Mafe 2009). The practice-based paradigm works from the understanding that the practitioner is also the researcher and that individual practice has an ongoing influence on the research process (Haseman and Mafe 2009).

As part of the initial research phase, I set about reflecting on the three aforementioned projects. The resulting narratives (Appendices i-iii) describe some of the factors informing the curatorial attention and problematics in relation to archives. Each project presented different complexities and power dynamics engendered by the specific configuration of materials, subject positions, individual and collaborative visions, motivations, technologies, platforms and contexts for curation, which informed and gave shape to the given instance of practice. Writing about these projects retrospectively provided a chance to reflect, capture and compare the different elements informing the projects' development and reception, and pivotally, to compare the projects against each other.

In this way, the projects provided a springboard from which to sketch different discursive fields and outline the "space of possibles" (Bourdieu 1993a, 176) brought about by different conditions for curation. Put another way, the case studies help distinguish different contexts and discursive frames in which projects could be understood and received (Culler 2011; Haseman and Mafe 2009; Stake 1995), and which could be used as a jumping off point for analysis of the broader discourse. Additionally, this practice-based component gives weight to the subjective, emergent and contingent nature of curatorial engagement with the archive. It provided a way to bring to bear the particular experiences and subjectivities of the researcher-practitioner. Each case study arose from a highly individualised trajectory of practice, informed by both personal and professional experiences, interests and points of identification which co-exist with the cultural and professional discourses and conditions studied.

Furthermore, these three projects are examples of active engagement at the intersection between curatorial practice and ideas of the archive. Reflecting on them illuminated some of the ways curatorial work with archives can provoke boundary interactions between different communities and fields of practice in the manner described by Wenger-Trayner. In the *Misfits* exhibition (project A), practices associated with museum curation are set in dialogue with those of museum documentation, archiving and exhibition production. In the exhibition *Along Some Sympathetic Lines* (project B), the concept of the archive was stretched in different directions within the space of a single art exhibition, bringing into play contested ideas of curatorial creativity and care. Lastly, in the case of the Slade Archive Project (project C), the university-based art school archive became the impetus for a multidisciplinary project centred on the digitisation of select archive records. The project brought together, with varying degrees of success, different communities of practice to collaboratively 'curate' this material within an academic framework.

However, the use of these projects as research tools deviates from a full practice-based strategy in a number of ways. First, PaR uses practice as the method of study and reports that practice as the evidence and outcome of the research findings (Nelson 2013; H. Smith and Dean 2009). By comparison, the results of this study have been reported as a written thesis, and the case studies were used as source material and an initial research method, rather than the locus of research in and of itself. The projects were employed as an initial research tool, but the research itself examines the broader discourses and fields of practice. Second, in PaR, practice and research are simultaneous and mutually referential. By contrast, in this instance, I have drawn on the projects retrospectively as a device through which to reflect on facets of decision-making, inspiration, confusion and debate in play when working with and through archives curatorially. The plasticity, and the fluid and performative nature of memory (Brockmeier 2010) means such retrospective accounts are informed by the insights emerging through the present research journey. A heavy reliance on a narrative of a past event risks retrofitting findings and attributing intention and understanding to aspects of practice, which would have been unknown or tacit at the time of the project. To that end, the narratives detailed in the Appendices offer a partial and subjective representation that aim to provoke thinking rather than seek to excavate stable meanings or research findings.

Third, fully using a practice-based research model would have set up the expectation to read curatorial practice as a creative process and the curator as a creative practitioner. As will be shown throughout the study, the role of creativity in curatorial practice marks an important point of debate that runs through the discourse around contemporary curatorial (and more recently archival) practices; a concern that dovetails with questions around authorship, agency, subjectivity, identity and related points of professional authority and accountability. Although this project seeks to address creativity *as part of* curatorial practice, taking a practice-based position without recourse to other theoretical and methodological tools would risk overshadowing other central facets of curation that have evolved from other disciplinary areas and activities. Together, these factors influenced the decision to shift the study away from individual practice, towards the wider discourses in play at the intersections of curatorial practices and archives.

v. Summary

A number of imperatives direct the *bricolage* approach described above. The first requirement was the need to delineate and give structure to the different discourses around curation and the archive in order to facilitate their analysis. The second imperative was the need to situate these discourses within various contexts of practice. The third requirement was to particularise, specify and follow the threads as they gather into different discursive constructs and manifestations of practice. This project therefore simultaneously addresses curatorial practices in relation to archives, the contexts for these practices and the discourses therein and thereof. It handles these components as interdependent.

A number of methods were used concurrently. Discourse theory was drawn on to help give shape and intellectual rigour to the work of surveying, delineating, and comparing and contrasting discourses from across a number of fields of practice. This study of discourses also brings to light a number of presuppositions that underpin various evocations of the terms 'curation' and 'archive' and their derivatives, to show how related discursive formations are subject to being sustained, challenged and elaborated through different forms of practice. Integrating the community of practice theory has meant the different texts and their respective

discursive constructs and formations could also be modelled along various fields and communities of practice centred around a) the archive (represented in both professional and scholarly discourse); b) the museum (represented in the discourse around curatorship); the exhibition (represented in the discourse around curating); and c) the expanded field of curatorial and archival practice (epitomised in the discourse around 'the curatorial'). Finally, the theoretical insights offered by practice theory has also enabled the consideration of the multivalent conditions (including power dynamics, social hierarchies, available subject positions, learning histories and points of agency) engendered by these distinct arenas of practice. This work was influenced in part by the retrospective review of three practice-based curatorial projects. The combined focus on the discourses, contexts of practice and specific iterations of practice has resulted in an overarching account of curatorial practices in their multifaceted relationship to archives and conceptualisations of the archive.

Chapter III. Professional Archival Discourse

i. Introduction: Sketching the Archival Terrain

This thesis sets out to bring clarity to the nature of the relationship between curation and the archive, beginning with the observation that the contemporary cultural landscape has generated new imperatives and opportunities for their interconnection. Yet within this broadened terrain, the perspective and expertise of archive professionals often remains unaccounted for (Breakell 2010; Cook 2009b). Many archive users and scholars, including curatorial practitioners, have a significant blind spot around the theories, practices and intellectual history underpinning the creation and maintenance of archives (Caswell 2016; Schwartz and Cook 2002; Theimer 2012).

This chapter counteracts this tendency. It lays the groundwork for the broader investigation by surveying the literature emerging from the archive profession in recent decades. It does so with three purposes: a) to flesh out definitions of the archive within the professional frame; b) to illuminate the underlying principles of practice, and c) to point to significant areas of professional debate and negotiation, that is, the issues and 'conversations' that shape the discursive field, as they relate to practices of curation. As will be shown, a number of overarching questions run through the professional discourse:

- What is an archive? Related to this, what are the limits of the archive?
- What is an archival record?
- What is the purpose of archives; what is their role in our contemporary cultural landscape?
- What is the role of the archivist?

Following this, Chapter IV turns to examine the theoretical texts and scholarly works about the archive from commentators *outside* of the archive profession – principally academic archive users. Together these two companion chapters profile the archive

as a potential source, resource and conceit for curatorial practice. They move past hazy evocations of 'the archive' to facilitate a more layered appreciation of the archive as the subject of curatorial attention. However, dividing the literature this way implies a false division between archive professionals and archive users. Although the discourses examined in these two chapters often uphold this distinction, at other times they show how these areas are mutually influencing, constituting a number of overlapping and interacting communities of practice with enterprises that crossover into different areas of practice, reflecting a certain porousness in the lines between archive caretakers, users and creators.

ii. The Challenge of Defining Archives

Archivists have long sought to formulate the definition of an archive.[9] The term 'archive' is multifarious, referring to a practice (the verb *to archive*, to transfer records to an authorised repository), an entity (a collection of records), and the institution which safeguards them (Pearce-Moses 2005, 29). In this study I follow Caswell's differentiation: 'archives' to mean a collection of records preserved according to archival principles, and 'the archive', for the more metaphorical evocations that refer to collated documentation of the past (both official and unofficial) and its psycho-social practices, as will be described in Chapter IV (Caswell 2016). However, such distinctions will also be brought into question throughout this study.

Archivists are typically held accountable to definitions of the archive set by the profession, such as those offered by the UK's National Archives, or the International Council on Archives (ICA):

> Archives are collections of documents or records which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research. (The National Archives 2011, 4)

> Archives are the documentary by-product of human activity retained for their long-term value. They are contemporary records created by individuals and organizations as they go about their business and therefore provide a direct

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[9] Jenkinson's 1966 publication *A Manual of Archive Administration* included a discussion entitled "What are Archives?". The question persists. See, for instance, Craven *What Are Archives? Theoretical and Cultural Perspectives: A Reader* (2008).

window on past events. ('What Are Archive?' | International Council on Archives, n.d.)

Despite significant variation, professional definitions of the archive retain common features. At minimum, the term 'archive' connotes a collection of records that have been valued for their evidentiary capacity (however these terms are understood) and thus selected for preservation through archival practices.

In recent decades however, the parameters of such definitions have loosened. Over the last two decades in particular, the term 'archive' and its derivatives have been subject to new points of interrogation, new iterations and applications, and to being conflated with other terms. At times, it has been entirely reimagined (Breakell 2008; Maher 1998; Moss 2008; Schwartz and Cook 2002). This trend is particularly felt as it has been taken up by those from outside of the profession (Buchanan 2010; Caswell 2016; Schwartz and Cook 2002). Conceptualisations of an archive – as an institution, a collection of records and an overarching construct – are handled with more variability. Debates and developments both within and beyond the professional discourse move closer towards "the undefining of archives" (Hamilton et al. 2002, 16). In addition, as will be shown, the impact of digital and networking technologies have further destabilised the guiding features that have traditionally defined an archive, including its very physical make-up. Thus, the overarching question, "What is an archive?" continues to infuse the professional discourse (Craven 2008).

iii. Archival Principles and Professional Roots

Approaching archives as the product of a distinct profession, with specific histories, and theoretical and practical principles, provides a baseline for understanding the ontology of archives.[10] Although the French Revolution led the charge with the formation of the modern archive (Duchein 1992), most histories of western archival

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[10] See for instance Cook 1997; Duchein 1992; Ketelaar 2001; Posner 1972; Ridener 2009; Shepherd 2009. The majority of these historiographies focuses on the modern Western archive tradition since the early twentieth century, and focus on European, Australian and North American archival discourse. The overall history of archival practice is more nuanced and far-reaching, but a full historical survey of archives lies outside the aims of this study. Instead focus rests on English-language sources dating from the 1980s onwards when postmodern ideas and technological advances began to gather pace and which, on the whole, continue to underpin current lines of professional thinking.

practice trace the codification of archival ideas to two key texts that emerged with the establishment of the archive profession in Europe around the turn of the twentieth century: first, the so-called "Dutch" *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, written by Samuel Muller, Johan Feith and Robert Fruin in 1898; and second, Hilary Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration* first published in the UK in 1922 and later revised in 1937 (Cook 1997; Ketelaar 2007; Ridener 2009).

Together these publications outline two principles that form the basis of modern archival practice and lexicon still in use today: appraisal and provenance. Archival appraisal denotes the processes by which archivists (and at times record creators), identify, judge and select materials of "sufficient value" to be accessioned into an archive (Pearce-Moses 2005, 22–23). Appraisal is the "gateway function to all subsequent archival activity" (Cook 2009b, 504). Provenance describes the origin or source of the material in a collection as well as the information *about* its origins, custody and ownership, and is an important factor in ascertaining the integrity of an archival collection. The principle of provenance is put into practice through two ideas: *respect des fonds* and original order. These concepts dictate that records of different origins be kept separate to preserve their original structure and contextual framework (Pearce-Moses 2005). The meaning of individual items in an archive is determined in part by their relationship to other items in that collection, known as the 'archival bond' (Pearce-Moses 2005). Pivotally, the nature of this relationship is determined by the creators and users of the record, rather than the archivist (Buchanan 2010).

These manuals also characterise the role and responsibilities of the archivist. For instance, it was Jenkinson's conceptualisation of the archive as a neutral repository for the "documents in the case" (Jenkinson 1980, 232) that profiled the archivist as an impartial custodian of its records. In this formulation, the archivist works "as a kind of honest broker, or informed tour guide, between the original creators of the record and its later use by researchers" (Cook 2009b, 504). As long as records were safeguarded by the archivist through archival protocols, the authenticity, integrity and evidential quality of the records that had been "naturally accumulated" through official channels of record creation could be preserved (Ridener 2009).

iv. The Influence of the "Postmodern Mindset" on the Archive Profession

Towards the latter part of the last century, postmodernist, poststructuralist, as well as feminist, postcolonial and queer theories have provided scholars and archivists with new lines of thinking that have challenged the principles laid out in the early professional literature and exposed their underlying ideological framework (Cook 1997; Ketelaar 2007). The "postmodern mindset" prevalent in academic discourse since the 1980s has had a profound influence on contemporary archival thinking (Cook 2001a).[11] Through these critical lenses, archives have been re-evaluated as social constructs that shape bodies of knowledge in ways that reify and naturalise problematic concepts of the past, as well social and individual experience, memory and identity.

Archival practices of appraisal, arrangement and description have been laid bare as powerful forces in the development and preservation of discourses that not only bias the writing of history, but that in and of themselves, are mechanisms of social power, governance and repression.[12] Archive theorists focusing on the historical development of archives have explored the ways in which archival thinking is subject to changing paradigms and "shifting currents" (Eastwood and MacNeil 2010) that simultaneously reflect and co-construct the cultural, juridical, technological, social and philosophical spirit of a given historical period (Cook 1997, 2013). Although these 'postmodern' understandings of the archive represent a paradigm change in archive theory (Schwartz and Cook 2002), they have now, to a large degree, been naturalised within the professional discourse (Cook 2001a, 2009a; Ridener 2009) and, by consequence, have opened up the profession to new sensibilities and areas of investigation.

Questioning the Nature of the Archive Record

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[11] On the postmodern mindset in archival thinking, see for example Cook 2001b, 2001a; Nesmith 2002; Ridener 2009. Archive professionals in North America, Europe and South Africa continued to debate the implications of these "postmodern" ideas in a number of articles published in the Canadian journal *Archivaria,* the UK-based *Archives and Records, The American Archivist, Journal of the Society of Archivists,* and the Dutch *Journal of Archival Science,* as well as through a series of international conferences and networks.

[12] See for instance, the double special issue of *Archival Science* on the theme "Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory" (Schwartz and Cook 2002).

One such area of investigation is the ontology of the record (Lemieux 2001). The concept – and the *ideal* – of the record lies at the heart of archive theory. A record, in its idealised form, is fixed in content, structure and context, can be used to demonstrate accountability and function as an extension of human memory (Millar 2010; Pearce-Moses 2005). A record obtains its "continuing value" (McKemmish 1993) through these qualities.[13] Applying Jenkinson's vision, an ideal record is a by-product of an official transaction, created *without* the archive in mind; it is organic, impartial and truthful (Cook 1997; Lane and Hill 2010). Once its chain of custody is safeguarded, the record becomes a stable conduit through which the truth can be captured and communicated through time (Jenkinson 1965, 2-6). Bonded to its circumstance and context of creation, the record is evidential (Eastwood 2010).

However, the critiques of rationalist and positivist thinking, and the postmodern and post-structural interrogations of representation and reality, challenged the core assumption that records are fixed in their content, structure, context and value. These developments put into question the idea that by upholding standards for appraisal and arrangement, records can be kept organic and authentic (Cook 1997; Craven 2008; Eastwood and MacNeil 2010). Around the turn of the last century, a number of archival theorists began to suggest archival records have little or no secure meanings and are instead, accessible principally as subjective encounters (Brothman 1999; Cook 2001a; Nesmith 2002). New efforts emerged to pin down the qualities of a record. For instance, Canadian historian and archivist Tom Nesmith, writing in 1999, described the record as "… an evolving mediation of understanding about some phenomena – a mediation created by social and technical processes of inscription, transmission, and contextualization" (Nesmith 1999, 145). By comparison, Australian archivists Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward set clearer parameters, arguing that an archival record is defined by "its contextuality and its transactionality," created "as a by-product of social and organizational activity in the course of transacting business of any kind, whether by governments, businesses, community organizations or private individuals" (McKemmish and Upward 1993, 1).

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[13] It should be noted that in archival studies, records differ from documents. A document refers more generally to information fixed in media and is characterised by its form, whereas a record is defined by its documentary *function* (Pearce-Moses 2005). Yeo also differentiates records "by their relation to activities, events or other temporal occurrents" and which means they function according to a different logic than documents (Yeo 2011, 18).

More recently, Geoffrey Yeo has emphasised the *representative* quality of records, describing them as "persistent representations … of occurrents, created by participants in, or observers of, the occurrents concerned" (Yeo 2010, 100).

Debates focusing on different types, genres and forms of records further elucidate points of debate in professional conceptualisation of the record (Millar 2010). Autobiographical forms of records, such as oral histories and personal papers, test rigid ideas about the essence and purpose of archive records. Oral history recordings are not generated in the course of day-to-day business but are undertaken with the express purpose of being archived. Precisely because of this difference, they lay bare the power dynamics of the archive at the point of creation (Bradley 1999). Proponents understand oral history to be a collaborative form of meaning-making and a valuable way to co-construct historical knowledge (Perks and Thomson 2010), giving agency to individuals and communities through the retelling of personal histories for the historical record (Flinn 2007, 2008). These first-person accounts are immediate and compelling, qualities that lend well to ideas of truth and authenticity. Yet by the same token, they shine light on the performative and subjective aspects of memory – the inherent storytelling – that underpin record making and interpretation (Flinn 2007; Portelli 2010; Sandino 2009). Gathering the verbal testimony of living people not only unsettles the hierarchy of written forms of knowledge, it does so by bringing into relief the multivalent nature of historical documentation (Portelli 1998), and the "contextual fluidities" that are part of any construction of the past (Hamilton 2002, 133). Furthermore, by *commissioning* oral histories, archival institutions reanimate the question as to the degree of explicit participation the archivist should play in the generation of archives (Flinn and Perks 2013; Moss 2008; Swain 2010).

In similar ways, personal records have in the past lacked the status of records generated 'organically' as a by-product of organisational activity (McKemmish 1996; Pollard 2001; Williams 2008). However, an awareness of the distinct value these types of records, both in cultural and economic terms, has led archivists to theorise their nature more closely (Douglas 2010; C. Hobbs 2010; Kirsch and Rohan 2008; McKemmish 1996; Williams 2008, 88; Pollard 2001). Both of these types of records also bring into relief the dialectic of public/private, and the politics of archival exposure and representation. Conversations around co-constructed historical

materials are further heightened as people generate unprecedented amounts of digital documents through a range of public or semi-private forums such as those offered by social media (Hawkins 2013; Lee 2011). Extending from this point, in the digital realm, the vast amount of personal records created *by* people are matched by the vast amount of data gathered *about* people (such as their transactions, search history and so on) (Hawkins 2013). In the digital era, the questions if, how and when personal documents should be integrated into the public record, and the consequences of doing so, loom large (MacNeil 2001b).

When set in dialogue with each other, these debates characterise the record as a construct conditioned by a tension between its apparent stability as a contextualised, persistent but retrievable representation of past activity on the one hand, and its essence as a fluid, porous and contingent and potentially inaccessible entity on the other. Even with this variation, the idea that records *are records because they link content to context of creation* remains a firm baseline for a shared professional understanding, one that becomes an important consideration when situating the archive in relation to curatorial practices.

The Shape of Information: Archival Records in the Digital Landscape

However, digital records have also significantly tested the conventional form and parameters of archival records and have renewed attention on the formal qualities of records. Discussions in the literature reviewed include the media-specificity of records, and their material, haptic, aesthetic qualities, and how these qualities impact upon how records are interpreted and used (Dever 2013; H. Taylor 1995). The loss of physicality associated with electronic records and the apparent "disappearance of the original" (Ketelaar 2004) has challenged the assumed formal, static and material qualities of the archival record (McKemmish 1997); it has asked archivists to "theorize materiality anew" (Dever and Morra 2014).

New typologies and vocabularies for archival collections have emerged. American archivist Kate Theimer differentiates three types of archives in the digital era: firstly, 'traditional', non-digital archives – typically paper-based records brought together for preservation in repositories by either the original creators, or a third party such as

a scholar or representative of an individual's estate; secondly, digital archives – collections of digitised analogue historical materials that may be selected from one or more repository, often focused on a particular topic or series. According to Theimer, these digital 'surrogates' of analogue originals constitute a separate intellectual product generated from an archival source; they are better described as "digital historical representations" (Theimer 2014a). Thirdly, the so-called 'born-digital' materials – archival material without analogue predecessor where, for the most part, questions of selection, appraisal and custodial history apply as they would to all records, but here, their born-digital format adds additional layers to pre-existing concerns around reliability, authenticity, stability, originality, and preservation and access (Theimer 2014a). Although these archival collections share commonalities, their different contexts of creation, formal qualities and functionalities generate different responsiblities, methods and points of archival intervention.

Even as archivists continue to debate the ontology of the record (Lemieux 2001; Yeo 2007, 2008), even as the evidentiary construct of the archive has been criticised for its positivist and constructivist bias, the idea that records embody evidence continues to dominate the terms by which archival institutions and their records are valued, managed and interpreted (Brothman 2002; Flinn and Shepherd 2011; MacNeil 2001a; Pearce-Moses 2005; Yeo 2007). In the professional rhetoric, there remains a conceptual attachment to the prototypical record (Yeo 2008), with all the connotations of credibility, authenticity, truthfulness, factuality, physicality, authority and transparency implied. However, writing in the early 2000s, Brien Brothman cautioned against conflating notions of the record and evidence. He argued that evidence is not inherent to well-guarded records, but is created "out of processes of social negotiation after the fact" (Brothman 2002, 334). Evidence is a retrospective effect engendered by a given user's "(re)construction of a documentary universe" (Brothman 2001, 52 fn 4). For Yeo, delineating records in terms of evidence and information also limits our understanding of how records are used (Yeo 2010b). Instead, he advocates shifting from the evidentiary understanding of records to a *conceptual* one in order to account for how records offer different "affordances" to their users; and for how records are performative (Yeo 2018). In addition to their evidential and information roles, records can have memorial, aesthetic and symbolic

ones (Yeo 2008), each of which help rationalise the retention of certain documents and the methods by which they are interpreted (Yeo 2010). Thus, two key ideas in recent archival theory are brought to bear on questions of curatorial practice: first, that evidence emerges through, and is not independent of, these processes of meaning making, and second, that records themselves can perform different functions.

Postcustodial Care and the 'Recasting' of Provenance: Accounting for the Expanded Conditions of Record Creation and Use

As a consequence of these manifold changes, the nature of the archivist's role as a guardian of archival records has also been subject to renewed questioning (Bearman 2002; McKemmish and Upward 1993; Moss 2008; Shepherd 2009). Where previously custodial care was bound to the physical arrangement and access of records, dynamic and 'dematerialised' digital records and their online points of creation, access and reuse undermine the methods of control once assumed by physical custody (Douglas 2010; Moss 2008). Indeed some archival theorists have questioned if and how stewardship of records can truly extend beyond the physical place of the archive (Duranti 1996), or if the conventional points of archival accountability are sustainable in today's fragmented and networked information society (Iacovino 2010).[14] The so-called 'postcustodial' approach to archival practice takes these developments into consideration. It asks archivists to shift their focus from the *physical* guardianship of records towards a *conceptual* one (Cunningham 2010). Contrary to the implication that the archivist's presence is no longer required, the postcustodial approach requires renewed focus on the value and complexity of provenance as a core archival practice. Archivists continue to strive to maintain accountability by preserving, where possible, the "binding attributes" (Moss 2008, 76), both electronic and analogue, that ascribe these records their archival status (Cook 1997; Ketelaar 2004; Ketelaar 2007; Yeo 2007; Yeo 2008).

Although archivists have always been concerned with safeguarding contextual information through the principles of provenance and original order, the computational and digital environment, and the volume, variability and dynamic

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[14] However as Cook noted, the increasing ephemerality and proliferation of documents has, in other instances, fostered a revival in Jenkinsonian emphasis on the evidentiary value of individual material records (Cook 1997).

qualities of contemporary forms and uses of documentation have brought new complexities to the fore (B. L. Craig 1992; H. A. Taylor 1987). Digital documents are created and operate in increasingly dynamic, interconnected and distributed ways that challenge the preservation of information about their origins (Brothman 2002; Yeo 2013). Preserving the transactional context of digital records means not only attending to the complex links between records and their provenance, but also the links within and between their systems of use and access, including dynamic software and interface systems (Stevenson 2008; Yeo 2013).[15] The binary, ephemeral, unsettled and interconnected nature of digital content has generated new degrees of potential reproduction, distribution, alteration and decontextualisation of records.

These developments have also put into question the clear-cut distinction between the point of record creation and its later use (Cook 1992, 2001a; Nesmith 2005). The 'records continuum' model, developed by Australian archival theorists in the 1990s, challenged the idea that archival documents follow a clear path from active to inactive records, emphasising instead how they are subject to ongoing remediation on a continuum of reuse and meaning making (Brothman 2001; Dingwall 2010; McKemmish 1997). In order to reflect these changes, some archivists have advocated a "recasting" of the conventional model of provenance in order to better encapsulate the broader societal contexts of record creation as well as the complex 'biographies' of records themselves (Cook 2001b; Douglas 2010; Millar 2002; Nesmith 1993). Yet others argue that loosening the parameters of the concept this way runs the risk of conflating provenance with context itself, to the point where provenance is viewed "as the umbrella under which an ever-expanding list of contextual factors are gathered" (Douglas 2010, 37). It sets up a near-impossible task for archivists and erodes the trail of documentation (Yeo 2013).

However these issues are negotiated in practice, the principle of provenance continues to be a guiding concept within the profession. Given the "expanded field

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[15] The question of how to preserve records in light of the massive, dynamic and internetworked dataset generated through digital forms of communication and given their interlinking and often proprietary platforms and repositories has played out, for instance, in attempts to preserve social media communications, such as in the case of the US Library of Congress' failed attempt to preserve all of the 170 billion tweets generated between 2006 and 2010.

of contextuality" (Lane and Hill 2010, 12), the broadened definitions of records, and the dramatic shifts in record-keeping behaviours and environments with their many points of potential mediation, some commentators position provenance as the fundamental pillar in upholding transparency in public records, which in turn facilitates the evaluation of their trustworthiness (Flinn and Shepherd 2011; MacNeil 2001a; Yeo 2013). Activities which do away with the mechanisms that align an archival item with its context – *including activities associated with curation* – therefore run against the currents of professional archival practice. As will be shown, although archival practice facilitates curation, such activities tend to fall outside the mainstream professional discourse, which focus instead on the consistencies of permanent archival forms, rather than temporary rearrangements such as curatorial ones.

Appraisal: The Changing Terms of Archival Valuation and Selection

Theories of appraisal have been shaped historically by positivist notions of records as evidence that serve juridical, administrative and research functions. In recent decades, the contemporary rationale for archival appraisal has broadened to account for how archives serve broader socio-cultural functions, encompassing a more fluid understanding of the fiduciary role of the archive (Eastwood 1992). Within the professional literature, a number of commentators have given credence to the emotional or psychological significance of archival records and the social and even "impractical" motivations for record keeping and consultation, which sit beyond legal and administrative purposes (O'Toole 1993, 238). Archival records are said to hold personal value through reminiscence or genealogical investigations towards "a sense of self" (Etherton 2006), or to engender "a sense of feelings, of relationships, and of character" from those of the past (C. Hobbs 2001, 133), for how they support artistic practice (see Chapter VII), or political change and activism (Cohen 2018; Eichhorn 2013; Flinn 2007; Kumbier 2014).

In this vein, the archive has come to be celebrated as a repository of collective memory (Brothman 2001; Eastwood and MacNeil 2010; Schwartz and Cook 2002; H. Taylor 1982). The framework of memory has helped to enhance the perceived value of the archive by aligning information about the past with contemporary

commemorations and experiences of the past (Brothman 2001). The rhetoric of the archives as the people's memory box is in itself a value-enhancing refrain, which has been, to a large degree, naturalised within the profession. For instance, although the nature of the relationship between archives and memory itself has yet to be fully considered (B. Craig 2002; Hedstrom 2010), the idea of the archive as a "house of memory" underpins much of the rationalising framework for its public engagement, outreach and advocacy activities (R. J. Cox 1993; Jacobsen, Punzalan, and Hedstrom 2013).

As new lenses on history have been taken up by scholars and cultural institutions, archives have been called upon to help complicate or contest dominant or singular narratives of the past (Eichhorn 2013; Flinn 2007; Hamilton et al. 2002; Prescott 2008).[16] Responding to ideas of cultural plurality and agendas of inclusion, archival institutions are implicated in helping to "fill the gaps" in the historical record (Flinn 2008), to better account for what and whom has been marginalised, erased or exiled from public record and by extension, social memory (Caswell et al. 2017; Cook 2001b; Duff and Harris 2002; Hamilton et al. 2002; Nesmith 2002).

This shift in archival direction has often been supported by a rhetoric of democratising the archive (Byrd Phillips 2016; Schwartz and Cook 2002), and framed by imperatives to represent and celebrate national, individual or community identities, however these are mobilised within a given context.[17] From the Netherlands, Eric Ketelaar argues that archivists have a duty to work towards a vision "where archives are Archives of the People, by the People, and for the People" (Ketelaar 2003). Canadian archive theorists Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil have argued that the contemporary rationale for the value of the archive can be summed up in three constructs: the archive as "arsenals of accountability", "sites of collective memory" and as "evidence of me" (Eastwood and MacNeil 2010, vii). More recently Caswell et al. have highlighted the ontological, epistemological and

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[16] The macro-appraisal model advocated by Cook is an example of archivists emphasising multiple narratives and "deliberately seeks to give voice to the marginalized…" as well as the powerful (Cook, 2001, 30-31). This appraisal model is paired with ideas of expanded archival description to include multi-relational, linked descriptions and includes appraisal rationale and omissions.
[17] On the community archives movement and its implications see Bastian and Alexander 2009; Caswell et al. 2017; Flinn 2007, 2011. For case studies exploring ideas of national identity in archives see Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998; Karabinos 2015.

social impact of community archives and archiving on members of marginalised communities (Caswell et al. 2017). Put another way, these developments reconceptualise the archive from a *product-focused* entity to a *process-oriented* activity (Cook 1997).

This emphasis on the social currency of archives has also resulted in attempts to be more inclusive at different points along the continuum of archival practice. Institutional strategies include broadening the scope of acquisition policies or developing public outreach and engagement programmes, often through online platforms which integrate user-generated description and/or content, or facilitate user-'curation' of archival content (Ridge 2016; Theimer 2014a).[18] Projects centred around so-called 'crowdsourcing', for instance, bring together a number of these aspirations. These initiatives outsource archival tasks typically performed in-house through an open call for participation from the general public (Eveleigh 2016, 211).[19] In the cultural heritage sector, crowdsourcing is said to both benefit the organisations by elevating the quantity of archival descriptions and points of access, helping overcome conventional access barriers (due to physical location or conservation issues, for instance), and providing a form of outreach and engagement with archives and collections for participants (Eveleigh 2016). In turn, enquiries into user demographics, needs and behaviours, constitutes another area of development and research, as archive professionals, funders and policy makers seek to investigate how archives are accessed (or not) and mobilised by their users (e.g. Caswell et al. 2017; A. Johnson 2008; Theimer 2011a; Yakel and Torres 2003). Enriched by digital tools and approaches, this new "participatory landscape" of archives (Eveleigh 2016) reorients record-centred practices towards new user-centred ones (Theimer 2011b).

This shift towards expanding the social reach of archives also signals an overall move away from the archivist- and scholar-led model, to one in which members of

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[18] Two examples of such platforms in the UK are the now defunct UK's National Archive's wiki "Your Archives Project" launched by The National Archives, which invited public to contribute to catalogue entries (Flinn 2010), and the "Transcribe Bentham" project based at University College London (Causer and Terras 2016).

[19] Tasks include tagging, transcription, or digitisation projects, or gathering information such as place names from historical maps. Although many of the expanded forms of participatory archive projects represent a new development, it should be remembered that crowdsourcing material for the archive is not in and of itself a novel practice. See for instance Peter Fritzsche's study of the German state's initiative to create a "people's archive" in the wake of the First World War (Fritzsche 2005).

the public (including those marginalised voices) play a greater role in determining the terms of archival valuation, appraisal and contextualisation (Cook 1997). A number of these initiatives work from the belief that the arena of expertise around archival material can – and should – extend outside of the professional frame and into the broader "community of records" (Yakel and Torres 2007), and that in turn, this knowledge should be brought into the fold of official archival records (Anderson and Allen 2009). This vision reorients the archivist's professional role "away from a mechanistic focus on strong archival leadership and hierarchically determined goals towards *a new emphasis upon facilitation, dispersed community coordination and emergent design*" (Eveleigh 2016, 220, emphasis mine). However, user participation in archival practices can be seen to deepen an overarching "fault line" within the practice (Eveleigh 2016, 212), between the imperative for archivists to maintain accountability by safeguarding the established mechanisms of control over records on the one hand, and the imperatives to broaden the points of access and use towards an "open authority" (Byrd Phillips 2016) on the other (Flinn 2010; Yakel 2011).

Even with this tendency to embrace archives as a vehicle of social empowerment and inspiration, archives remain contested terrain, replete with ethical, social, political and professional tensions relating to the terms of archival representation, access and interpretation (e.g. Blouin and Rosenberg 2006; Eastwood 2010; Eastwood and MacNeil 2010; Hamilton et al. 2002; Schwartz and Cook 2002). Furthermore, whether created by scholars, archivists or the general user, public engagement projects and platforms may be short-lived, misguided and poorly designed. Outreach initiatives, despite aims to the contrary, are still exclusive, bound by the protocols and priorities of archival institutions. Equally, agendas of inclusion may unintentionally further marginalise or cause harm (Christen 2011; I. Hopkins 2008; Schwartz and Cook 2002). Additionally, without careful application of key archival principles, the usefulness, viability and longevity of these projects as *archival resources* is questionable (Eveleigh 2016).

Furthermore, the quest for archival inclusivity is held in tension with an awareness on the part of archivists of the political, social and intellectual consequences of the decisions made by archivists (Eastwood 2002), and by a very practical understanding of the limitations of the archive and its instituting frameworks (I. Hopkins 2008;

Prescott 2008). The professional literature acknowledges that archival practices are, by their nature, mediating activities. The appraisal, ordering and description of records alters their meaning and sets the initial terms for their interpretation (Brothman 1991a; Duff and Harris 2002; Nesmith 1999). Archivists are fully aware that archives are selective representations, offering only a "sliver of a sliver" of the documentary record (V. Harris 2002b, 135). The continued focus on the practice of appraisal speaks to this persistent and overarching need for measured and informed judgement in determining what is to be preserved as archival records. In light of the ever-growing and incalculable volume, variation and complexity of documents and documentary forms being generated (Cook 1997), continuing discussions about what, how, and for whom records are selected for preservation continues to denote a key 'conversation' within the archive profession.

v. Agency in the Archive: The Role of the Archivist

In light of the developments touched upon in this chapter archivists have been called upon by those from within and from outside of the profession to assume a more transparent and self-reflexive position (Cook 2001b; Ketelaar 2001). Focus has turned to making archivists' footprints on the archival record more transparent, and to questioning their role in shaping both archive records and the discursive frameworks for their use (Cook 2001a; Craven 2008; V. Harris 2001). On the one hand, this process of articulating and debating the nature of their position has made archivists increasingly accountable to their points of influence and power. They have the authority, for instance, to determine and implement the criteria by which to select, classify and describe records (Craven 2008; Cook 2001b); they "construct meanings" (Duff and Harris 2002), and develop "archival representations" in the form of finding aids and access systems (Yakel 2003), that function as "interfaces" between documentary evidence and readers (Hedstrom 2002). At the same time, this introspection has brought greater awareness of how their particular subject position can be harnessed for advocacy or change in the broader cultural field. Hybrid

practices emerging at the intersection of activism and record keeping are exemplary in this regard.[20]

Given these changes, the profile of the professional archivist has shifted from a passive and impartial guardian of records to a central agent in the production of archival meaning (Cook 1997; Ridener 2009), and at times, an explicit co-creator of the records themselves (Flinn 2008). In other words, these paradigm shifts have unsettled the dividing lines between the acts of structuring and maintaining records encapsulated in the roles of the record creator and archivist, and the gathering and construction of evidence embodied in the role of the historian, the curator, the archive user and so on (Brothman 2002; Moss 2008). As the interpretive role of the archivist is highlighted, and the conventional terms of archivist's authority and responsibility are renegotiated, the archivist has been recast as a highly active and subjective figure, interacting, to varying degrees, with other fields of practice including those relating to curatorial practices. Indeed, as will be argued, the figure of the archivist represents an important counterpart, colleague or collaborator to the curator in the terrain of this study.

vi. Conclusions

For the purpose of understanding archives as a subject and terrain for curatorial attention, the professional discussions sketched here can be distilled into a number of overlapping 'conversations' concerning the ontology and parameters of the archive, the nature of its records, the purpose of the archive and the role of the archivist therein. The discussions surveyed above are shaped by their professional character. Even when highly theoretical, the professional discourse reflects the day-to-day practical nature of archivists' work and the pragmatic considerations evolving from different collection types, resources, organisational systems and structures, and institutional priorities. The insights accumulated by archivists through the direct

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[20] Examples include the Activist Archivists group, a cohort of media archivists and academics who work to support the discoverability of media produced as part of social movements seeking political change ('About ActArc' n.d.), or information professionals who advocate access to archives over preservation, or who promote "radical cataloguing" as a way to challenge systems of classification that reify knowledge in particular, and hierarchical, ways (Eichhorn 2013). See also Flinn 2007, 2011 and *Archivaria* 80 (Fall 2015) for a number of articles on the question of activism and archival practice.

management of records provide a counterpoint to ground the (often idealised and misguided) depiction of archives in the broader cultural fields.

Even within the professional discourse, understanding of the nature and purpose of an archive are wrapped up in the "shifting currents" of the cultural, economic, political, technological landscape in which it operates (Eastwood and MacNeil 2010). The ongoing influence of postmodern and critical intellectual theories, as well as profound technological and social developments, has significantly expanded the field of professional practice. They set broader terms for defining and utilising archival records, and offer wide-ranging rationales and strategies for safeguarding the contexts around their creation and use. Reflecting these developments, this chapter highlights a broader frame of reference to be brought to discussions on the curation of the archive – as a construct, an institution and a collection of records.

Within this framework, there is friction for archivists between upholding and promoting the parameters of archivists' definitions of archives, and embracing the elaborated terms of reference. Even so, a number of core beliefs guiding the development and care of archives can be brought forward to inform the discussions around curatorial practices moving forward. Archival records have been selected from the wider documentary record because they are perceived to be of enduring value. Records signify evidence because they link content to context and structure, a bond that is upheld, in so far as is possible, through archival principles and practices. Meaning is simultaneously perceived as encapsulated within the archival record and co-constructed through its mediation within the archival frame and through any subsequent interpretive acts. Even though it has been interrogated, the conceptual link between ideas of archives and evidence prevail in the rhetoric of the profession. As will be shown in the chapters that follow, these key archival concepts are at various times activated, manifested and challenged through curatorial practice.

Debates around archival principles also point to areas of professional uncertainty and risk: how best to safeguard the provenance, the terms of valuing a record, and how to negotiate the terms of care and access for records with their increasingly complex iterations and contextual frameworks. These discussion points are qualified by a series of tensions between archival subjectivity and objectivity, preservation and

access, inclusion and selection, and between theoretical ideals and their realisation in practice. Discussions around the nature of archival records reveal an overarching tension between ideas of contingency and fluidity, and a need for the archive to stand-in for a static, retrievable, valuable and enduring representation of activities. Given the complexities of the contemporary cultural and informational landscape, the care of provenance and the need for transparency in relation to archival activities have also been reconfirmed as core professional priorities that help to uphold the value and trustworthiness of archives and their records. The constitution and ontology of the archive is made up not only of the records and brick and mortar of its institutional walls, but also these principles of practice and their surrounding debates. As will be shown, these dynamics and discourses condition curatorial practices that draw on archival records and the concept of 'the archive'. Archive-oriented curatorial practices are thus implicated in these discourses, knowingly or unknowingly, explicitly or implicitly.

Chapter IV. The Interdisciplinary Terrain of Archives

i. Introduction

Alongside the debates taking place *within* the profession, towards the end of the twentieth-century, the archive became an explicit focal point outside of the profession (Buchanan 2010; Craven 2008; Manoff 2004; Stoler 2009; Velody 1998). Whilst archivists are oriented towards the practical management of archives and its distinct academic field of studies, scholars and practitioners in the arts, humanities and social sciences work with archives according to their own varied disciplinary frameworks, which have engendered more pluralistic and ever-evolving conceptualisation of archival forms, methods and topics. Researchers are presented with new choices in how they approach, and indeed, how they define archives.

In 2004, Marlene Manoff described the increasingly pervasive use and varied meanings by which the archive is understood and mobilised across the humanities and social sciences. The term 'archive' has been greatly inflated; it now functions as "a kind of loose signifier for a disparate set of concepts" (Manoff 2004, 10). As will be shown, scholars continue to understand an archive as a physical repository and corpus of 'primary' source material (Velody 1998), but they also conceptualise 'the archive' as a discursive terrain, a social tool and political technology and a semiotic and (inter)textual space. Outside of the archive profession, the archive is a malleable construct, and there is little consensus on its ontology (Breakell 2015; Buchanan 2010; Burton 2005; Caswell 2016; Hill 2011; Spieker 2008). It is in this vein that the term 'the archive' (in its singular form) has been taken up to refer to a more generalisable, abstracted concept and its metaphoric use (Caswell 2016).

Underpinning this variation lies a web of interrelated archival constructs, terms of reference, presuppositions, strategies, methods and forms. The archive has come to function as a metaphor through which questions of representation, interpretation, knowledge, and ideas of truth, memory, history, evidence, authenticity and identity, converge and refract in an interdisciplinary landscape (Osborne 1999; Velody 1998). Analogies range from the ethnographic archive produced by the discipline of

anthropology (Marcus 1998), the archive handed down through novels (Booth 2005), printed books and literary texts (Voss and Werner 1999), through Greek mythology (Zajko 1998) and oral testimonies (Perry 2005; Mpe 2002). As Manoff notes, adjectives are often used to give further character to archival constructs, such as the social archive, the imperial archive, the postcolonial archive, the popular archive, the liberal archive, the ethnographic archive and so on.

This chapter explores how these different conceptualisations of archives operate in salient debates in philosophy, historical studies, cultural and literary studies, narrative and memory studies, digital humanities, media archaeology, and visual arts and creative practices. It brings to light a number of critical issues, themes, motifs and tendencies engendered by broadened understandings and uses of archives. In doing so, it seeks to clarify the multivalent terms of reference for understanding 'the archive' and further set the stage to consider how these can be brought to bear on the discourses around curatorial practice.

ii. The Archive as Philosophical Subject

The idea of the archive as a topic of philosophical enquiry, rather than solely a scholarly or legal resource, has been influential across a number of disciplines. In particular, the writings of Michel Foucault have had an enduring influence on contemporary conceptualisations of the archive in disciplines across the humanities, arts and social sciences (Axel 2002; Farge 2013; Manoff 2004).[21] In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 2002), Foucault set aside the idea of the archive as simply an institution and corpus of records. Instead, he reconstrued the term 'archive' to denote the very rules, structures and mechanisms by which knowledge and power is produced, circulated and transformed. The archive not only retains records of the past, it produces and authorises discourse itself. It lays down and describes "the system of discursivity" (Foucault 2002, 145), determining that which is preserved and thus what can be stated (or not), and determines the categories and systems by which these statements are valued, stored and made into events, things

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[21] Foucault's two seminal texts examining the knowledge/power paradigm with salience for discussions of the archive are *The Order of Things* (1966/1973) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972).

and practices which act in and upon the world. In turn, the associated archival practices of gathering, filtering, classifying and regulating access to information, function as a mechanism of social and epistemological control. Archival systems and records condition knowledge and compartmentalise individuals as social subjects so that they may be identified, assessed and disciplined on a spectrum of deviance and normality (Foucault 1995, 2001).

Foucault's characterisation of the archive has been criticised for being too abstract, for resting too heavily on the formation and transformation of statements in a way that denies the literal conditions and pragmatic nature of archives and archival research (Osborne 1999). Yet it is significant to note that at the same time that Foucault worked towards this theoretical and politicised theory of the archive, he also made use of institutional archives as primary source material for his critical histories (e.g. Foucault 1995), showing how the archive can be drawn upon simultaneously as both a metaphor and as a literal site for specific source material.

A counterpoint to Foucault's idea of the archive was offered by Jacques Derrida in a lecture presented at the Freud Museum in London (1994) entitled, "The Concept of the Archive: A Freudian Impression", and published shortly thereafter in book form as *Archive Fever* (*Mal d'Archive: Une impression freudienne*, 1998). Like Foucault, Derrida understood the archive as a place of power; it embodies the authority to pronounce and inscribe law, and set the terms by which it will be recalled and re-inscribed. However, he also turned this question of archival power inwards, arguing that the archive reflects a compulsive psycho-social struggle that can be understood by way of analogy to Freud's theories of psychoanalysis (Derrida 1998).

According to Derrida, the archive embodies two counteracting human impulses identified by Freud. The first impulse is the death drive, a self-destructive urge to destroy one's own memory – that is, one's own archival traces. (He describes the death drive as 'anarchivic'). The second impulse is the *resistance* to this death drive, which manifests in the compulsion to archive, to accumulate and inscribe memory to some external place or substrate. In Freudian terms, this process of 'archivisation', as Derrida called it, represents the original psychic imprinting of trauma, memory and consciousness. Inscription requires a place of consignation, an 'exteriority' or

surface where memorisation, re-impression and reproduction can take place, and it is this surface that he conceives of as the archive. Pivotally, the archive includes the very methods of capturing and preserving these remnants; it includes the practices, structures and technologies, which in themselves condition that which can be remembered. It is in this sense that "archivisation produces as much as it records the event" (Derrida 1998, 17).

Derrida's concept of the archive shines light on the paradoxical nature of archiving as a cultural condition, process and legacy. The archive signifies the contradictory forces by which we attempt to produce understanding of the past, while working to destroy it. As inscriptions undergo 'archivisation' they move from private to public status in ways that shelter as much as they reveal. The archive makes impressions legible, tangible and effable in ways that also bring into relief what is intangible and ineffable. It represents both the origin of memory and the "structural breakdown" of remembering (Derrida 1998, 10–11). The contradictory nature of the archive is also a question of temporality. The archive inscribes the past, but is oriented towards the *future yet to come*. It is "a pledge, a token of the future" (Derrida 1998, 18). Derrida's concern with the archive as a psychological and ontological tension focuses attention not only on our attempts to archive – to build up and retain memory – but on the related acts of repression, suppression and destruction that give the archive its unresolvable quality. It represents a physical, conceptual, psychic and temporal condition in which we cannot find resolution, leading to a kind of frenzy, *mal d'archive*, or "archive fever".

Although by no means Derrida's only work relating to the archive (Brothman, 1999), *Archive Fever* in particular has proved to be an important touchstone for many scholars (Brothman 1991a; Manoff 2004; Stoler 2002). Derrida builds this idea of the archive in part by dismantling it, an approach that forms part of his broader philosophical project. As a text, *Archive Fever* is itself a complex exercise in deconstruction and a platform on which to philosophise on the nature of writing, text and memory. This quality leaves it open to variable, and often oversimplified, interpretations. In turn, his formulation of the archive, like Foucault's, has also been criticised for its abstraction and for the ways in which it fails to account for concrete

archival spaces and practices (Brothman 1991b; V. Harris 2002a; Jacobsen, Punzalan, and Hedstrom 2013; Nesmith 2002; Steedman 2001b, 2001a).

Even given these qualities, the philosophical treatment of the archive by writers such as Derrida and Foucault have radically refigured the concept of an archive. They have also abstracted it and rendered it a metaphorical as well as a literal cultural construct, phenomenon and system. By doing so, they paved the way for much of the broadened conceptual application of its terminology across many fields of practice, including curation, as will become clear. However, when left in the silo of theoretical discourse, these theories of the archive do not account for knowledge obtained by working directly with specific archival collections. By comparison, scholars of history utilise archives for their specificities, and it is to these I turn to next.

iii. Archives as Source and Subject for Historical Research

Archives have long served as a foundational, so-called 'primary' source material for historical research. The positivist belief in the archive as a conduit of original, first-hand information from the past gives the archival record its unique value (Yeo 2008). The idea that an archival document can serve as an authentic record through which the past can be retrieved and reconstructed has served as a foundational presupposition not only in archival studies and practice, but also more broadly in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Howell and Prevenier 2001). Archives provide intellectual accountability. For sociologist Thomas Osborne, they are a "bottom-line resource in the carving-out of claims to disciplinarity" as well as an abstracted "principle of credibility" (Osborne 1999, 53) that extends onto the particular claims to knowledge, and garners authority onto those privileged to access it (Derrida 1998; Foucault 2002; Mbembe 2002).

In the wake of the social, political and intellectual upheavals in the latter half of the twentieth century, new scrutiny on the notion of objective truth cast doubt on the idea of the archival record as a static repository of facts and conduit to the past. Historical knowledge was recast as a disciplinary construction, built up through representational systems that reinforce and naturalise biased world views and power structures, and predetermine the parameters of scholarly understanding (Barthes

1986; Foucault 2002, 2007). Archives were exposed as ideological constructs and tools, and archival material recast as sources for historical *representations* rather than records of objective truths (Velody 1998). These post-positivist perspectives led to an 'archival turn' in the arts and humanities towards the latter part of the twentieth century (Buchanan 2010; Simon 2002; Stoler 2009). This 'turn' was marked by an interest in (and suspicion of) the complex and unstable epistemological and ontological status of archival records, and an appreciation of how their structures and practices mediate political and cultural understanding (Blouin and Rosenberg 2006). As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has summarised, this development marks a paradigm shift from treating archives as *source*, to addressing archives as *subject*, where archives are "elevated to new analytic status with distinct billing, worthy of scrutiny on their own" (Stoler 2009, 44).

These developments further expanded the terrain of historical research and elaborated the terms by which archives are defined and used. Social historians turned away from constitutional, national and economic histories – with their focus on figures of power and grand events – and examined alternative historical topics such as folk culture, industrial and labour histories, domestic life and women's histories, urban and family histories, and black and ethnic minority histories (Samuel 1985). Scholars began examining the archive for the discursive formations they construct and the truth claims they facilitate, and which circulate as historical narratives. These include the mythologies of nation states (Dirks 2002) and the fantasies of the European empires (Richards 1990). Others have focused on the dialogic, transnational (Ballantyne 2005; Bayly et al. 2006) and multidirectional (Rothberg 2009) nature of histories and historical sources (Perry 2005; Putnam 2016; Sahadeo 2005).

Scholars have also turned attention to the distortions and omissions in historical representations (S. Hall 2001, 2000; Samuel 1994). They have applied postcolonial or feminist perspectives to locate the presence of colonised and repressed peoples written out of, prejudiced against, and harmed through, historical records. They read the archive 'against the grain' in order to give 'voice' to peoples and stories that were intended to be silenced (Burton 2001; Stoler 2009; Trouillot 2015). In parallel, and as discussed in the previous chapter, marginalised groups have demanded greater

visibility in historical narratives, in part through representation in archival collections (Ridener 2009). In all of these ways, archive-based scholarship since the latter part of the twentieth century onwards has thus explicitly been implicated in broader discourses around power and knowledge, but also agency, representation, historical consciousness and the politics of identity.

These academic reorientations have also stretched the conventional parameters of the historian's archive. Over the same period, scholars have turned attention to, and made use of, unofficial historical knowledge circulating in popular culture, in cultural narratives, monuments or 'sites of memory' (Nora 1989), and oral sources (Perks and Thomson 2010; Portelli 2010). As Samuel described it, "whole new orders of documentation" came into play (Samuel 1994, 1:25). The interest in alternative historical sources unsettled the "talismanic importance" given to historical manuscripts central to positivist historiography (Samuel 1994, 1:269). It also unseated the professional historian as the principal and authoritative interpreters of history. The broadened subject area for history has highlighted 'do-it-yourself' archive-based scholarship (Samuel 1994, 1:148), as well as the role of community archives (Flinn 2007), family historians, chroniclers of alternative histories, and those "archive entrepreneurs" (Burton 2005, 2) who create and safeguard historical records outside of the official spheres of academia, government and law (Eichhorn 2014; Trouillot 2015).

Reading Along the Archival Grain: Biographies, Ethnographies and Ontologies of the Archive

A central presupposition guides these uses of archival sources: that archives, whatever their constitution, are subject to interpretation; archives exist to be re-read (Buchanan 2010; S. Hall 2001; Farge 2013; Mbembe 2002, 20–21). The act of this re-reading relates to a long-standing debate around the role of narrative in understanding and making meaning from the past.[22] Highlighting the role of narrative in historiography pushes against the historian's claims to factuality and brings the subjective and creative arrangements of archival information to the fore. It

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[22] The literature concerning the relationship between history and narrative is vast and longstanding. Debates have questioned the degree to which narrative is intrinsic to an understanding of the past, or is an effect of our recreation of the past. See for example Barthes 1986; Funkenstein 1989; H. White 1984.

takes into account the fact that narrative distorts; it is an ideological tool, an instrument of power as well as a point of epistemological vulnerability (H. White 1984).

However, the storying of archives not only happens at their point of re-use, but is part of their very constitution. The archival turn has helped modify ideas about the truth-telling capacity of the archive by identifying the archive's capacity to be at once about the construction of both fact and fiction *from its outset* (Burton 2005; Farge 2013; Zemon Davis 1987). As Antoinette Burton writes, archives are not only used to *tell* stories, they are themselves, "always already stories" (Burton 2005, 20). Burton argues that by tracing the 'biography' of an archive, or what Carolyn Hamilton describes as the "archival backstory" (Hamilton 2011, 321), telling stories about an archive's provenance, its histories and its effect on users, helps dismantle claims of archival objectivity. It demystifies the archive and diffuses "the aura which now more than ever surrounds the notion of 'real' archives" (Burton 2005, 6).

The sub-field of historical anthropology that emerged in the 1980s has provided another lens through which to denaturalise archival research (Axel 2002), in part through "self-conscious ethnographies" (Burton 2005, 6). Writing in 2002, Nicholas Dirks treats his encounter with Indian colonial archives as a historian's ethnographic arrival story in order to question his own epistemological and ontological position and overcome his "fundamental ignorance of the archival structure of the conditions of historical knowledge" (Dirks 2002, 50). This type of self-reflection has been intrinsic to the reconceptualisation of archival research as a subjective and contingent process (e.g. Bradley 1999; Ghosh 2005; Kirsch and Rohan 2008; Sahadeo 2005; Steedman 2001a). It is a self-reflexive lens that has been mirrored in certain curatorial rhetoric, as will be shown.

Treating the archive as anthropological terrain also marks a methodological shift away from working with archives as an "extractive exercise" to one that understands historical research as, in part, an ethnographic one (Stoler 2009, 47). In her studies of Dutch colonial archives, Stoler focused on how archives can provide a picture of historical ontologies; what she described as the "colonial common sense" of a specific time and place that mutates according to changing contexts, norms and

needs. In addition to interrogating archives by reading them *against* the grain, Stoler points to the value of reading them *along* the archival grain, looking to their form and structure, as much as their content, in order to illuminate the culture of record-keeping and the motivations that lie behind the documentation. For Stoler, understanding archives as *a process* rather than *an entity* means reading records not for their objective truths, nor handling them as inherently skewed and biased sources, but instead, reading them as "condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety" (Stoler 2009, 20).

Linking History, Memory and Models of the Archive

Over the second half of the twentieth century, memory also emerged as a central concern in historiography (K. L. Klein 2000). This explicit attention to the role of memory further extended the parameters of archival research to include questions related to witnessing and trauma (Agamben 2000), cultural identity (Assmann 1995), justice and commemoration (for example, through Holocaust studies), social and collective memories, and processes of memorialisation (Funkenstein 1989; Mbembe 2002; Nora 1996a). The focus on memory engendered different ideas of archival authenticity and authority, providing another counterpoint to the positivist assertions of objective, logical reconstruction of historical events through fixed archival sources (Brothman 2001; K. L. Klein 2000; Trouillot 2015). The expansion of the memory paradigm into historical discourse has propagated the idea of the archive as both a repository or 'house' of memory and a site for memorialisation (Ballantyne 2005; Bastian 2003; B. Craig 2002), a discursive formation that is paralleled within the professional archival discourse, as the previous chapter showed. The memory paradigm associates history writing with ritual and "ancestor worship" (Samuel 1994, 1:230), and with honouring, being faithful to, and at times being burdened by, the dead (Steedman 2001a, 40). The archive comes into being not only by the accumulation of documentation, but also through ongoing memorial processes by its custodians and heirs, who construe and misconstrue the past. The archive is the responsibility and the product of its handlers, including historians (Fritzsche 2005).

The interconnection between history, memory and archives has been problematised in other directions. Writing in 1989, French historian Pierre Nora dismantled the notion of archives as truthful representations of the past. Instead, he described the

archive as an *inauthentic* surrogate for authentic memory culture. Modern 'archival' memory is that which has been deformed, multiplied, decentralised and made material into what he described as sites of memory, or *lieux de mémoire.* These sites of memory include institutions like archives and museums, but also statues, monuments, cemeteries, places of worship, place names, historical figures (both real and mythic), flags, festivals, civic rituals and so on, in play in the construction and performance of, in this case, French national and individual identity (Nora 1996a).

Conversely, he attacks modern memory for being 'archival', for its reliance on "the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image" (Nora 1989, 13). The ubiquity of archives in modern culture is a symptom of the schism between real memory on the one hand (that is, "social and unviolated" and "spontaneously actualising" forms of memory found in habits, unspoken traditions, reflexes and ingrained memories) and history on the other (inauthentic memories reconstituted as critical, intellectual and partial representation of the past by "sifted and sorted historical traces") (Nora 1989, 8, 13). However, Nora's theories, as his critics have noted, characterises archives through oversimplified and romantic binaries of authentic and inauthentic history and memory in ways that, ironically, propagate an oversimplified and inauthentic construct of French history based on linear national and racial lines (e.g. K. L. Klein 2000; Rothberg 2010; Tai 2001).

Media archaeology offers another counterpoint to the notion of the archive as a 'house of memory'. For media theorist Wolfgang Ernst, the archive is first and foremost a technological apparatus which does not contain narratives (those are imposed on the archive). Instead, the archive is "coded storage", a "topological place of permanent data transfer", where artefacts "do not speak but operate" (Ernst 2004, 48-49). He redefines the archive as the technological infrastructures of cultural traditions that enable information to be standardised and transferred across time. His view provocatively challenges the presupposition that memory and narrative are intrinsic to archives, taking instead a proto-scientific approach that separates machines, media and its technical characteristics from its entanglement with human narrative, memory and motivation (Parikka 2013). It reasserts the technological and media specificities of archival practices as a cultural practice that requires analysis in its own right.

These critical perspectives, each in different ways, complicate the discursive formation of archives-as-source that once dominated academic history writing. They have done so, not by doing away with reliance on archives, but by further elaborating and elevating it as a central vehicle for the renewal of historical studies and understandings. The archival activities described above reinforce the capacity of archives to simultaneously engender and reaffirm normative discourses, while also supporting their critical re-evaluation. Thus a fundamental tension continues to colour the handling of archives and ideas of the archive: on the one hand, archives continue to be held up as a baseline and legitimising evidentiary source, while on the other, they represent the very construct subject to deconstruction and analysis by scholars. This paradox also colours curatorial approaches to the archive, as will be shown.

Agency and the Archive: Intersections of Past and Present

Critical debates around the archive have also reinforced how records are intrinsically read in the context of current concerns and future imaginaries (S. Hall 2001). This tendency is encapsulated in the trope of the archive representing the 'past in the present' (e.g. Burton 2005, 297; Lowenthal 2015; Samuel 1994, 1:429). Leaning into this potential, academic, institutional and community projects have focused on how archival records, as well as metaphors of the archive, can be mobilised in the face of pressing political need. The project and publication *Refiguring the Archive* (2002), led by scholars at the University of Witwatersrand in the early years of post-apartheid South Africa, is a case in point. The project promoted the idea of a "radical archival discourse" through which the very structures, forms and systems of the archive could be interrogated in order to support political transformation in the present (Hamilton et al. 2002, 10).

The mobilisation of archives for social empowerment has also manifest in notions of 'archival repatriation' and in efforts to decolonise colonial archives and related record-keeping practices to support indigenous rights (Curthoys 2005; Gilliland, McKemnish, and Lau 2017; Luker 2017; Perry 2005), or even the development of a 'postcolonial' archive (Kurtz 2006; McEwan 2003; Shetty and Bellamy 2000). Likewise, grassroots and community archive-oriented initiatives seek to support (often marginalised) peoples to have new ownership of representations of their past

through the construction of archival resources in the present (Caswell et al. 2017; S. Hall 2001; Flinn 2007; Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009).

These efforts invert the oppressive power of the archive formulated by Foucault; they harness the archive as an explicit site, vehicle and construct through which agency can be asserted and/or counter-normative positions taken (Burton 2005; Eichhorn 2013, 2014; Pohlandt-McCormick 2005). Participants in these projects may actively resist reductive definitions of the archive (H. N. R. Ramirez 2005) and seek to challenge conventional archival practices as a way to radicalise history, its representative modes and its archival sources (Cohen 2018; Kumbier 2014; Marshall, Murphy, and Tortorici 2014; Pohlandt-McCormick 2005). The archive is positioned as the nexus for cross-fertilisation between political and intellectual pursuits, and between scholars, activists and archivists, and different communities of users and contributors. The texts referenced here celebrate visions of collaboration, democratisation and the agency of grassroots, counter-culture or counter-normative archives and archival subjects (Eichhorn 2013; Cohen 2018).[23]

The mobilisation of archival records and motifs towards political change gives archives and archival activities powerful currency in contemporary discourse. It brings imperative to public-facing archive-based projects, including the dissemination and curation of newly created or digitised archival collections (Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd 2010). However, the context for activist collections and endeavours is also subject to change over time. Independent or community archives and archival projects that may have been purposefully built-up or activated outside of hegemonic institutional frameworks, may later be acquired by mainstream institutions such as universities or cultural organisations, and be bound by the terms of their related funding and governing bodies (Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009). By virtue of this displacement, the counter-culture or critical posturing status of such projects is likely to be absorbed as part of very different archival frameworks, shaped by other conditions of access and institutional imperatives.

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[23] For example, the London-based collective and organisation The MayDay Rooms has a communal space used to "activate and socialise" its collection of historical archives linked to social movements and experimental culture in Britain and to "safeguard historical material and connect it with contemporary struggle" ('MayDay Rooms » About' 2019).

Additionally, there is a slippage within these archival endeavours between broadening archival representations and limiting them. Applying themes to archival collections implicitly and explicitly predetermines an interpretive frame for archival research towards specific social and political agendas. As Stuart Hall wrote (borrowing from Walter Benjamin), the moment of constituting an archive "flashes up" as a "moment of danger" (S. Hall 2001, 92). The formulation and subsequent interpretation of an archive risks distorting it, affirming its authority and smoothing over the "real discontinuities and contingency of history" (S. Hall 2001, 92). Thus efforts to bridge past and present through archives and archival practices puts into question the difference between retrieving historical knowledge and producing it. This tension also conditions curatorial practices, as will be shown.

The discussions of archival representation and restitution can also tacitly put forward another assumption: that presence in the archive is inherently empowering. This tacit belief stands in contrast to the observation by Farge that many accidental authors appear in the archive, a fact well-known to archivists (Farge 2013). These accidental subjects give face to a fault line of human vulnerability that runs through archives. Through archival practices, individual often unwittingly become part of historical records, through which they are subject to being misrepresented and misinterpreted, particularly as archives so readily afford alternative interpretations to those intended by its creators and subjects. Thus, a tension shadows this celebratory rhetoric of archival agency: while on the one hand archives can empower, on the other, they can also – sometimes inadvertently – disempower.

A number of points emerging from these discussions will be brought to bear on ideas of curatorial practice in the following chapters. First, that the archive pertains to agency and authorship; archives transform people into subjects, authors and witnesses (Farge 2013); second, that authorship in archives is multifarious. It exists, at minimum, in the inscriptions or utterances by the record's original creators and subjects, as well as in those subsequently generated by archive readers; third, that authorship concerns both the creation and the re-use of the archive, that is, the right to archive, but also the right to interpret the archive; fourth, that the archive interpreter inherently privileges their context over that of the original record creators;

and finally, that authorship in the archive manifests along a spectrum of empowerment and disempowerment.

Archival Metaphors: Intersections of the Literal and the Imaginary

A related discursive thread concerns archival imaginaries. For Osborne, the particular social value of an archive lies in this affordance to oscillate between the literal and the ideal, between the real and the imagined (Osborne 1999). The archive itself is in part an imaginary, representing the other-worldly past that is both accessible and inaccessible. It supports a fantasy of comprehensiveness, linking archival collections to an imagined unified whole. This imaginary has been traced to the Enlightenment vision of amassing the world's knowledge (Manoff 2004; Richards 1990), and reappeared in the evocations of the internet as a 'total archive' (e.g. Foster 2004; Sentilles 2005; M. Smith 2013; Voss and Werner 1999).

As a literal and metaphoric construct, the archive is also an "aspiration", and "a deliberate project" and "site for the production of anticipated memories by intentional communities" (Appadurai 2003). Archives support imaginaries in relation to identity (Craven 2008). Community archives, for instance, relate to "both imagined and real communities – helping those who have been excluded from or misrepresented in mainstream cultural records and narratives to 'imagine otherwise'" (Caswell et al. 2017). Archives can support visions for "decolonial futures" (Basu and De Jong 2016), or towards 'queering' the archive, reimagining it as a site where the "boundaries of sex, gender, and knowledge" can be contested (Marshall, Murphy, and Tortorici 2014, 2).

Recurring motifs point to other instances of the dialectic between the literal and the imaginary. The archive has been depicted as a space of intimacy and potential exchange between the dead and the living (Echevarria, Mbembe, Steedman 2008). In her book *The Allure of the Archives* ([1989] 2003), historian Arlette Farge's description of working in the French archives of the Arsenal is laden with metaphoric turns. The archive is a semi-animate entity, a forest, a flood and an avalanche of lives once lived. For Stoler, the archive has a "pulse" and a presence to be touched and communed with (Stoler 2002). Metaphors of the life forces flowing

through archival records are countered with motifs of death and entombment. Archivists and archival researchers are said to inhabit a sepulchre in which archival records are buried, submerged or hidden (Farge 2013; Mbembe 2002). Documents are bundled or boxed together like the dead, perfectly preserved to be unravelled by the historian's careful hand. The motif of dust also peppers the literature about archives (Schmuland 1999; Sheridan 2012; Steedman 2001a). Dust speaks to the passage of time, to mystery, stillness and death, but also to the potential to be uncovered and brought back to life by the researcher (Farge 2013; Mbembe 2002; Steedman 2001a).

Yet this promise of connection is illusory. Archival research is inextricably interwoven with the fantasy of retrieval and restoration of the past. This is the "allure" (Farge 2013), the "temptation" (Jardine 2015) and the "romance" (Steedman 2001a) of the archive. Although these qualities are something to be attuned to – even enjoyed – they are also a force to be resisted; to truly read what the archives tell, the seductive qualities of the archive must be overridden (Farge 2013, 30). Reframing archival research as a "lived process" in this way (Kirsch and Rohan 2008) facilitates discussion of the intellectual vulnerability that condition archival research. Recent literature also reflects a new degree of interest in the phenomenological nature of archives and archival research. Scholars have questioned how the physical and affective qualities of archives inform their reading and the resulting production of historical knowledge (e.g. Buchanan 2010; Farge 2013; Randolph 2005). They consider how archival records engender cognitive, but also physical and emotional reactions (Biber and Luker 2014; Breakell 2015; Dever 2013; Lester 2018; H. Taylor 1995). Archives are increasingly understood as both intellectual *and experiential* resources (Buchanan 2010, 55).

The Materiality of the Archive

A scholarly interest in the materiality of archives has also emerged as part of this development. Positivist approaches to history have led to a persistent bias towards written documentation in historical research. The consequence has been the "fetishization of archives" (Samuel 1994, 1:269). As philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe notes, it is the physical form of archives that "does away

with doubt […]. It is proof that life truly existed, that something actually happened" (Mbembe 2002, 21–22). The hyper-presence of digital representations in contemporary culture has only reinforced the value and authority of physical records with all the stability and authenticity implied (Dever 2013; Dever and Morra 2014). The digital landscape has given material records "a new kind of sacral character" (Burton 2005, 5). The heightened attention to the materiality of archives and their currency as multidimensional, tactile and aesthetic artefacts is salient in relation to curation, as will be shown. Moreover, the interpretation and handling of archival records are now conditioned by the dialectic between the digital and non-digital forms, material and 'immaterial' ones, original and copy. Although these distinctions are continually challenged (e.g. Paul 2006; Theimer 2014a), they persist as a means to bring different qualities and use values for archives to the fore, and set into play different potentialities for curation. This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

iv. Digital Humanities, the Digitally 'Animated' Archive and New Knowledge Models

A focus on digital media, technologies and environments reinforces how the 'content' of archives is made up not only of the information and context of the records, but also the technological apparatus and platforms that render them legible (Derrida 1998; Ernst 2013). Digital technologies have altered and elaborated the ways in which archival records are stored, accessed and interpreted. They have brought about radically new conditions and potentials for archive-based research (Putnam 2016). Digital humanities, defined as "the application of computational or digital methods to humanities research", is explicitly situated in this terrain (Warwick, Terras, and Nyhan 2012, xiv).[24] The relevance of digital humanities for extending an understanding of the archive in relation to curation is two-fold. First, like other areas in the humanities, archives constitute important resources for studies in digital

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[24] The definition, scope and long-term viability of digital humanities as a distinct academic field and its relationship to existing disciplines and fields of practice, remains an active subject of debate. See for instance, L. Klein and Gold 2016; Liu 2011; Ramsay 2011b; Warwick, Terras, and Nyhan 2012. Its parameters are often delineated by a common set of ethos and values (e.g. Honn n.d.; Sabharwal 2017; Schnapp, Jeffrey, Presner, and Lunenfeld 2009). As well as traditional humanities methods, digital humanities draws on applied sciences, computer engineering, software design, and hacking, social media and 'remix' cultures, giving the digital humanities a reach that stretches beyond conventional academic research and output pathways.

humanities. Here, however, academic pursuits are equally driven by the affordances of digital technologies. The research terrain for digital humanities projects also encompasses the digital tools for mining, processing, visualising and disseminating archival data, as much as the hermeneutic analysis of the primary source material itself. Second, given this capacity, many digital humanities projects are concerned with the digital augmentation and presentation of archival records, collections, datasets and platforms using computational technology in ways that relate to notions of curation (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012, vii; Warwick, Terras, and Nyhan 2012).

In the 2012 publication *Digital Humanities*, Burdick, Drucker et al describe how digital humanists set out to simultaneously generate and study new 'knowledge models' offered by new convergences of scholarly and computational forms, contexts, methods, artefacts and ideas. Most salient, they identify the "animated archive" as one of these new knowledge models. According to the authors, the 'animation' of archives brings together a number of strategies that close the gap between the processing of records and their 'afterlife'. They cite user-centred approaches that "build on a multiplicity of use-scenarios", that "break down partitions" between collections and institutions, and pivotally, integrate "curatorial and content-producing tools into access portals" (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012, 48).

Of course, the idea of making provisions for the reuse of archival records predates the digital era; all archives are created and preserved for this very purpose. Yet this description points to a tendency in digitally-oriented academic discourse; that, in addition to expanding archival research methods, digital and networked environments also engender new ways of repurposing, reconfiguring and sharing 'augmented' archival records using (in part) *curatorial* methods and tools. In other words, linking digital technologies and humanities disciplines entangles archival and curatorial practices in new 'knowledge models' that support elaborated public archive-based projects and curatorial activities. This point will be developed further over the proceeding chapters.

Digital Archives and Debates of Gain and Loss

However caution is required. A celebratory tone infuses much of the rhetoric in digital humanities literature (e.g. Schnapp, Jeffrey, Presner, and Lunenfeld 2009). The discourse of digital humanities promotes digital cultural. As a technologically-oriented research practice, it encourages an experimental and fast-paced academic practice that is inherently tied to the rapidly changing technological landscape. It most often presumes the digital activities are positive, novel and more democratic (Bishop 2018; Liu 2011).

Discussions of the losses brought about by the digitisation of archives provide an important counterpoint to the rhetoric of gain associated with digital methods, forms and research platforms. In reality, the digitisation of archives may restrict rather than enhance interaction across boundaries and collections (Eichhorn 2014). Archives are better understood in the context of other collections, where they can be viewed across different series and record types that have been acquired by the same archive, what Dirks referred to as the "cross-referentiality" of archival records (2015, 42). Digitised archives may also foreclose the creative and spontaneous readings and handling of records in their material, textual and form (Howe 2014; Sentilles 2005), and detract from the "real-world geography of textual sources" (Putnam 2016, 380). Furthermore, what has been selected for digitisation is typically a limited purview of broader collections, with canonical or visually enticing records and modes of presentations being privileged (Bishop 2018). In the contemporary information landscape, web-enabled digital searching makes possible "radically more decontextualised research" and reinforces "systematic blind spots" with shortcuts "that enable ignorance as well as knowledge" (Putnam 2016, 392).

Moreover, the conversion of 'primary', non-digital materials into machine-readable binary code brings about epistemic and ontological changes to archival records. Digitisation constitutes an intervention (Berry 2011; Schreibman, Siemens, and Unsworth 2004; Theimer 2014a). As Johanna Drucker has written, digitisation consists of a chain of decisions "that carry interpretative inflection; they are not neutral or value-free, and each privileges one aspect of a digital artefact at the expense of others (Drucker 2013, 12). Digitisation "is not representation but

interpretation", and it is this recognition that can serve "as a critical springboard for insight" in the humanities (Drucker 2013, 12). In sum, digital technologies can enhance access to archival records, and generate different mechanisms and pathways for their handling and interpretation. Yet they also extend the potential points of loss and vulnerability of information in ways that reinforce the value of archival and, as will be discussed, ongoing curatorial and scholarly reflection, evaluation and stewardship.

v. Archives and Creative Practices

Even given the many ways that humanities researchers make meaning from archives, on the whole, scholars use archival materials for historical research in ways that are oriented around ideas of evidence and the reconstruction of the past. Furthermore, this research typically takes final form as published academic writings. By comparison, creative practitioners working in television and film, literature, design and visual and performing arts are not accountable to this same academic and historiographic paradigm and forms of output. They draw on the currency of 'the archive' as it circulates metaphorically in popular discourse, and do so to a variety of ends.

The archive has been generalised to mean "historically significant materials of a 'treasured nature'" (Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009). Archives connote historicity, but also order, stasis and classification (Breakell 2010; Buchanan 2010). In literature, the archive is a conceit for writers to explore themes such as history, knowledge, power, the past, mystery and death, but also melancholy, loss, trauma and memory (Boulter 2011). It represents an expression of nostalgia and the fantasy of the cohesion with the past (Keene 2003). It may symbolise the act of searching for the truth (K. Buckley 2008), of the tension between accessibility and secrecy (Schmuland 1999). Literary scholars have shown how the conceit of 'the archive' productively circulates and entwines fact and fiction in cultural discourse (Echevarria 1990; Richards 1990; Voss and Werner 1999). These studies highlight how curatorial engagement with archival materials and metaphors not only pertains to archives profiled by archivists and scholars, but also to those conceptualisations of the archive circulating in popular and literary imagination.

The Discourse of 'Archival Art'

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the archive became the "trope of choice for a dazzling variety" of art practices (Spieker 2008, 4). Cultural historian Sven Spieker describes the archive as a "crucible of European modernism" in twentieth-century art, a conceit that has thread through key art movements, including Dadaism, surrealism, constructivism, conceptual art and on into contemporary art practices. He showed how it has served as a motif for the avant-garde to respond critically to the rise of bureaucratic and documentary forms and their technologies over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Spieker 2008), a connection first posited by Allan Sekula (Sekula 1986). In 2008, curator Okwui Enwezor attributed artistic interest in the archive to Foucault's rendering of it into a highly flexible metaphor by which to question the workings of power and knowledge in society (Enwezor 2008, 11). Others have correlated artists' growing interest in the archive over the last half century with a reconceptualisation of artistic practice *as research* (Buchanan 2010; N. White 2013), a point that I will return to in Chapter VII.

Over the last two decades in particular, the archive has also served as a useful umbrella by which curators, critics and art historians have grouped and historicised a wide variety of practices (e.g. Bismarck et al. 2002a; Comay 2002; Foster 2004; Enwezor 2008; R. Hobbs 1998; Merewether 2006; Schaffner and Winzen 1998; Spieker 2008; Van Alphen 2014). The archive has emerged as a theme in exhibitions, publications and conferences. Writing in 2004, American art critic Hal Foster attempted to pin down the particular drivers of this "archival impulse", arguing that it represents an allegorical expression of a variety of contemporary cultural concerns and anxieties (Foster 2004). Foster delineated this "archival art" by highlighting a number of strategies used by a handful of contemporary artists. These include giving physical, visual and spatial presence to historical information once lost or displaced (while at times, also arranging these fragments in ways that obscure them); laying bare and disrupting archival conventions and vocabularies, and testing their organisational principles and systems through subversive, thematic or anachronistic arrangements; and working with found archives, or developing fictional or alternative archives (Foster 2004, 5).

However, as the previous discussions have shown, a number of such strategies are present in other creative and intellectual pursuits and are not necessarily restricted to artistic practices. In essence, Foster's description presupposes two key features of archival-oriented art. Comparing this discourse with other areas in the humanities and social sciences helps to paint a clearer picture of its distinguishing features. First, these visual arts practices not only make use of the archive as source and subject, but also as an artistic form and medium. Their work is designed and designated for visual presentation; it is a question of "staging" the archive (Van Alphen 2014) in its widest possible configurations and connotations, and to do so as a contribution to artistic discourses. Artists combine the informational, spatial, aesthetic and temporal qualities of archival records and archival constructs with the platforms and modes of presentation available to them, and do so in experimental and highly idiosyncratic ways.

In the multidimensional exhibitionary frames for contemporary art, the archival construct has been elaborated as visual motifs, such as in the much-cited work of Christian Boltanski (R. Hobbs 1998; Van Alphen 2014). It has come to describe an aesthetic model, for instance, in the "quantitative ensemble" of photographic images (Sekula 1986, 444), or in the sculptural accumulation of records (Enwezor 2008; Schaffner and Winzen 1998; Spieker 2008). It has been reworked into the notion of a "living archive" that can be re-enacted through performance or participatory practices (Clarke et al. 2018; Osthoff 2009). Archived audio and visual records have been reformulated as multi-screen cinematic representations of the past (Connarty and Lanyon 2006), and preserved data has been activated as an evolving 'archive' to be performed and projected in the gallery space (Dreyblatt and Cummings 2002). Some artists have explicitly engaged with archives as a form of *artistic research,* which seek to develop and present alternative organisation and experiences of knowledge (Bismarck et al. 2002a; Buchanan 2010; Magee and Waters 2011; N. White 2013).

Second, these practices presuppose the ability to apply the very loosest of definitions of 'the archive' (Merewether 2006; Breakell 2008). Artists, art historians, art commentators and curators alike readily reinvent or sidestep conventional understanding of an archive, treating it instead as a malleable construct and symbolic

vocabulary. Artistic and curatorial practices therefore unseat the archive from its conventional historiographic and authoritative parameters and recast it as a prompter and resource for artistic expression and enquiry (Breakell 2008; Clarke et al. 2018; Magee and Waters 2011; Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013). Artists' engagement with archives and the metaphor of 'the archive' pivot on the freedom to pursue archival activities experimentally. Artistic practices can reconstitute and reconfigure archival materials in ways that visually, spatially and chronologically dismantle and reimagine conventional methods and modes of historical representation (e.g. Connarty and Lanyon 2006). They may embrace the speculative, performative or fictive qualities of archives (Orlow and Maclennan 2013), towards "playful, improper use" (Adami and Ferrini 2014). They may wilfully alter or even destroy an archive, or an archival system (Spieker 2008). This permission is reflected in the rhetoric of alternative, "anarchival" (Foster 2004, 5) and "counter-archival" models surrounding the resulting works of art (Enwezor 2008, 21). When posited as part of creative practices, an archive becomes whatever an artist deems it to be.

Archival Art and Authorship

A number of points can be brought to bear on questions of curation. First, artistic handling of the archive privileges ideas of artistic vision and innovation over historical evidence and authenticity. Conversely, the discourse around archival art assumes that artists are best placed to reimagine the archive, to lead interventions and bring insight to its operations in society. Yet privileging artist-led approaches to archives without recourse to other debates encourages a blinkered (albeit highly pluralistic) understanding of the archive and its role in scholarly and cultural fields. It runs the risk of obscuring how other practices outside of the field of creative arts may also put into play critical practices and influences that equally shape the elaborated definitions and uses of archives in contemporary life.

Moreover, the artistic treatment of archival materials brings about an explicit area of original and subjective interpretation and authorship, situated at the opposite end of the spectrum from the conventional ideas of archival value as 'organic' records. It reorients the archive's *historiographic* authority towards an *artistic* authority. In doing so, the deployment of archives as an explicit resource for and output of

creative practice renders questions of authorship, identity and position-taking in relation to archives more explicit. Artistic authorship in archives is literally manifest when artists produce work in archival sites through artistic 'residencies', an increasingly commonplace strategy for institutions seeking to engage new archival audiences and users and to foster knowledge exchange between different areas of practice (Buchanan 2010; Byeon 2015).[25] Situating artists within the archival institution transforms the archive from a *source* for creative practice to a *site* of creative production and presentation in the field of contemporary art (Breakell 2008; Clarke et al. 2018; Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013; Yiakoumaki 2009). This development renders archives curated spaces and brings questions of curatorial practice to the fore.

The creative authoring of archival materials also relates to artists handling their own archives. As Beatrice von Bismarck describes, "self-archiving" may be undertaken by artists for both pragmatic and creative reasons (Von Bismarck 2002, 465). Artists may undertake archival activities as a form of institutional critique, as a contribution to the art historical record, and/or to shape their practice, image and legacy. The interconnections between artists and their artworks, archives and archival practices have deepened as creative practitioners, curators and institutions alike are increasingly aware of the cultural, economic and intellectual value ascribed to archives (Hutchinson and Weller 2011; B. McLean and Smith 2013; Melvin and Jump 2013; Schaffner and Winzen 1998; Von Bismarck 2002).

In addition, archive-based artistic activities foster cross-pollination between different areas of practice. For instance, the archive provides a point of engagement between artists and archivists, with artists at times adopting the archivists' position in the mode of the artist as archivist (Foster 2004; Magee and Waters 2011; Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013). The archive acts as a conceptual, and at times, literal meeting point between creative practitioners as they work across boundaries of practice and modes of knowledge production, moving between subject positions

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[25] Innumerable examples can be pointed to show the prevalence of this type of residency. To offer three, see Lewandowska and Cummings artists' residency at the Design Council Archive, University of Brighton in 2000 (Lewandowska and Cummings 2000) and the Imperial War Museum's artists residency programme, including its archives (Moriarty and Weight 2008). A 2012 workshop at the British Film Institute "Artist in the Archive" sought to foster artists' engagement with their archive collection ('The Artist in the Archive' n.d.).

including artist as collector, researcher, documentarian and ethnographer (Schaffner and Winzen 1998), as well as curators (Breakell 2015), a point that will be addressed further in the following chapters.

vi. Conclusions

This chapter considered how archives and notions of 'the archive' have recently been mobilised in a number of disciplinary areas, specifically philosophy, historical studies, cultural and literary studies, digital humanities and media archaeology, and creative and visual arts practices. Along with its companion chapter (III), it foregrounds the multivalent and complex nature of archival discourse in order to flesh out the terms of reference for their analysis in relationship to curatorial practices. The discourses examined demonstrate radically elaborated and varied conceptualisations of archives and a widening field of practice for archive-based activities. It confirms how, outside of the archive profession, the term 'archive' has come to denote at once a corpus of records, an intellectual and creative source and subject, but also a medium, an outcome, a form and a site of practice, a metaphor and an imaginary. This flexibility and variability give the terrain of archive-oriented practices a constellational quality, with various interrelated concepts and discursive formations in movable configurations and entanglements. Writings and projects on the topic are peppered with conjunctions, joining the concept of the archive with other discursive constructs ("the archive and – "; "the archive in – ").

This "undefining of archives" (Hamilton et al. 2002, 16) means that, to a large degree, that the archive is whatever the researcher, philosopher, artist and so on, determine it to be. At the same time, the archive serves as an enduring construct within scholarly and cultural imagination in ways that continue to affirm the conventional definitions for archives. It denotes safeguarded records of the past and repositories for the same. Therefore, the concept of 'the archive' does not replace 'an archive' but exists alongside, and in tension with it. It is in this sense that the adjective 'archival' comes to the fore to encompass the potentialities of both of these constructs; it is a fluid term that will be drawn on as this study progresses.

The literature thus affirms the assertion set out in Chapters I and II that an approach to the study of curatorial practices in relationship to ideas of the archive needs to address the archive as a highly complex and pluralistic construct that draws on many knowledge paradigms, histories and contexts of practice. This condition engenders an overarching imperative for critical vigilance around different evocations of the archive and the tacit beliefs that underpin them. The question of what constitutes an archive and how they are created, accessed, utilised and valued constitutes a salient 'conversation' in the discourse surveyed. It is also part of what is at stake through curatorial practices, as will be shown.

The developments and tensions highlighted here condition the terrain for curatorial practices in relation to concepts of the archive. Curatorial practices that engage with archives and the notion of 'the archive' become part of this discourse – explicitly, tacitly and at times unknowingly. The literature reviewed illustrates an opening and expanding of possible trajectories for archive-oriented curatorial activities. Curation can be led by practices that extract from archives, practices centred on retrieving, unearthing and bringing to the light; and on ordering, representing and figuring people, events and ideas from the past. Such approaches continue to support well-worn representational modes. Yet equally, the discourse facilitates the *dis*ordering and decentring, reordering and refiguring of archival materials, practices and concepts. These approaches focus on questioning historical representations, on dismantling and reconstructing cultural narratives in response to countervailing intellectual and socio-political imperatives.

The discourse also reflects a growing interest in the affective, paradoxical, contestable and pliant qualities of archives that colour historical understanding and complicate the truth-telling capacity of archival records. In principle, curatorial mobilisation of archives provides a way to question not only the past, but also those conditions, practices and technologies informing the production of knowledge in the present. The material and media composition of archival records, their digital manifestations, and the interconnecting technological conditions of their production and circulation, also engender additional layers for curatorial consideration. Public-facing value frameworks for archives also present as curatorial opportunities.

Yet while this discourse suggests an open terrain for curators working with archives, as will be shown, these expanded constructs and alternative approaches to archives may be overridden by the specificities of curatorial discourses and contexts of practice. Moreover, even given this variation, the notion of archives *as evidence* continues to dominate the interpretation of archives in scholarly research, and thus condition curatorial handling of the archive, as will become clear.

Mapping discursive areas and debates related to the archive sets the stage for the second part of this thesis, which seeks to understand how the multi-faceted conceptualisations and uses of archives described above are brought to bear in relation to different curatorial discourses and practices. The following chapter outlines a number of initial areas of intersection, overlap, convergence and divergence between curatorial and archival fields of practice. The proceeding chapters then turn attention to how the archive functions across three different curatorial discourses: curatorship (Chapter VI), curating (Chapter VII) and 'the curatorial' (Chapter VIII).

Chapter V. Linking Archives, Museums and Curatorial Practices

i. Introduction

Having fleshed out different formulations and uses of archives, this chapter turns to addressing acknowledged points of intersection and overlap between archives and museum curation. It focuses on the question: What is the nature of the relationship between archives and curatorial practices? Given how museums are a foundational site for curatorial practices, it follows that discussions around the relationships between archives *and museums* also point to connections between archives *and curatorial practices*. This chapter, together with Chapter VI on curatorship, relates archives to museum curation specifically. Discussions of the other forms and sites of curatorial practice – represented in the discourse of curating and 'the curatorial' – will be addressed in Chapters VII and VIII respectively.

References to the interconnectedness between museums and archives are found throughout the professional literature surveyed. However, the explicit rhetoric of a 'convergence' between museums and archives gathered pace around the turn of the millennium (Marcum 2014).[26] The discussions focusing specifically on the integration of museums and archives points to a number of practical areas of integration: as institutional and architectural amalgamations (Doucet 2007; Martin 2007; Robinson 2018); as integrated access systems or linked datasets (Stainforth 2016; Timms 2009); as policy and governance strategies (Dupont 2007; Jones 1997); and through the sector-level of professional collaborations, coalitions and working

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[26] In the UK, sector convergences have also manifest as policy and funding frameworks, where archives and museums are grouped as part of a cluster of related institutions under the acronym GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums), or simply LAM. In the UK, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2000-2012) was a non-departmental public government body with a remit to promote innovation and improvement in these overarching areas. For an extensive list of case studies and conferences relating to this idea of LAM convergence see Marcum 2014, and the 2007 triple special issues on the topic of sector convergences in *Library Quarterly* (8:1), *Archival Science* (8:4), and *Museum Management and Curatorship* (24:4). *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* (8:1). Although libraries are part of this construct, their role is beyond the scope of the study. In general, libraries are differentiated from archives for how they collect and make available published sources, often giving borrowing rights to users, compared to archives, which focus on unpublished documentation, although these distinctions, particularly in light of digitisation, can also be challenged (Hedstrom and King 2003).

groups (Beasley 2007; Trant 2009). Yet these arenas of activities have always been – if not physically, then in many ways philosophically – intertwined. This suggests that this convergence in fact represents a "reconvergence" (Given and McTavish 2010).

Indeed, outside of this professional discourse, scholars have emphasised the common function of museums and archives as discursive systems and sites. For some commentators, it is this functionality that renders museums and archives synonymous. This comparison is crystallised in the metaphor of the *museum as an archive*, a construct that will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter.[27] Given these perceived parallels, it is unsurprising that the very debates around the nature and function of these two institutions also draw from each other and are mutually-influencing (e.g. Ketelaar 2001; Lester 2018; Manoff 2004; H. Taylor 1995).

For other commentators, typecasting museological or archival institutions by promoting their parity risks conflating fundamentally different forms of practice. In this view, the integration of museums and archives is not to be celebrated. Convergences are a consequence of policy-driven, cost-saving measures that devalue important specialist areas, disciplinary skills and positions (Jones 1997; Hedstrom 2010; Moss 2008). Therefore, as much as this discourse may promote integration, it also reinforces differences and reasserts the value of these distinct practices (Robinson 2018; VanderBerg 2012; Wythe 2007). These discussions therefore signal a need to test or extend the links between these two institutions and the practices therein (Marcum 2014; H. Taylor 1995). The discourse of 'convergence' thus offers a conceptual frame through which intellectual debates, practical activities and policies relating to the relationships between archives and curation can be imagined, negotiated and put into place.

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[27] The metaphor peppers the literature reviewed. For example, historian Patrick Joyce traced how the museum (along with the library) could be understood as a form of political technology used in the creation of a liberal citizenship, though tellingly, he suggests both institutions are in fact, firstly forms of *archives* (Joyce 1999). Anthropologist Ruth B. Phillips described the museum as an "object archive" (R. B. Phillips 2005, 88). The editors of the 2002 visual art exhibition and publication *Interarchive* draw on Derrida's concept of the archive as the place where symbols are gathered, to argue that "all types of museums, libraries and collections" are synonymous with the archive (Bismarck et al. 2002b, 417). See also Bronson and Gale 1983, 9; Groys 2008; Paul 2008, 5; Pearce 1992.

With these points in mind, this chapter proposes a number of initial frameworks for understanding these interconnections. First, it considers the apparent kinship of museums and archives as they are conceptualised as common collecting institutions. Second, it looks to their shared interpretive frameworks as a) institutions of knowledge, b) memory and heritage, and c) as common repositories of (and platforms for) digital cultural resources. Thirdly, it examines ideas of overlap at the level of collected records and objects. Lastly, it looks at points of crossover between the professional positions of archivists and museum curators. Many of the discussions surveyed rely on a simplified typology and prototypical depictions of museums and archives, their activities and their subject positions to compare and contrast these areas of discourse and practice. Most presuppose curatorial and archival practices taking place in larger institutions, rather than smaller independent or community ones. A degree of generalisation has also been assumed throughout this chapter in order to introduce the themes and 'conversations' therein. The reader will also note a certain fluidity between concepts of the *museum* and those of *museum curation*. The proceeding chapters (Chapters VI-VIII) will then flesh out these generalisations by setting them in relation to the different modes of curation (curatorship, curating and 'the curatorial'), and provide additional layers by which to understand curation and archives as intertwining fields of discourse and practice.

ii. Archives and Museums as Collecting Institutions

As collecting institutions, museums and archives are similarly concerned with the acquisition, arrangement, care and provision of access to collected cultural artefacts and records (Marcum 2014). Both institution types revolve around the intentional accumulation and stewardship of knowledge understood to be attached to these records and objects. The practices of building and ordering these collections have been refined over time through the same positivist and imperialist epistemologies, which are driven by a desire not only to guard against the loss of knowledge, but also to control information and its application (Hedstrom and King 2003). This dual motivation also points to a common tension for archives and museums. By nature, the accumulation of records and cultural artefacts reduces, distils and distorts; possession and control also engenders loss and loss of control over this information.

This paradox conditions both curatorial and archival activities (Bastian and Alexander 2009; Murdoch 1994).

This shared collecting framework also gives archives and museums their value. Both organisations have the cultural authority to determine what is perceived to be worthy of collection and preservation from the wider cultural record. In turn, this collecting activity also assigns status and significance to collected material, rendering these items symbolic, evidentiary, illustrative, typographical, unique and valuable, and so on (Clifford 1988a; Osborne 1999; Pearce 1992). By way of this collecting framework, an individual item (or group of items in the case of archival records) can stand in for and be understood as a part of a broader whole, while also retaining the specificities and accessibility of an individual entity; in managing these collections, museums and archives serve a common *representational* function.

A collection also implies a collections *repository* – a place to store and care for archival and museum collections. Even as museums and archives reach into digital spheres, they continue to connote a bounded site with conceptual, and often physical, parameters. This notion of a repository constitutes another shared foundational concept of these two fields of practice and conditions the subsequent terms of archival and curatorial work. It engenders a key dynamic of inclusion and exclusion – what belongs inside and what belongs outside of these institutions. Furthermore, as was discussed in relation to archives, it has established a common expectation of curatorial and archival care-taking *as custodial guardianship*; as an activity that is contingent on physical possession of the collected material. In recent decades however, museums have been increasingly drawn into highly-charged debates around the repatriation of cultural objects and records to their communities of origin (e.g. Ames 1990; Curtis 2006; McKemmish et al. 2011; Shelton 2013). A museological paradigm that supports the repatriation or alternative use of these objects extends curatorial stewardship to include safeguarding an object's content and context, as it moves in and out of the museum. Paralleling the postcustodial model of archival theory, these developments challenge the custodial model of curatorial care as site-specific and reinforce a turn away from the *physical* guardianship of cultural evidence towards a *conceptual* one.

Even when collected objects and records link (symbolically or literally) to what lies outside of the museum or archive, and even as notions of postcustodial care have been incorporated into the discourse, the collecting framework for archives and museums brings about a process of displacement. Bringing something into the archive or museum necessitates taking it away from its place of origin; the acquisition process takes artefacts and records out of their original context of production and use (Clifford 1988a). When objects and records are acquired and remediated by institutions, they are altered, some say deadened, by dint of this removal from their original frame of reference. The metaphors of the 'life cycle' of archival records, and the archive as a sepulchre described in Chapters III and IV, are paralleled in descriptions of the museum as a mausoleum (Adorno 1967; Witcomb 2003). These motifs speak to the troubled transition between decontextualisation and recontextualisation. These collections are therefore doubly bound by loss, not only the loss of what has not been selected or preserved, but also the loss brought about through their transition into these institutions. In both museums and archives, record-keeping practices have been developed to help safeguard against the loss of contextual information. Yet equally, these artefacts and records are inherently mediated by practices that distil and decontextualise. Context – that is, the circumstances surrounding the creation, acquisition, use of an artefact and its relationship to other materials – represents a fundamental area of concern for museums and museum curation and, as was shown in Chapter III, is a concern shared with archives.

Yet the notion of context functions differently in each institution. For archivists, context is one of three pillars of an archival record: content, structure and context (Pearce-Moses 2005). Archivists seek to preserve the content and context of records by retaining their original structure and form, and thereby safeguard the fiduciary status of records (Moss 2008; Theimer 2012). The role of context in museological terms concerns more with the contextual information that may shed light on the circumstances and settings related to the history of an object, and any subsequent recontextualising through interpretive activities such as exhibition making (Orna and Pettitt 1998). Archives provide baseline contextual information for museum objects; but museums do not typically provide the same for archives.

As will become clearer in the chapters that follow, even with these differences, context denotes a common informational layer and evidentiary value at stake in both curation and archival work. In turn, the mediation and remediation of context and contextual information represents an area of opportunity, but also negotiation, for curatorial practice. The importance of context is particularly felt given the influence of poststructuralist and postmodern understanding of the contingencies of knowledge and meaning on both museological and archival thinking, a development addressed in Chapter VI.

iii. Archives, Museums and Their Shared Interpretive Frameworks

A second driver informs this discourse of convergence. Both museums and archives are oriented towards the re-use of their collections, albeit in different ways. Specifically, a museum's explicit focus and spatial orientation on displays and programming distinguishes it from an archive (Beasley 2007; Robinson 2012; Trant 2009; Wythe 2007). In general, archivists aim to stabilise the context/content/structure of records for interpretation *outside* of the archival framework (Buchanan 2010; Moss 2008), while museum curators seek to interpret and recontextualise artefacts in the museum's public programming environment. While archives are oriented towards the *reading* subject (encapsulated by the term *archive reader*), museums revolve around a *viewing* subject who engages with the collection through the museum's particular configuration of objects, ideas and people in exhibition spaces. Even with these differences, three overarching and overlapping discursive formations link museums and archives to a common interpretive framework: a) as institutions of knowledge and power, b) as institutions of memory and heritage, and c) as repositories of, and platforms for, digital cultural representations.

Institutions of Knowledge, Paradigms of Access and the Rhetoric of Transparency

Firstly, both archives and museums are understood as knowledge organisations, centres of learning and interpretation in which knowledge is not only safeguarded, it is also produced and exchanged (Hedstrom 2002; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Osborne 1999; Richards 1990). This frame emphasises the intellectual and educational role of

these institutions, their alignment with libraries, and their role as information providers. Being responsible for the accumulation and preservation of, and access to knowledge, both institutions are enmeshed in political and economic power, a facet of their position in society that has made them an important subject of critical interrogation over the last forty years, as evidenced by the paralleled archival and curatorial 'turns' in academic and creative discourse (a point discussed further in the following chapters).

The discourse around convergence assumes both are public institutions with a social obligation not only to safeguard but also to provide access to cultural records (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998). This common access paradigm has manifest, for example, through the provision of reading rooms and exhibition spaces, but also in the development of classification systems and finding aids, in other words, the "epistemic infrastructures" that support knowledge communities (Hedstrom and King 2003). The public service role of archives emphasises access to historical records within a frame of legal, public, governmental and corporate accountability (R. J. Cox and Wallace 2002; Millar 2010), whereas museums emphasise access to their interpretive programming. As will be shown in the following chapter, this aligns museums with education and ideas of social improvement. However, in both instances, different types of organisations (national or civic, judicial, corporate, university, community archives or museums) set up different degrees of public access to the material in their care.

Yet there is a tension within this shared paradigm of public access. Paradoxically, the means of granting access also encompasses mechanisms to gatekeep, deny or restrict access. This includes physical barriers and security measures, admission tickets or service fees, terms and conditions of use, the closure or redaction records, or the concealment or destruction of information. Museums and archives may therefore imply public access without fully delivering it. Theirs is a literal and figurative position that can be used to advance claims of accountability through a rhetoric of accessibility and transparency, while keeping aspects of their activities and holdings exclusive, opaque or off-limits.

Institutions of Memory and Heritage: Linking Past, Present, Future

Museums' and archives' shared orientation towards the past also directs their respective interpretive frameworks. Both are concerned with the "transmission" of the past into the present (Murdoch 1994), ideas of perpetuity and the current and future use-value of their collections. In this capacity, both institution types are commonly referred to as heritage or memory institutions.[28] These two concepts, memory and heritage, are complex and capacious, and each has been the subject of much scholarly debate, but each (and often paired together) provide powerful contemporary rationalisations for these organisations and their practices, as well as for their points of convergence (see in particular Macdonald 2013 but also; Dempsey 1999; Kirchhoff, Schweibenz, and Sieglerschmidt 2008; Robinson 2012; Stainforth 2016; H. Taylor 1995; Trant 2009).

As discussed previously, the paradigm of memory shifts emphasis away from ideas of the retrieval of knowledge from static records, towards ideas of social meaning making through shared or collective memorial processes (Brothman 2001; B. Craig 2002; Crane 2000; Samuel 1994). Yet, as Elizabeth Stainforth notes, different types of collections tend to garner different focus: ideas of "informational memory" are prioritised in the discourse around archives, while notions of "cultural memory" are more often attached to those around the museum (Stainforth 2016). Furthermore, as Helena Robinson has argued, the "interpretive scaffolding" of museums gives them the distinctive ability to "contextualise collection objects within broader thematic and narrative groupings", and thus, promote users to "remember differently" (Robinson 2012, 422).

By comparison, the term 'heritage' links ideas of memory and the past to specific places and entities. The concept of heritage helps attach historical narratives onto representational forms, both tangible (heritage sites, memorials) and intangible (oral histories, folk songs and so on), which can be experienced as shared cultural resources (Alivizatou 2012; Macdonald 2013). In turn, the values that become attached to these sites and objects can be retrieved, performed, and re-inscribed for

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[28] On museums, memory and heritage see for instance Crane 2000; Macdonald 2013; Nora 1996b; Samuel 1994. On archives, heritage and memory, see for example Bearman 2002; Blouin and Rosenberg 2006; Caygill 1999; V. Harris 2002b; Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998; Hedstrom 2010; Jacobsen, Punzalan, and Hedstrom 2013; Schwartz and Cook 2002.

present-day purposes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Lowenthal 1985). The capacity of the heritage concept to weave together not only ideas of the past, present and future, but also the tangible and the intangible, render it a useful, and often naturalised, concept in the construction and deconstruction of political, ideological and cultural narratives within archival and museological frames (L. Smith 2006).[29]

Moreover, as rehearsed in relation to archives, concepts of memory and heritage are also intertwined with notions of identity, and associated ideas of representation and political agency (S. Hall 2000; L. Smith 2006). Indeed, the literature probing connections between museum and archives often configure the terms 'memory', 'heritage' and 'identity' in different dyads and triads, with the term 'culture' being a common qualifier. The "memory-heritage-identity complex", as Macdonald describes it, is a discursive construct that can be drawn on to bridge notions of individual and collective memories within a broader cultural (often national) framework (Macdonald 2013).[30] With reference to museums, archives and their curation, such constructs support dominant narratives, as well as advance ideas of belonging and cultural continuity important to assertions of identity in postcolonial contexts (Samuel 1994), and in different marginalised communities (Caswell et al. 2017; Witcomb 2003). They may also advance notions of social difference or hybridity (L. Smith 2006). Whether intentional or not, the deployment of these constructs around memory and heritage can also reinforce the dualisms of presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion, as well as problematic assertions of authenticity and inauthenticity with regards to memory, identity, materials and so on. Moreover, the use of these constructs are bound by the overarching limitations of the

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[29] The academic concern with ideas of memory and heritage emerged between the 1960s and 1980s through the roughly parallel development of heritage and memory studies (Viejo-Rose 2015). The increased presence of museums and archives in contemporary cultural landscapes has been situated as part of the wider increase in public attention to the commemoration and preservation of the past, a so-called 'memory boom', correlated with the growth of museums and higher education institutions in Western nations (Winter 2001), and a response to concerns with social amnesia in contemporary society (Radstone and Schwarz 2010). On heritage as a discourse and its uses in valuing and authorising cultures and cultural narratives see L. Smith 2006.

[30] For discussions on how museums and archives are geared towards the construction of national identity, see Coombes 1988; S. Hall 2000; Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998; Kaplan 1994; S. J. Knell 2011; S. Knell, MacLeod, and Watson 2007; F. McLean 1998. Recent initiatives to bridge collections across type and regions through collections data (such as the Europeana project) apply the rhetoric of convergence in order to promote ideas of transnational cultural pluralism and connectedness (Stainforth 2016).

representative modelling that underpin archival and museological rationalities (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a).

The discourse around ideas of cultural heritage and memory has also brought the leisure and economic roles of these institutions into focus, and by extension, their implication in processes of commodification and consumption, as signalled by the terms 'heritage industry' (Hewison 1987), and more recently 'memory industry' (K. L. Klein 2000). The critical discussions around memory and heritage show how archives, and more commonly museums, are understood as part of activities that may celebrate, but also may trivialise or promote false consciousness of the past towards particular socio-political narratives and economic gains (e.g. Clifford 1988a; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Macdonald 2013; Samuel 1994). Museums and archives face common issues around the commodification of cultural resources and experiences, and the development of precarious cultural and intellectual labour (e.g. Burns 2018; Dever 2017; Eric and Vukovic 2013). A consideration of heritage and memory frameworks illuminates how the lines between the intellectual, leisure, commemorative, social, economic and political roles of these institutions blur.[31]

Digital Convergences

A third overarching framework for understanding ideas of overlap in these sectors is the idea of digital convergences between archives and museums (Kirchhoff, Schweibenz, and Sieglerschmidt 2008; Marcum 2014; Marty 2009; Timms 2009). Indeed, in surveying the literature, the term 'digital' functions as a conspicuous catch-all descriptor for a number of different drivers relating to archival, museological and curatorial connections. Commentators variously describe new integration points brought about by digital *media* and the digital *environment*, where digital *records* and digital *artefacts* constitute new forms of digital *representations* and *resources, content* and *assets* that can be mined, mapped, aggregated, analysed and disseminated through new digital *platforms*. Yet, as digital humanities scholar

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[31] Indeed, memory and heritage paradigms have encouraged multifaceted museum-archive-corporate configurations. For instance, in 2009, a permanent exhibition and archive research centre was created from the Marks & Spencer's corporate archive at the University of Leeds. It places the archive in an interpretive framework of a community museum, links it to the educational and research foundations of an institution of higher education, and reorients it from an internal resource to an external public-facing function and asset.

Alan Liu argues, the term 'digital' is itself a shorthand for three underlying concepts – technology, media and information – and that the relationship between these concepts remains unsettled, rendering it slippery and imprecise (Liu 2011, 11).

Even so, a consideration of these digital elements illuminates a number of areas of intersecting curatorial and archival concerns. First, as a process, digitisation is a gateway activity for many projects that interconnect archives and curation, such as those developed in digital humanities. Second, it describes the media and form of the archival/curatorial information for such projects, the digital artefact and representation (Theimer 2014a). Third, digital technology is celebrated as a way to dismantle the conventional institutional barriers that pre-determine access and interpretive frameworks to archival and curatorial information. Digital technologies allow users to sidestep conventional physical and hierarchical arrangements and restricted access pathways (Menne-Haritz 2001; Trant 2009). On the surface at least, navigational tools and augmented search functionalities available in the digital environment render the highly specific 'epistemic infrastructures' and 'interpretive scaffolding' of conventional archives and museums somewhat redundant. Integrated access systems provide singular user interfaces to search across collections and collection types (Doucet 2007; Kirchhoff, Schweibenz, and Sieglerschmidt 2008; Martin 2007; Timms 2009).

Digital platforms have brought about radically new ways to present archive catalogues, and to contextualise and 'story' digital representations of archival materials – they constitute, in essence, new curatorial platforms for archives (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012). One example is the artist Barry Flanagan's online archive, co-developed by the artist and his estate, which brings together images and catalogue entries of artworks and archival records (including sketches, writings, diary entries, correspondence, photographs, press clippings and exhibition records). The website provides multiple entry points that uphold and give visual presence to archival hierarchies, while also encouraging new access pathways. It aspires to the artist's vision for an "interconnected network as a total exhibition" (Melvin and Jump 2013). A second example is Tate's synthesis of its digitised archive and art records through its centralised online portal. The *Transforming Tate Britain: Archives and Access* project (2014-2017) published over 52,000 archival records,

and connected digital representations of artworks with archive items through its "Art & Artists" portal. This type of online integration of digital images of artworks and archival records are also platforms for "increased curatorial activity" for archive materials in a "deterritorialised" digital space (Stack 2013). These points of interconnection will be further elaborated and problematised in the discussions in relation to the expanded landscape of curatorial and archival practice addressed in Chapter VIII.

Digital Curation

The sub-field of digital curation is another, yet more background area of interconnection between archives and curation. Since the early 2000s, digital curation has become an area of expertise in its own right that plays an important custodial role in cultural heritage and knowledge environments (Ray 2009). It has been described as "the curation of digital research data and other digital materials" (Beagrie 2004, 7). On the surface, digital curation seems to be an amalgamation of archival and curatorial practices.[32] Yet definitions of digital curation are characterised by a lack of clarity between its technological and conceptual drivers, and by how curatorial and archival terminology is being invoked. There is a certain semantic overlap between the terms data curation, digital curation, digital preservation and digital archiving (Flanders and Muñoz 2011; Yakel 2007b). Meaning of the term 'archive' seems to be context-specific, sometimes presupposing digital documentation related to cultural records and artefacts (Sabharwal 2015), other times presuming the care of (often scientific) research data. Most commentators describe a practice centred on safeguarding the integrity of data for its future use through archival principles, including appraisal and provenance (Ray 2009). However, the preservation of data and datasets are not equivalent to the preservation of structured archives (A. Smith 2004). Similarly, even though the term 'curation' and 'curator' dominate descriptions of the field of activity (Tibbo 2012), the connections to curation in the museological sense are not always clear.

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[32] For example, Beagrie described digital curation as "… the actions needed to maintain digital research data and other digital materials over their entire lifecycle [….] Implicit in this definition are the processes of digital archiving and digital preservation, but it also includes all the processes needed for good data creation and management, and the capacity *to add value to data to generate new sources of information and knowledge*" (Beagrie 2004, 7, emphasis added).

It stands that curation has become an overarching conceptual framework for understanding the management of digital content in ways that leave the ontology of curation and archives ill-defined. The appearance of the term 'curation' in this context nonetheless points to an area of common ground for museums and archives at the level of digital information management and preservation for which the terms of practice, and relationship to conventional curatorial and archival practices, are still under negotiation. Indeed, the question of stewardship of digital cultural records and related datasets reappears as a salient conversation from different vantage points throughout this study.

iv. Archival Records and Museum Artefacts in Their Evidentiary Frameworks

The 'things' at the centre of archival and museological collections (Dudley 2011) provide other contact points for curation and ideas of the archive. The following section sketches ideas of typical museum objects and archival records as typologies in order to trace connections at the level of collected material.[33] Collected artefacts and records are a starting point for meaning making in both museums and archives. Like archival records, museum artefacts are valued for their potential to act as a conduit for the transmission of information and meaning through time and space. In turn, these items have acquired the patina of time, or what Alois Riegl described as "age value" (Riegel [1903] 1982), qualities which in turn reinforce ideas of authenticity, originality and evidence that prevail in the valuation of cultural collections (Clifford 1988a; Prown 1982). Like archival records, museum objects can operate at the level of the mundane, but also the imaginary; they link the visible and the invisible, the material and immaterial, past and present (Pearce 1992; Pomian 1994).

However, different evidentiary frameworks emphasise different qualities and 'affordances' for each type of collection. As rehearsed earlier, archival theory places

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[33] I use the terms museum 'object' and 'artefact' interchangeably, recognising they carry different connotations and are subject to debate and particularisation (e.g. Dudley 2011). Rather than assuming fixed definitions and ontologies, the discussion here sketches these constructs superficially in order to highlight how discursive framing focuses on particular facets of cultural documentation and material towards different aims.

emphasis on the content, context and structure of documents in order to secure their use value as records. This character has meant archival records are typically assumed to be texts that readily support "informational content" (Lester 2018), with manuscripts being particularly emblematic archival records. By comparison, museum objects are more readily understood to carry their value through their formal and material qualities, what Sandra Dudley refers to as the "thingness" of museum objects (Dudley 2011). It is telling that although the materiality of archives has been a focus of recent research (Chapter III, IV), archive catalogues do not typically describe physical characteristics of records (Magee and Waters 2011). Whereas the reading room is the typical point of access for archive users, the highly ocular-centric space of the gallery is the conventional point of access for museum visitors. Because museums are oriented towards exhibition, they typically acquire objects for their capacity to be displayed; their physical qualities are paramount (Pearce 1992; Weil 1997). Indeed, museum collections have evolved as part of the development of "exhibitionary disciplines" such as history, art history, archaeology, geology and anthropology, areas of study focused in part on comparing and contrasting artefacts through visual inspection and physical arrangement (Bennett 1995, 75). Informally, curatorial expertise is often expressed as a type of material and sensory knowledge. Curators are said to have a 'good eye' and a 'good feel' for objects (Macdonald 2002, 64–65).

Although these differences between archive records and museum objects continue to be affirmed, the discourse also highlights points of overlap. Longstanding debates around the ontology of cultural objects have advanced the idea of artefacts as cultural records and evidence (e.g. Prown 1982). Museum objects have been conceptualised as documents (Buckland 1997), and as "an archive of information" (Witcomb 2003, 6). The notion of an artefact-as-record continues to serve as a unifying concept across museums and archives (Latham 2012). Furthermore, scholarly interest in the transactional nature of cultural artefacts has entailed a greater focus on the "contextual envelopes" of objects (Cook 1992), bringing museum artefacts into closer alignment with archival records. Studies across a number of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have examined how visual and material culture is circulated, consumed, ordered and presented in ways that are at once social, spatial, temporal and discursive (e.g. Bal 1996; Gosden and

Knowles 2001; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). The meaning of museum objects is now commonly understood to be fluid, "situated and contextual rather than inherent" (Macdonald 2006c, 2), and the capacity for cultural artefacts to be read and re-read, deconstructed and reconstructed along different terms, has been held up as their central asset (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 215). The digital environment has only heightened this fluidity. Given these developments, the discourse emerging from critical museum curation has turned attention away from the assumption of the intrinsic values of museum objects and onto their context of creation, construction, circulation and reception (Dudley 2011).[34]

Conversely, the growing body of literature centred around the material and affective qualities of archives, as discussed in chapters III and IV, brings archival records into closer alignment with museum artefacts, and with the object-focused orientation of museums and museum curatorship. Archive records have be described as "material artefacts" (Taylor 1995), "cultural artifacts" (Smiraglia 2008) or even "cognitive artifacts" (Brothman 1991b, 79).

This tension and blurring of typology is highlighted in visual art practices. Over the last century, conceptual and performance art practices, as well as the creative use of documentary, time-based and digital media, have opened up areas of crossover and blur between collectable, exhibitable art objects and documentary records. Conceptual art practices, for instance, have transformed documentation into a key conceit and medium for artists, and eroded the distinction between the work of art and its informational envelopes (Berger and Santone 2016; Spieker 2008). Likewise, performance art documentation can be categorised as either an archival record of an event or an art object, thus complicating institutional and commercial classifications (Giannachi and Westerman 2018). In both instances, artists can assert agency precisely by defying the categorisation of their artwork as commodifiable *objects*, instead rendering their artwork documentary by design (Bismarck et al. 2002a, 238; Clarke et al. 2018). The porous boundaries between an artwork and its records are

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[34] Material culture studies, for instance, have advanced understanding of the transactional nature of objects and their value, and the histories and politics of their exchange and commodification. This has included discussions of the hybridity, circulation, mobility and mutation of cultural artefacts (Gosden and Knowles 2001), and their "social life" (Appadurai 1986) and "cultural biographies" (Kopytoff 1986). A significant body of literature emerging from the 1970s has also questioned assumptions of the inherent cultural value and function of art objects as part of the so-called 'new' art histories of the 1980s and 1990s (Preziosi 2006; Rees and Borzello 1988; Vergo 1989).

thus subject to being explicitly tested and harnessed by the creative practitioners themselves.

It stands that the distinctions between the finished work of art, related documentation and archival records can be precarious (Giannachi and Westerman 2018; Melvin and Jump 2013), particularly in light of the loose definition of 'the archive' described in Chapter IV.[35] The nature of the relationship between archives and works of art can be designated by artists, but also by archivists, curators, collecting institutions and so on, in both passive and active, implicit and explicit ways. Typically, archival records have a supportive, secondary role; they are understood to be complementary to works of art, and offer evidence of working practices, artworks or art events (Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013). However, artists' archives can also invoke imaginaries. Marginalia, unpublished manuscripts, notebooks, sketchbooks and ephemera support the promise of new understanding of artworks as well as new connection to, and even an extension of, the mind of the artist themselves (Banting 1986; McNally 2013). The 1998 exhibition *Deep Storage*, for example, asked audiences to conceptualise "the artist's life [as] a grand archive, in which every discarded receipt, marginal note, or studio scrap might someday be deemed tremendously significant" (Schaffner and Winzen 1998, 20).

Digital technologies have also destabilised the traditional distinctions between archival records and museum objects. Digitisation translates different heterogenous types of material into uniform machine-readable code; it re-renders three-dimensional objects and alters their functionality, transforming, for example, an index card into a key-word searchable digital image (Blaschke 2014), or two hundred year old manuscripts into a series of annotatable, hyperlinked images and their metadata (Causer and Terras 2014). As digital representations, remediated museum artefacts and archival records are more readily circulated beyond the specificities of a given institution frame or collection type. The convergent ontological terrain between archival records and museum artefacts is reflected in the

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[35] Indeed, the question "When may the artist's archive become an art work itself?" was posed as part of the "Archiving the Artist" conference at Tate, organised by Arlis UK & Ireland Art Archives Committee in partnership with Tate, 2009 ('Archiving the Artist Audio Recordings | Tate' 2009). This issue can be clearly traced in the visual arts and art history but is also felt in poetry, literary studies and performance studies (Banting 1986; Nuttall 2002).

prevalence of the terms 'collection' (Moss 2008) and 'resource' (Marsden 2001), which commonly circulate both inside and outside of the professional discourses. These function as catch-all terms to describe an accumulated, selected and preserved grouping of cultural assets in museums and archives, both digital and analogue, while neutralising the specificities of their different origins, ontologies, functions and connotations.

However, museums and archives have always supported a certain amount of exchange, crossover and hybridity between collection type. Their holdings are often "mixed collections" (Marcum 2014); historic sites and museums are themselves multi-type repositories (Robinson 2018; H. Taylor 1995). The effects of reproducing cultural materials through technologies certainly pre-date the digital age (e.g. Benjamin 1999). Yet together these discussions point to a fault line in this crossover terrain between upholding typologies and focusing on the distinguishing features artefact and record types on the one hand, and leaning into the ways in which these can (and should) be put into question on the other. Bringing this discussion forward to the research at hand, it stands that the typology of (archive) records and (museum) objects constitutes another point of negotiation and entanglement in play at the intersections of curatorial activities, archives and ideas of the archive.

Integrating Information: The Role of Collections Documentation

The documentation and metadata that underpins collected artefacts and records represents an additional level of potential interconnection and integration across typologies. Collection documentation pertains to what Jennifer Trant calls "collections knowledge", information about the artefacts and records in museum or archive collections. Collections documentation is both curatorial and archival in nature (Trant 2012; Orna and Pettitt 1998).[36] It upholds the integrity and authority of collections, and supports their functionality as accessible resources within the interpretive frameworks described above (F. Cameron 2010). When made interoperable through standardised descriptions, collections documentation and related metadata can also connect different institution and record types, and link

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[36] Discussions about collections information are also represented by the sub-areas of museum archives, and museum information management and informatics (Deiss 1984; Orna and Pettitt 1998; Trant 2012; Wythe 2004), and will be addressed further in Chapter VI.

information resources through cross-institutional networked platforms.[37] One example is the aforementioned Europeana project, launched in 2008. It provides users with a single access point for digital representation of cultural heritage from repositories across Europe ('Europeana Collections' n.d.).

However, initiatives that seek to bridge collections at the level of digital collections documentation are not without difficulties. Curators and archivists employ different standards for resource description and cataloguing, emphasise different types of information, and work to different vocabularies and classification systems (Marcum 2014; Timms 2009).[38] There is therefore a discrepancy between the vision for interconnecting these different types of cultural records and repositories and its realisation in practice (Robinson 2018; Stainforth 2016). Moreover, although collections documentation is an important area for common curatorial and archival activity and stewardship (Trant 2012), within much of the discourse surveyed for this research, it is often underacknowledged and taken for granted, particularly outside of specialist professional archival and museological discourse.

v. Archivists and Museum Curators: Comparing Forms of Mediation

Another way to understand archival and curatorial convergences is to consider the role of the archivist and the collections-oriented museum curator. For the purposes of sketching the points of overlap and difference between curators and archivists, I use the term 'curator' here to refer to a collections curator working in a museum. The definition and role of a museum curator, and indeed of curators writ large, will be rendered more complex in the chapters that follow.

Both the position of the archivist and that of the curator were formalised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries along with the rise of state archives and museums; theirs is a parallel history (Hedstrom and King 2003). Indeed, despite

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[37] For instance, the International Description Standard for Archives, or ISAD(G).
[38] For example, different paradigms of access for museums and archives have led to different cataloguing conventions. In archives, records are structured in hierarchies in order to offer the researcher a variety of pathways to the information contained within records (from *fonds* and series, to file and item level). By comparison, museum cataloguing takes place at the item level and places significant emphasis on singular curatorial descriptions (Trant 2009).

having different focuses with divergent professional pathways and "regimes of competence" (Wenger 2010, 180), the literature points to a certain amount of crossover and hybridity in their respective positions. Archivists and curators are 'keepers' of cultural artefacts and records, and have common duties associated with the development, description and classification, preservation, conservation, promotion and contextualisation of these collections, with facilitating their accessibility, and overseeing the financial management related to these activities (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998).[39] Like archivists, curators are in a mediating position, with privileged access and responsibilities to the records in their care. Both are charged with negotiating the terms of public access to the collection. Speaking schematically, archivists, like museum curators, mediate access to materials held in collection storage (Hedstrom 2002). The nature of the curator and archivist's care is therefore double-sided: they are at once keepers, but also (particularly in the popular and scholarly perception) *gate*keepers (Breakell 2010; Keene 2003; Schmuland 1999).

Curators and archivists are both bound by a duty of care to the collected objects and records (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998; Macdonald 2002). Conversely, these archival records and museum objects are understood to be vulnerable – in physical, but also intellectual and moral terms – and in need of careful handling by curators and archivists. Professional protocols in both areas show how this vulnerability comes in many forms, and includes the physical effects of the passage of time, potential loss or destruction, and the intellectual, ethical and legal implications of decontextualisation, misinterpretation or misrepresentation, through accident, ignorance or apathy, or as a form of cultural warfare.[40] Both the curator and the archivist works with what has been previously created or inherited; their work typically derives from that of others. Thus, this responsibility is also a continuity of care, a duty to safeguard and hand down this material with its 'contextual envelope' intact. As will be shown, curatorial and archival principles imply care not only to the

[39] Job titles also evidence this overlap. For instance, the title of 'manuscript curator' is sometimes made synonymous with archivist, and curatorial and archival positions alike have been referred to as 'keeper'. Indeed, in some historical institutions, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the title 'keeper' is used to describe the curator, a term also applied to archivists, as in the Keeper of the Archives at the University of Oxford.

[40] See for example, Robert Bevan's *The Destruction of Memory*, or the British library endangered archive programme (Bevan 2016; 'Endangered Archives Programme' n.d.).

collected objects and records, but to their creators and previous custodians. In these senses, archivists and curators both attend to that which is of the dead – to their traces, transmissions and legacies. Archivists and curators are in relationship with objects and records as they concern people, both of the past, present and future.

Curatorial and archival intermediation is also temporal. Curatorial duties in museums, like those engendered by the archive, are conceptualised as responsibilities to 'historic' collections, thus oriented to the past. At the same time, they are driven by imagined future uses and users (Pearce 1992). This simultaneous orientation to the past and future-present sets into play a balancing act for curators and archivists: the duty towards stabilising and preserving, where possible, historical artefacts and their original content and context (keeping them ordered, retrievable and under supervision), and the obligations meet diverse expectations of different users, community groups, funders and government bodies, as well as internal marketing departments who seek to make use of the collection for present purposes in ways that may challenge or circumvent protocols of preservation and care (e.g. Marquis 2006). Examples of such professional challenges include the use of museum artefacts by members of an object's community of origin for ceremonial purposes outside of the museum (Chapter VI); or artists' 'interventions' into museums and archives that subvert or sidestep conventional terms of access and use (Chapter VII).

Although both the curator and the archivist mediate cultural records and artefacts, their aims in doing so differ. Archivists focus on safeguarding the evidentiary framework of records while curators focus on the interpretation of collected material through public programming – most explicitly through exhibitions. Typically, curators mediate between the museum collection and museum's public; their interpretive task is to explain, clarify, to translate, and to contextualise the meaning of collections for public consumption, and to do this within the museum's operational framework designed for exhibitions (Dean and Edson 1994, 171). By comparison, although archivists certainly mediate records (Chapter III), they have not traditionally had an explicit role in storying archival collections and presenting them historically through public programming. Historically, Jenkinsonian archive theory has asserted a necessary distance between the care of records and their interpretation; an archivist's primary focus is on safeguarding the integrity of records

for use *by others*. In this positivist frame, archivists should aspire to impartiality and invisibility. Extending from this history, they have often been depicted as "two-dimensional ciphers" or archival "servants" who hinder or help the historian (Breakell 2010, 30–31). This perceived distance to interpretive activities has helped to uphold the fantasy of archives as a naturally occurring phenomenon that reflect reality and uphold truth (Lane and Hill 2010).

Yet, as was shown in Chapter III, within the professional discourse archival processes are understood to be highly interpretive "representational practices" (Yakel 2003). Historically, archivists were often trained as historians, so the division between the care and interpretation of records has been overstated (Ridener 2009; Shepherd 2009). However, the depiction of the archivist as neutral custodian and manager of records retains its power (Buchanan 2010). This means that this rather outmoded and idealised portrait of the archivist can function as a *counterpoint* to that of the curator.

However, as noted by some commentators, and what is reinforced throughout this study, is that the roles and activities assigned to and taken up by both archivists and curators are increasingly overlapping, as is the context of their activities (Moss 2008; Prescott 2008). The various conditions for convergence described above point to many areas of crossover in the practices of archivists and curators. While archivists have always played a role in the process of making archival records public, some are doing so with more visibility, representing new points of professional commonality with curators. Beginning in the late 1980s, there has been a growing emphasis on public programming and outreach within the archive profession (e.g. H. Taylor 1995; Theimer 2014b; I. E. Wilson 1990). As an example of this trend, the 'Archive Studio' at the Southbank Centre in London is a purpose-built, highly visible storage and reading room on the main floor of the Royal Festival Hall that that seeks to make the "archive function visible and our collections accessible" ('Southbank Centre Archive Studio' n.d.).

Most salient for questions of curation, archive-based exhibitions have become a more conspicuous part of archivists' arena of practice. It is notable, for instance, that the Canadian journal *Archivaria* now includes exhibition reviews, signalling

increased professional attention to curating. The provision of exhibition-oriented interpretive environments has been embraced as a way to improve the public perception and value of archives (Beasley 2007; Theimer 2014b). Two recent publications offer guidance to archivist-curators for the production of exhibitions. Yet these assume displays of paper-based archive material (Lacher-Feldman 2013) and an organisational context with resourcing and expertise along the lines of a museum (Matassa 2014). Furthermore, these guides focus on the how-to, rather than the many nuanced opportunities and implications of working with these materials in curatorial frameworks that will be discussed in the following chapters.

The study and presentation of visual arts and design archives represents a particularly fruitful area of exchange between the work of curators and archivists (Breakell 2015; Vaknin, Stuckey, and Lane 2013). As will be elaborated upon in Chapter VII, it is in this context that a number of recent discussions, conferences and research projects have discussed how archives can be mobilised as curatorial resources and platforms. Archivists have come to play an important and increasingly visible role in the public display of artists' archives, and in the stewardship of artists' archive-oriented projects. To offer a few local examples, in 2014, the Art Libraries Society (ARLIS UK & Ireland) held a training day on the theme of the "Archivist as Curator". In 2005, the Whitechapel Gallery in London opened its dedicated archive gallery. Graduate-level curatorial programmes in art colleges have also turned attention to archives, offering modules on curating archives attached to institutional study collections and associated exhibition spaces. These include Central Saint Martins and Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication (University of the Arts London), as well as the Centre for Curating the Archive, University of Cape Town, based at The Michaelis School of Fine Art ('About | Centre for Curating the Archive' n.d.).

Even while new hybrid roles and activities in curatorial and archival practices can be identified, the literature surveyed also stresses how these remain distinct pursuits, with different histories of learning, 'regimes of competence', perspectives, values, repertoires and training needs (e.g. Given and McTavish 2010; Trant 2009). Archival and curatorial practices in this crossover terrain therefore also pertain to professional

identity and position-taking (Martin 2007) and the navigation of boundaries of practices.

vi. Conclusions

This chapter took the notion of a museological and archival 'convergence' as a starting point to account for a number of areas of kinship between archives and museum curation. First, it demonstrated how archives and museums are conditioned by their common role as collecting institutions. This foundational condition sets the terms for their interpretive frameworks, the ontology of the objects and records they collect and display, and the scope of their professional practices. The collecting rationale implicates curatorial and archival activities and entities in questions of representation, presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion, accumulation and loss, and practices of decontextualisation and recontextualisation. Context is delineated as a shared area of concern, and the safeguarding of contextual information – in part through collections documentation – identified as a shared activity.

Building on this, I addressed how museums and archives are schematised as institutions of knowledge, memory and heritage, constructs that are pluralising and limiting in equal measure. I discuss how digital technologies bring curatorial and archival remits into closer alignment and how they have reformulated the terms of engagement with archival and museological collections, and elaborated and complicated shared areas of professional activity and responsibility. However, in addition to highlighting points of crossover, the literature also brings into relief how archival and museological discourses equally stress different terms of reference and access, public service roles, and divergent representational models.

Following this, I explore notions of overlap at the level of collected records and objects and, drawing on Chapters III and IV, show how the discourse surveyed asserts different use values and affordances for records and artefacts in ways that both confirm and reorient conventional conceptualisations for archival and artefactual evidence. Overall, the discussions point to a fault line between upholding typologies, focusing on the distinguishing features of artefact and record types on the one hand, and leaning into the ways in which these can and should be put into

question. The ontologies of (archive) records and (museum) objects are shown to constitute another zone of negotiation and entanglement in play at the intersections of curatorial activities, archives and conceptualisations of 'the archive'. Finally, the archetypal role of the archivist and museum curator were compared and contrasted. The literature here points to significant variation in the mediating practices of archivists and curators, while also elaborating how their roles and spheres of activities increasingly intersect. Archival and curatorial practices in this crossover terrain therefore also pertain to professional identity and position-taking and the delineation of communities of practices and their priorities.

What is clear is that archives and museums, archival records and museum objects, archivists and curators share a field of influence. The term 'convergence' implies a seamless and natural integration, where insights, expertise and tools from different areas are brought into welcome alignment. However, the literature complicates this depiction, showing instead how points of apparent and imagined amalgamation also signal areas of challenge, and of divergence and distinction. Attempts to cleanly compare and contrast these fields of practice result in a point, counter-point flow of argument that reveals complex interrelationships not sustainable through simple comparisons. The discourse reflects a condition of push and pull between claims to sameness and difference, amalgamation and specialisation, between rhetoric and practical implementation.

Seen in this light, the points of interaction also signify meaningful boundary encounters for different communities of practice in which important cultural typologies, familiar knowledge pathways, shared histories of learning, and professional identities are subject to debate. The discourse brings into relief boundaries of practices where opportunities for productive cross-sector activities may co-exist with misalignment or resistance. The correspondences described above bring about opportunities for curatorial experimentation, collaboration and exchange but also engender imperatives for decision-making and signposting of difference. Moreover, it demonstrates how the nature of this relationship is multileveled and multifaceted. The connections between archive and museum curation manifest across different disciplines and types of practice, through histories of practice and professional protocols, at the level of theory and practice, and in tacit and overt ways.

However, the discourses examined here are drawn from stereotyped constructs of museums and archives and their collections, and presuppose that curation takes place within the institutional frameworks of museums and archives. They do not, therefore, take into account the fuller range of curatorial practices, nor their peculiar discourses, contexts and conditions. The analysis of discourses around the archive in the first part of this thesis has set the stage for the second phase of investigation, which develops this line of inquiry with greater detail by asking: How are archives and notions of 'the archive' conceptualised and mobilised in different curatorial contexts? How can the nature of their relationship be understood through a tripartite model of curatorship, curating and 'the curatorial'?

Chapter VI. Curatorship and the Archive

i. Introduction

Having discussed a number of interconnections between museum curation and archives in general, this chapter takes a closer look at the discourses of curatorship to understand how archives, and ideas of 'the archive', are being constructed and utilised in museum contexts. It begins by articulating the particular qualities of museums that have shaped curatorship into a specific area of practice and discourse, one that is distinguishable from curating and 'the curatorial'. From this groundwork, it identifies how archives operate in this field in three ways: a) as the source of curation through the dual frameworks of collections and exhibitions; b) through the museum's institutional archive; and c) through the metaphor of the museum-as-archive. Building on this framework, I address several critiques of the museum, their impact on the idea of curation and the role of the archive as part of these developments. A number of curatorial strategies have also been identified that employ archives and archival constructs. In addition, areas of curatorial responsibility in this crossover terrain are brought to the fore. This chapter begins to address the questions: How are ideas of the archive conceptualised and mobilised in different curatorial contexts? How can the nature of the relationship between archives and curatorial practices be understood through a tripartite model of curatorship, curating and the curatorial?[41]

ii. Curatorship, Professional Practice and the Prototypical Museum

Curator*ship,* in the sense of the vocation and profession of the curator, denotes a role developed and defined throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as part of the formation and rise of the public museum (Heinich and Pollak 1996; Schubert 2009). Curatorship revolves around the *modus operandi* of the museum. Curatorial work is undertaken by professional curators, subject-area specialists who are typically part of the larger museum staff (Kavanagh 1994b). The museum and its

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[41] This chapter has also been informed by the 2007 exhibition I curated entitled *Misfits* (project A). The exhibition explored the connection between the museum, its archives and ideas of curatorial practice. A reflective account of the project (Appendix i) outlines the nature of these curatorial entanglements and led to the working research question: What are the discursive coordinates, both tacit and explicit, that underpin this exhibition, and how can they point to a more detailed understanding of the relationships between curation and archive?

collections are where curatorial activities, competencies and codes of conducts are developed, negotiated and contested. In turn, curatorship furthers knowledge for the museum, reinforcing its epistemological and operational systems (Pearce 1992).

Qualities of the museum shape curatorship in ways that distinguish it from the other modes of curation examined in Chapters VII and VIII.[42] In this discourse, the prototypical and ideal museum is conceptualised as a public, non-profit institution, with a mandate to educate and improve society (Alexander and Alexander 2008).[43] It follows that the role of the museum curator has been similarly rationalised through a rhetoric of public service and education. Curators care for, interpret and display the museum's collection, and thus contribute to a given body of knowledge for public benefit and access (Thompson 1992). This principle of practice for curatorship is most explicitly described in professional manuals. These manuals refer to three main areas of responsibility: the museum collection, its care and use; the public and its right to access to the collection; and the institution and its authority, where curators are expected to uphold professional values over personal gain (Dean and Edson 1994). Thus, curatorship is also ethical, as demonstrated by its formalised codes of conduct (e.g. Besterman 2006; Duggan 1992).

Generally, these texts bypass questions of curatorial individuality, authorship and creativity associated with amateur collectors and independent curators (Chapter VII). Instead they emphasise accountability through shared working practices and the governing framework of the institution. In ways that echo the conventional characterisations of archivists, ideal museum curators are often depicted with a certain professional self-effacement. They are altruistic and show personal reserve and modesty. This depersonalisation of the curator promotes notions of institutional authority and neutrality, and privileges the museum voice over the individual, curatorial one (Heinich and Pollak 1996; Thomas 2002).

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[42] I am indebted to Bernadette Buckley who modelled curatorship as a distinct arena of curatorial practice as part of her PhD research on the theorisation of curating (B. Buckley 2004).
[43] The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines a museum as: "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (2007). It should be noted this definition is subject to ongoing review and revision ('Museum Definition - ICOM' 2007).

Moreover, foundational histories of the museum have tended to conflate the evolution of curation with the development of the museum. In these early histories, the museum has been conceptualised in oversimplified terms, resulting in "undifferentiated histories", which do not account for the shifting epistemic conditions and cultural rationalities (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 8). There has also been a tendency to trace curatorial history as a linear evolution from the eccentricities and biases of aristocratic and religious collectors, towards the more impartial, professional and academic stewardship of the professional curator, who facilitates public understanding of collections once only available to a privileged few (e.g. Bennett 1995; Heinich and Pollak 1996; Pearce 1992). Yet even given the apparent democratising of access to these collections, the profession remains marked by significant social inequality, and issues around the privileged access to and orientation of the museum and its collections remain salient and unresolved.[44] Museums and museum curatorship also continue to misconstrue and misunderstand the 'publics' they purport to serve and address (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a; Dimitrakaki and Perry 2015).

Furthermore, the tacit presentation of curatorship as a cohesive profession does not stand up to scrutiny (Kavanagh 1994a; Pearce 1992). Current debates show how a curator's professional duties are interwoven with activities inside and outside the museum, including museum administration, public programming, exhibition design, education and marketing, and collections conservation and management (George 2015; Murdoch 1994). Similar to archives, museums are varied, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary; the discourse of curatorship is defined and constructed by many fields of practice (Pearce 1992; Clifford 1997; Macdonald 2006a). Equally, different types of museums, shaped by different historical, social and economic conditions, engender different forms of curatorship and different models of the curator. These variations are manifest in size and status, the geopolitical basis of the institution (regional, local, civic and national) and the subject area and collection type (Candlin 2016; Clifford 1991; Macdonald 2002). In larger institutions, some curators focus solely on exhibitions, others on collections. In addition, the

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[44] See for example, the UK-based "Museum Detox" professional network for black, Asian and minority ethnic museum workers seeking to change the lack of diversity in the museum workforce http://museumdetox.com/.

diversification of the museum in recent decades, including the emergence of community, cultural, heritage, art and science centres and the museum's move into the digital sphere, have expanded the forms of curation and diversified curatorial roles (S. Knell, MacLeod, and Watson 2007; Parry 2010; Wilkinson 2014; Witcomb 2003). Acknowledging the diversity of museums reinforces the context-specificity of curation. It also extends questions of curatorial position-taking and identity (Kavanagh 1994a), as will be shown throughout the following chapters. It suggests a tension between acknowledging the variability of museum curatorship, and the need to reinforce boundaries of practice, which uphold the profession as an area of authority and expertise.

iii. Curatorship and the Care and Presentation of Museum Collections

Even as commentators account for the multifarious nature of this field of practice, the discourse of curatorship presumes the pedagogic, symbolic and economic value of museum collections and takes these as its primary rationale (e.g. Kavanagh 1994a; Murdoch 1994; Pearce 1992; Schubert 2009). As described previously, museum collections are also assumed to be composed principally of material *objects* which can be examined and displayed in their physical, three-dimensional form. It is through this curatorial study and presentation that narratives are formed and representations put forward. The museum therefore has an interpretive function, and the collection is the primary vehicle for its storytelling. With their collection-specific knowledge, the curator is the key figure behind this interpretive function, and the primary mediator between the collection and museum visitors. Hence, a dual orientation structures the museum and its handling of the archive: the curation of collections and the curation of exhibitions. These activities are not separate, but are intertwined.

Additionally, the value of these museum artefacts is understood as intrinsic to the objects, but also constructed and accrued through these curatorial practices. Curatorial care, therefore, involves the knowledge attached to, or communicated, by way of the collected objects, but which is also produced by curation. This double-sided aspect of curatorial knowledge reinforces the role of museum documentation and archives, as will be shown.

iv. Curatorship and Archival Constructs: Archives, the Museum Archive and the Museum-as-Archive

Building on these foundational conditions of curatorship, the archive comes into play in three ways. First, in a general sense, archives can be drawn on as a source for curation, serving as research material and content for display. Such archives can be official or unofficial, in-house or external. Second, the museum archive represents a specific type and area of record keeping for curation. It comprises an institution's curatorial and administrative records relating to its governance and management, collections and programming (Deiss 1984; Ambrose and Paine 1993; Wythe 2004). Curatorial activities also generate records, a selection of which will become part of the museum archive. Thus, the museum archive serves a dual function; it is both a resource for, and a product of museum curation.[45] Finally, the archive comes into play through the metaphor of the museum-as-archive. According to this construct, museum collections and "the entire associated record" of the museum holdings (including its inherited procedures and customs), can be understood as a type of archived record of human culture (Pearce 1992, 120).

Each of these approaches has curatorial value, and each can be problematised in turn. With these archival constructs in mind (archives as source material, the museum archive and the metaphor of the museum-as-archive), the following sections address how the principles of curatorship have been challenged over the past fifty years and considers the implications of these challenges for museum curation in relation to the three archival constructs described above.

v. Critiquing the Museum and its Curation

In parallel to the critiques levelled at the archive, towards the end of twentieth century, the museum faced new forms of scrutiny from a wide range of critical perspectives in the arts, humanities and social sciences. From the late 1970s, this critical analysis gathered pace, and by the late 1990s, a plethora of texts elaborated

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[45] In general, museum's archives are comprised principally of 'inactive' records relating to its institutional governance and activities and do not include 'active' records such as collection files. However some commentators extend this definition to include a museum's collection records. These are the active but permanent files that hold documentation relating to the provenance, condition and history of use of the collections, and which provide collected items with their archival associations. See Deiss 1984; Orna and Pettitt 1998; Trant 2012; Wythe 2004.

how the museum operates as an institution of power, reflecting and perpetuating the dominant cultural values in contemporary society (Macdonald 2006a; Witcomb 2003).[46] A look at three seminal texts in this era of paradigm change helps to illuminate how these criticisms impacted ideas of curatorship and brings clarity to the role of the archive in these developments.

Hooper-Greenhill's (1992) study *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* offers an early, revisionist history of the museum and its collecting practices. Drawing on Foucault, it follows the evolution of the museum as a distinct discursive system, showing how the museum's production of knowledge rests on systems that, although presented as rational and natural, advance highly subjective worldviews and Western *épistèmes* rooted in positivist, imperialist, colonial and academic discourses that produce and uphold hegemonic power (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). The museum, as an 'archival' institution, collects and orders what can be stated, and determines the categories and systems by which these statements are valued, organised, preserved and accessed (Kreps 2006). Museum displays in particular make visible claims to truthfulness, portraying information as fact through the presentation of typologies, chronologies and evolutionary models (Bal 1992b; Haraway 1984; Staniszewski 1999). Exhibitions reveal and naturalise certain information, while omitting and concealing other information. For example, through its apparatus, the museum has historically obscured issues around politics of ownership, and the moral and cultural imperialism on which the museum project has been built (Bal 1996).

Tony Bennett's seminal study *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) showed how the museum operates as a unique topology. Bennett traced the development of the museum as one of a series of cultural institutions that arose in the nineteenth century (including fairgrounds, world fairs and department stores), that revolves around the practice of 'showing and telling'. Through specific technologies of representation, the visitor is guided through an exhibition space which configures artefacts and persons in public spaces in ways that were "calculated to embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values" (Bennett 1995, 6). The power of the museum

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[46] Seminal texts include Bennett 1995; Clifford 1988b; Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; Haraway 1984; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Karp and Lavine 1991; Pearce 1992; D. Phillips 1997; Wright 1989.

is manifest "by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order" (Bennett 1995, 67). Through the museum's "exhibitionary complex", these self-observing and self-regulating museum visitors hold the power to view the crowd as much as be a part of it, thus democratising of the act of inspection as spectacle and (self-)surveillance. Hence, the exhibition and its specific manifestation in the public museum, has become a central vehicle in the formation of new viewing and consuming publics, and for "inscribing and broadcasting messages of power" in society (Bennett 1995, 6).[47]

In the same decade, the American art historian Carol Duncan argued that the museum, in particular the art museum, functions as a ritual structure (Duncan 1995; see also Wallach and Duncan 1980). Questioning the secular nature of the museum, she argued that the museum, through its architectural conventions and rhetorical devices, delineates a sacred space and liminal zone that separate the visitors from everyday experience, bridging the everyday and the sacred, the real and the imaginary, the visible and the invisible. Duncan drew attention to the museum's symbolic and affective power, highlighting its potentially transformative effect on whatever – and even whomever – crosses its threshold. In turn, by transforming entities into symbolic representations, the museum functions as a space in which idealised notions of social, sexual and political identities can be framed and enacted as objective and common-sense knowledge. As the central choreographer in this terrain, the curator holds the power to "control the representation" of individuals, communities and their values, while at the same time position themselves as rightfully placed to determine and authenticate these values (Duncan 1995, 8).

These studies are examples of critical writings that played an important role in challenging the once taken-for-granted framework for museum curation. In doing so, they provide a baseline to consider how curatorial practices utilise the archive within the museum as part of its discursive workings. Yet their focus is on large-scale archetypal, often national, Western institutions (Kreps 2006). They do not address the variable forms of curatorial practice and context, professional perspectives,

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[47] The museum's relation to the development of consumer culture has been well studied from a number of vantage points. See for example Ames 1992; Bennett 1995; Clifford 1988a; Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a; J. P. Harris 2001; Krauss 1990; Samuel 1994; Walsh 1992; Wu 2002.

intention and agency, and thus tend to reinforce over-simplified figurations of the curator and curatorial practice. Moreover, given their dates, these critiques also predate any consideration of the impact of digital technologies, which have come to significantly shape curatorial mediation in the museum, and so are, by default, out of step with contemporary museology.

vi. Bridging Theory and Practice: Museum Studies and Critical Museologies

In this sense, two other mutually influencing developments provide practice-based perspectives, which have deepened this interrogation of museum curatorship. The first development was the emergence of museum studies as a distinct area of study from the 1980s (Dubuc 2011; Mason 2006). Bridging the vocational and academic spheres, museum studies called for curators to be educated in, and responsive to, the developing academic critical discourse pertaining to the museum and the contested nature of its endeavours.[48] The second development was the so-called new museology movement that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s (Lorente 2012; Vergo 1989). Advocates of this movement sought to reorient the museum to be less elitist, and more relevant to and reflective of, diverse members of society, and to challenge the museum's authority to define the terms of knowledge production (Stam 1993; Wright 1989).[49] These aims could be accomplished in part by disputing taken-for-granted curatorial authority and unsettling its self-perpetuating, internally focused logic by asking curators to pursue broadening audience bases and improving the experience of museum-goers (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1994).

The discourse around critical and new museology also demonstrated how the function of the museum has been polarised along a series of interrelated binaries. Roughly sketched, these are: a curatorial focus on the entertainment and appeal to

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[48] See for instance, the Leicester Readers in Museum Studies series.
[49] Coming out of a broad range of intellectual developments such as the sociology of culture, critical anthropology, literary theory, social history, postcolonial and feminist theories, the movement responded to new awareness of the museum's unequal social power relations and its role in perpetuating patriarchal, hierarchical and imperialist values (Lorente 2012). However, the new museology was hardly a novel and cohesive movement (McCall and Gray 2014; Stam 1993), and has been subject to regional and linguistic variations (Lorente 2012). Furthermore, the feasibility of implementing its values in practice (Stam 1993; Witcomb 2003), and its successes or failures, have not yet been adequately examined (Rose 2012, 252). None-the-less, the notion of a 'new' museology continues to serve as a conceptual reference point to understand museum curation (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013b; McCall and Gray 2014).

diverse museum publics on the one hand (associated with populism, user-friendliness, spectacle, and financial profitability); and curatorial activities prioritising scholarship and contemplation on the other (associated with slow accumulation and communication of specialist knowledge, not-for-profit initiatives, elitism and the potential alienation of the public) (Alexander and Alexander 2008; Pearce 1992).[50] Even as these dichotomies have been debunked (D. F. Cameron 1971; Ewin 2015; Macdonald 2002), they nonetheless point to a dynamic that colours museum curation between the facilitation of an *experience* of museum collections, and the provision of authenticated *information and evidence*. This tension also colours archive-oriented curatorial practices, as will be shown.

vii. Archives as Source and Resource for Museum Curation

Archival records can be drawn on to support and bridge these different purposes of the museum. Archives function as a baseline empirical scholarly resource for curators, which provide context and provenance, and construct authoritative curatorial narratives. Individual records can be presented in an exhibition to provide the public with historical context for a given artefact. More generally, the display of archival material in an exhibit signals the provision of verified and truthful information about the past; curators can draw on the archive's "principle of credibility" (Osborne 1999), and its role as an "arsenal of accountability" (Eastwood and MacNeil 2010, vii). The presence of archival records confers ideas of authenticity not only onto collected objects, but also onto curatorial and museological narratives and positions. Conversely, by showcasing archival records in the sanctified exhibition space, curators also authenticate the archive, and the museum-as-archive rhetorical loop is asserted and reinforced.

Curators can also capitalise on the affective qualities of archival records and their currency in scholarly and popular imagination discussed in Chapters III, IV and V. In an exhibition, archival records help 'bring to life' the past in present terms, rendering a presentation more immediate and convincing. Examples include the display of enlarged archival photographs, newsreels or audio recordings providing

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[50] Related binaries include the museum as a temple or a forum (D. F. Cameron 1971; Stam 1993); as a place of reflection or sensation (Belting 2001); resonance and wonder (Greenblatt 1990); and an aesthetic, educational or discursive one (Cuno 2001).

first person accounts of a particular historical event or experience, as is frequently seen in social history museums. Archival materials can render an exhibition more accessible, working with more direct forms of communication, seemingly requiring less contextualisation than unfamiliar museum artefacts because they typically arise from familiar forms of communication. Conversely, older forms of documentation can be used to evoke nostalgia or wonder (such as telegrams and sepia photographs), harnessing the 'romance' of the archive in ways that render the past both exotic and within reach at the same time.

Curators can use the emotional and visceral experience of archives to connect with museum audiences. Archival records can be part of a strategy to attract new visitors, making exhibitions and collections more relevant to and representative of their lives, harnessing the archive as "evidence of me" (Eastwood and MacNeil 2010, vii). In turns, as a ritualised, social space the museum is also a place for archive records to be experienced as a shared resource. In this context, they can be used as part of activities that foster collective memorialisation and identity formation. Museum curation encourages visitors to contemplate fragments of the past in order to make meaning in the present. This may be accomplished, for example, by juxtaposing archived images of the past with contemporary photographs.[51] With important parallels to the participatory landscape of archives (Chapter III), the deployment of interactive technologies such as user-curated online and social media platforms, support visitors' personalised reading and use of archival records within and beyond the museum site (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a). In each of these ways, the integration of archival records into museum programming supports aims for more democratic and inclusive museums.

In a recent Pablo Picasso exhibition at Tate Modern in London, "Picasso 1932: Love, Fame, Tragedy" (8 March 2018 to 9 September 2018), curated by Achim Borchardt-Hume and Nancy Ireson, archive records were employed towards a number of principles and 'rules' of exhibiting that viewers would perceive as given (Bal 2006,

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[51] To offer one of many examples, this technique has been employed in the exhibition *In a Different Light: Reflecting on Northwest Coast Art* exhibition at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver (22 June 2017-Summer 2020). Curators juxtaposed historical and contemporary photographs and testimonies in a didactic panel entitled 'Witnessing', thereby providing a platform for Indigenous Northwest Coast peoples to story past and present through reflexive consideration of repatriated objects.

532). Archive records gave historicity to a visual presentation by signposting dates and events. They supported the chronological orientation of the curator's narrative, which posited that 1932 was a "year of wonders" for Picasso, a particularly inspiring, but difficult point in the artist's life (Ireson et al. 2018). Exhibition photographs and ephemera relating to his 1932 retrospective at the Galeries Georges Petit were displayed in vitrines and further storied a partial rehang of the display as part of the contemporary Tate exhibition. Archival photographs also linked artworks to the life of the artist, supporting a conventional, biographical narrative, which positioned the artist as "the unifying principle" (Bal 2006). Photographs of his mistress Marie-Thérèse Walter were included as part of the didactic panelling, introducing her as the artist's muse, which reinforced the familiar trope of Picasso as a passionate (but unfaithful) genius.

The curators configured archival materials in ways that provide multiple points of engagement for visitors, rendering the exhibition space more "open and polysemic" (Witcomb 2003, 6). A 1932 advertising leaflet for Picasso's Hispano-Suiza chauffeured car, a butcher's receipt and grocery bill, a telegram announcing the date of the exhibition – each of these documentary fragments provided glimpses of the artist's daily life at his summer residence and studio outside Paris. These documents provide little historical significance; rather, their value lies in being evocative and symbolic, tapping into the imaginary and the extraordinary through the ordinary, mundane, but authentic archival fragments of Picasso's life (Osborne 1999). Selected by curators and encased in vitrines, these archival records were elevated and aestheticised as treasured entities in their own right. Finally, a scaled-to-size reproduction of a photograph of Picasso's summer studio was a feature design element in the presentation and further dramatised the exhibition space. In turn, the sculptures on display in the exhibition could be seen *in situ* in the enlarged photograph of the artist's studio. In this arrangement, each entity – the artwork and the archival photograph – authenticates the other.

Yet while archives support curatorial processes, they are also vulnerable to them. As discussed in Chapter V, museum curation decontextualises (Andreasen and Larsen 2007; Clifford 1988a). Curators select archival material, take these records out of their original and/or archival context and temporarily rearrange them in the

exhibition, research, teaching or programming environment, each of which asserts their own discursive conditions. Through this process, curators instil additional layers of mediation, interpretation and valuation onto a given record (Ames 1992; Macdonald 2006b; Simpson and Watson 2007). In an exhibition, archive records are displaced from the more open-ended research framework and placed as part of a highly structured curatorial narrative. Archive records extracted from their archival frame are detached from their provenance, original order and cross-referentiality. Rearranging archival records in an exhibition also disrupts their archival structure preserved in *fonds* and series. This effect of dislocating archival records is compounded by the increasingly diverse and distributed fields of practice for archives and curation, which multiplies the possible points of decontextualisation and recontextualisation.

Furthermore, the curation of archival records is a practice of selecting from what has already been filtered; it redoubles archival selectivity. The inclusion of archival records in an exhibition gives them presence, but also deepens this fragmentation of the past; only a portion of records can be displayed in an exhibition, representing a further reduction of the "sliver of a sliver" that constitutes documentary records (V. Harris 2002b, 135). Moreover, exhibiting archive records also induces a loss of the information available through direct handling of archival records. It restricts access to the haptic qualities that allows users to read and cross-reference them in personalised ways. In the aforementioned exhibition, only a single page of Picasso's sketchbook could be revealed when presented in a vitrine. Loss also occurs through the alterations made to archival records as they are reconfigured for public presentation and framed in devices (e.g. vitrines, frames, screens, printed and digital reproductions and so on) that absorb and override other sensory contact points. Curatorial choices emerge in relation to how to account for, and if/how to signpost, the areas and textures of these losses.

Moreover, museums commodify culture; they are commercial institutions. Museum archives, and archival records borrowed by an institution for exhibition, can be repurposed as marketing and merchandising opportunities (Clifford 1991; Deiss 1984; Wythe 2004). To offer one example: a vintage exhibition poster from a 1960's Picasso exhibition in the collection of the Tate Archive was reprinted and released to

coincide with the 2018 exhibition described above, and a digital version circulated as part of an electronic marketing campaign for the exhibition. The strategy brought new use value to the record from the museum's archive, promoting the exhibition and the opportunity to "shop the exhibition" (TATE e-marketing, 7 April 2018). This type of repurposing of archival material in entangled curatorial and commercial frameworks warrants future research, particularly for how these interrelationships are elaborated in the digital sphere. For the purposes of this study, the point stands that the commodification of archival records constitutes an additional gesture of mediation and engenders different contexts for reading archival records. As Clifford described in relation to postcards made from historic photographs sold in the gift shop of two indigenous museums in Canada, the commodification of archival records in a museum context stories the archive in different ways (Clifford 1991). It also engenders different conditions for the provision of contextual information. In addition to the cursory text one might find on an object label, what additional details should be included on the verso of such a postcard? What relationship does this reproduction have to the original archival photograph, to the archive itself, to the museum, its exhibition programming, the donor, the creator? Who is circulating this archival record and for what purpose?

As much as they support curatorial activities, the use of archives as described above also poses a risk: archival records may come to represent the authenticated past in complex ways without themselves being meaningfully contextualised or interrogated. This is doubly true in light of the naturalising effect of the museum's exhibition spaces and the commonsense association between archives and evidence. The curatorial strategies towards archives described above are typically undertaken by curators in a relatively unexamined capacity. There is a tendency to treat archival records as self-evident resources to be selected from and harnessed in service to the museum's larger narratives and aims. Applying insights from the more critical and post-critical museological discourses highlights how the archives, and ideas of the archive, can also be more consciously mobilised towards explicit critical or experimental strategies in museum curation, and it is here I turn to next.

viii. Curatorship, the Archive and Strategies of Representation

As part of the critical museological turn, renewed attention has been paid to the representational model of museums based on a subject/object dualism in which one entity (idea, sign or person) comes to stand for another (S. Hall 1997). Curatorial representations have been shown to be highly reductive, ordering material and information in ways that deny the complexities and ambivalences of otherwise complex phenomena. Curatorial practices are by their nature prejudicial and ideological, enmeshed in thorny issues of judgment and power (Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1997; Pearce 1992). As the nature of social and individual identity, and the complexities of political agency have been probed, the idea that a collection or exhibition could be used as a comprehensive representation has been shown to be deeply problematic (Bennett 1995; Haraway 1984; Lidchi 1997; Pearce 1992; Wallach and Duncan 1980).

Over the last thirty years, in addition to the previously mentioned critical museological texts, postcolonial, feminist and queer theories have provided important lenses through which to question how museum curation construes knowledge and naturalises it as truthful and authoritative through both its exhibitions and collections. Such theories have brought to light how curatorial practices contribute to racial, ethnic, class and gender stereotyping, and the construction of hegemonic values and subject positions.[52] The resulting "political rationality" of the museum (Bennett 1995, 9) saw curators work towards greater parity in curatorial representations, giving visibility and 'voice' to those who have historically been miscast, marginalised or omitted from the museum frame (Pearce 1994).

Building on this, a number of archive-oriented curatorial strategies come to the fore. In relation to collecting activities, attempts have been made to de-centre the dominant cultural perspectives by reorganising and representing museum collections according to alternative or non-hegemonic epistemologies (Clifford 1988b; Pearce 1992, 5; Kreps 2006; R. B. Phillips 2011). These practices, in essence, attempt to 'disorder' and 'refigure' (Chapter IV) the museum-as-archive. Collection policies

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[52] See for instance (Ames 1992; Bal 1996; Bourdieu 1993b; Coombes 1994; Dimitrakaki and Perry 2015; Duncan 1995; S. Hall 2000; Haraway 1984; Karp and Lavine 1991; Levin 2010; Lidchi 1997).

have been broadened to incorporate alternative, non-official or community archive collections, such as those described in Chapters III and IV, thus supporting the museum's aim to be more democratic at the point of constituting the museum collection. Other projects may gather, crowdsource or commission new archival collections as part of a specific curatorial project in order to augment the museum's documentary records. Such efforts also support the aforementioned ideological aims to shift museums towards more egalitarian and collaborative models of curation (Clifford 1997; Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1994).

In turn, curation validates the stories, experiences and identities depicted through archival and museum representations, and asserts them to be meaningful for the cultural record. By incorporating these records into collections and public programming, institutions not only legitimise alternative narratives, they also promote a vision of the museum as a more progressive, democratic or even counter-hegemonic organisation. In each of these ways, archives support the representational function of museums, and museums, in turn, reinforce the representational currency of archives and archival records.[53]

Categorising the Archive: Collection Hierarchies

While the archive serves a representative function in the museum, the typology of archives is also being represented. Here the question of the distinction between an archive and other collected cultural material (Chapter V) is re-ignited. Given the variability of archives and the fluidity of the archive as a construct, as well as the various points of crossover between museums, archives and their respective collections, an archival record is, in essence, whatever the museum deems it to be. What may be described as archival in one instance may be classified or presented as part of the museum collection in other. An archival resource generated by curatorial programming (e.g. an oral history collection), could also be classified as part of a museum's public programming, and thus be part of the institutional archive as a 'by-product' of its core activities. Even though such classifications may be pre-

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[53] However, scholars have challenged the dependency on the representational model of the museum in critical museology, arguing that it fails to adequately recognise the complex ways museum audiences identify or engage with curatorial messaging, particularly given the conditions of globalised, hypermodern and 'distributed' museums (Dewdney, Dibosa and Walsh 2013a; Witcomb 2003). This will be addressed further in Chapter VIII.

determined by another agency (a community group, an independent researcher or an artist's estate), a museum will also assert its own categories onto that which it collects and displays and will do so with an eye on its broader acquisition and collections policies, programming priorities, publicity and marketing goals.

The museological discourse surveyed showed how collection-based museums tend to work to collection hierarchies whereby museum collections are tacitly understood as the primary collection, and archives as secondary contextual, research material. However, different types of museums – including research-based centres, social history museums, science and 'discovery' centres, cultural and indigenous centres (Clifford 1997; Simpson and Watson 2007) – may display documentary material on a more equal footing with museum objects (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Macdonald 2002; Spalding 2002). This suggests such classification is more nuanced than may first appear.

ix. Positioning the Curator: Behind-the-Scenes and Spaces of Public Display

Critical museological debates have questioned not only *what* is being represented in the museum, but also *how* these representations are produced through a structural divide within the museum. This physical divide separates activities that take place behind-the-scenes where knowledge is produced, with the public exhibition spaces where messages are offered for consumption (Bennett 1995; Cuno 2001; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1989; Macdonald 2002). The museum's "axis of visibility" positions people, objects and space in ways that are naturalised and taken for granted (E. H. Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 7). It also creates two subject positions: the curator and the viewer. Power relations favour the curator as the knowing subject and producer who decides what can be seen, and under what conditions it will be viewed. The museum visitor, on the other hand, is seen as the passive consuming subject who is given limited access to the objects and practices through which curatorial knowledge is produced. Advocates of new and critical museologies have sought to break down this binary between the 'informed' and empowered museum professional and the 'not knowing' passive museum visitor (Bennett 1995, 127; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1994).

In the last thirty years, these issues have converged around the discourse of anthropology and specifically ethnography, with its history of depicting different societies through displays of their material culture (Ames 1992; Bouquet 2000; Shelton 2006). For example, anthropologist and museum scholar James Clifford characterised the museum as a 'contact zone', a social arena in which different communities of people, with different cultural frameworks and experiences, may share a sphere of influence (Clifford 1997).

> When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship* – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull (Clifford 1997, 192 [his emphasis]).

The contact zone model of the museum reconceptualises curation beyond custodial care and presentation of fixed objects and records. It imagines curation as stewardship of this zone of knowledge production and exchange, collections-oriented knowledge, which is always subject to negotiation, is dynamic, unfolding and enmeshed in a continual, and often contradictory and fraught, web of relationships between people, objects and spaces. The metaphor has become a useful reference point for those seeking to redress the museum's power relations (e.g. Crooke 2007; Purkis 2013; Witcomb 2003) and is a concept that has also been applied to the archive (e.g. Burton 2005; Sahadeo 2005).

Yet the metaphor has also been adopted in ways that inadvertently reinforce dominant power relations. As Boast argues, curatorship is inherently bound by "leftover colonial competences – collecting, exhibiting and educating", which are perpetuated in the neo-colonial landscape of the museum (Boast 2011, 65). Adopting the rhetoric of a contact zone of knowledge exchange also risks masking and reinforcing systematic asymmetries of power intrinsic to museums. This debate highlights the irreconcilable dilemma of curatorship: even if curators wish to alter the power relations of their work, curatorship is conditioned by, and itself conditions, the representative frame of the "museum-as-collection" (Clifford 1997), which is bound by unequal power relations – both past and present. The aforementioned physical and epistemological divisions of the museum (behind-the-scenes and public spaces) therefore do not simply outline a division of power; they also delineate the

liminal arena of curatorial mediation. The challenges inherent in the curator's mediating position are particularly overt in the discourses around curating as exhibition-making (see Chapter VII). Yet it is through the formative terms of museum curation with its structural dualities that the ambivalence towards the curatorial position is established, and which continues to inform curatorial activities with and through the archives.

Furthermore, although curators are intermediating agents with a significant degree of power and access 'behind the scenes', they are also public-facing representatives of the institution accountable to many different stakeholders: the institution, directors, patrons and sponsors; scholarly and specialist communities; and the donors, creators and source communities (Macdonald 2002). Furthermore, the autonomy of the curator is often lessened by being part of a larger team of museum professionals (including colleagues in marketing and fundraising, public programming, conservation and security departments) and by the museum visitors and contributors who bring their own interpretive power to the equation. Resourcing and funding pressures also impact curatorial autonomy. In the UK, for instance, the reduction of state funding in the 1980s and 1990s forced museums to operate under 'plural funding' and audit-driven models that rationalise public expenditures (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1994; Macdonald 2002). The balance of power in museums shifted away from curators towards managers and administrators, education and marketing departments (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013b; Macdonald 2002; Shelton 2006). It stands that many contingent agents and pressures condition the curatorial approaches to archives, archival materials and archival subjects in museums.

x. The Archive as a Motif in the Critique of Curatorship

Visual artists have also contributed to the interrogation of curatorial mediation and knowledge production in museums. Building on institutional critiques from the late 1960s, artists have, since the 1980s, been invited to reconfigure museum collections in the exhibition space (e.g. Bronson and Gale 1983; Drobnick and Fisher 2002; Schaffner and Winzen 1998). Interventions by artists into museum collections have

unsettled curatorial display practices and the museological divisions and the privileged position of the curator therein.[54] Here artists may assume positions typically reserved for curators by researching, selecting and arranging museum collections for public display. Given privileged access to both the exhibition space and the museum sites and stores, artists have turned the spotlight onto items sequestered in storage, on the packaging, the apparatus and the administrative remnants of museum systems, garnering them new symbolic and aesthetic value (Schaffner and Winzen 1998).

In this interventionist mode, archival records, the museum's institutional archive, and the museum-as-archive metaphor are fruitful resources. To offer one of many examples, in her 1998 installation "Information Room" at Bern Kunsthalle, artist Andrea Fraser brought the museum's archive into the public space and made it available in its entirety for public perusal and disordering (Spieker 2008, 181–82). The museum-as-archive conceit also reappears as an important springboard towards the rhetorical unsettling of inherited museum practices and collections. As early as 1983, Canadian curator Peggy Gale described a number of critical interventions in museums by artists who "quote [the museum] for their own purposes as an archive, a structure for preservation and presentation, a social entity" (Bronson and Gale 1983, 9). In 2017, the metaphor persists: "Mashup the Archive", a collective curatorial project organised by Iwalewahaus, Bayreuth in Germany, included a commission of artists' projects towards "activating and making visible" the museum's "extensive archive of African art" (S. Hopkins and Siegert 2017).

Curatorial Reflexivity and Museum Archives

Taking cues from these developments, curators have also adopted interventionist strategies. They have drawn attention to the peripheral areas of practice, spaces beneath or alongside the gallery, including the stores, the offices and service areas

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[54] Early examples include Eduardo Paolozzi's 1985 collaboration with the British Museum, *Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons from Nahuatl* in which the artist exhibited misfit objects from the museum's ethnography collection at the Museum of Mankind (Paolozzi 1985); American artists Joseph Kosuth's provocative rehang of the Brooklyn Museum collection, *The Play of the Unmentionable* (27 Sept – 31 December 1990), which brought censored and salacious works to the fore; and Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society (4 April 1992 – 28 February 1993) for which the artist constructed labels and configured objects from the museum collection in ways that laid bare the racist ideologies underpinning the museum's collecting and display practices. See also Alberro and Stimson 2009.

(Macdonald 2002; Rose 2012; Spieker 2008). Curators have used the museological division as a critical platform to bridge areas of research and public presentation, and to give access to the places that "evoke the mediatory relations, normally hidden from view" (Bouquet 1996, 229). Initiatives have been trialled to offer greater access to museum collections, including 'visible storage' models (Ames 1992; Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 201) and collaborative research and collection documentation models (R. B. Phillips 2011). The questioning of museum practices by curators has fostered reflexive projects that highlight the practices of valuation traditionally excluded from public presentations (e.g. Beard 2014; R. B. Phillips 2005). Others have brought to light examples of 'problematic material' for contemporary scholars (Bouquet 2000; S. Hopkins and Siegert 2017).[55] Curators may use texts to put forward multiple viewpoints in order to flag contested information in museum texts or to signal the subjective nature of authorship (Bal 2007; Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a; Lorente 2012, 25).

Imperatives for curatorial transparency also encourage the reflexive use of a museum's curatorial and archival records. In 1993, museum studies' scholar Deirdre Stam argued that the new museology centred on "a call for an improved understanding and handling of the [museum's] full information base", including the documentation "housed variously in registration files, curatorial records, public relations files, institutional archives, administrative data, correspondence, financial records, personnel files and more" (Stam 1993, 271-272). Over two decades later Jennifer Trant identifies a moral obligation to a) make collections documentation public; b) to expand the concept of collection documentation to include evidence of its use and contextualisation within the museum's programming framework; and c) to recognise a "multiplicity of information sources, inside and outside of the institution" (Trant 2012, 275). In a telling statement that aligns the curatorial position with an archival one, Trant writes: "If museum collections information is going to have a longer life and is going to become, in itself, a source for someone else's work, then the recording of the context of creation of that information becomes important. When that content is made explicit, for example, through metadata about digital documents or the recording of authorship in on-line catalogue

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[55] This may also include addressing artefacts or documents that fall between museum classifications, such as those 'orphan' objects featured in project A (Appendix i).

entries, the institution is 'released' from its burden of authority; the source become responsible, rather than the institution as a whole. The museum is playing a valuable role, but it is as conduit, not arbiter" (Trant 2012, 284).

This curatorial interest in museum archives echoes the archival turn in academic discourse described in Chapter IV. Curators may treat archives as a source for curation as well as a *subject* through which to interrogate inherited curatorial practices and collections. A focus on the biographies of museum objects and collections as they are traceable through museum archives is one such strategy (Shelton 2006). This approach highlights the subjective and often eccentric collecting and documentation practices, with their distinct historical formations and cultural trajectories. Reflecting on the uneven nature of "curatorial inheritance" (Pearce 1992, 120) can demonstrate how museum collections, like archives, are "already stories" (Burton 2005, 20). The discourse enables curators to acknowledge the contingencies of the collections they work with, and to contemplate how social and personal circumstances, prejudices and passions impact curation and the resulting production of knowledge (Macdonald 2002).

In this capacity, museum archives constitute a rich, but often problematic resource. Records that trace collecting histories can be used to hold institutions accountable to the contested acquisition of cultural material, as well as to demonstrate complex histories, and even conflicting conceptualisations of ownership (Clifford 1991). Museum archives hold documentation that may support efforts to repatriate museum collections (R. B. Phillips 2005). Collection records may also prompt engagement with difficult pasts. For instance, Moira Simpson describes how the Smithsonian opened their institutional archives by expanding and making the catalogue records more readily available to indigenous researchers in ways that fostered meaningful, but at times traumatic, encounters with information about past abuses to aboriginal communities (Simpson 1996). The museum archive can also be utilised to investigate how processes of political change and decolonisation have been negotiated through museum collections and exhibitions (e.g. Wintle 2016), and it can thus serve as a resource to understand the socio-political function of museums both in the past and the present.

Thus, the museum's documentary records become a source for not only curatorship, but also for re-evaluating its past and current aims. For instance, in the Centenary Gallery of the Horniman Museum in London, in 2016, the concept of the museum-as-archive was used to introduce the museum's ethnographic collection:

> The museum operates as an immense, three-dimensional archive. It collects, numbers, classifies, files, preserves, displays and stores tens of thousands of artefacts, objects which illustrate and record the 'material culture' of humankind both past and present.

With this description of the museum as an archive, the curators presented the museum collection as a historically constructed entity. Within the corresponding text panel, they asked viewers to question why particular objects were acquired for the museum, and how the classification systems underpinning them were historically contingent and outmoded. Given this archival framing, the museum and its collections was mobilised not only as a resource for museum curation, but also for its critique. Rather than gloss over the troubling rationales of the ethnographic museum project, this approach positioned the museum collection as a record of contestable collecting practices.

A nearby display panel included archived photographs of museum staff, which also attempted to demystify the personalities behind the curatorial inheritance, highlighting them as historical agents, and positioning them as counterpoints to contemporary curators and curatorial perspectives. However, such a strategy places accountability on the past collectors at the point of collection (Shelton 2006). It displaces the colonial archival imaginary as 'elsewhere' in time and space to the present, in service to a utopian imaginary of a more egalitarian, but still neo-colonial, present (Edwards 2016). In other words, the metaphor of the museum-as-archive provides a framework that can be both critical and affirming of the museum project.

However, as useful as the museum-as-archive metaphor may be, as rehearsed in Chapter V, the organising structure of museum collections differ from that of archives.[56] Museums do not handle and preserve collections through the same archival principles that safeguard the content, context and order of records. The

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[56] I am indebted to Sue Breakell for helping me to refine my thinking on this point.

relationship between collected items in the museum is determined by the institution, not the creators of the artefacts. The museum has its own systems, which operate towards different forms of public access and presentation that render the museum and its collections an inherently *curated* space. Furthermore, even given the prevalence of archival references in critical museum curatorship, on balance, museum commentators and curators conceive of the archive as a source in an unquestioning manner, as if only vaguely aware of its specific professional paradigm, or the critical perspectives outlined in Chapters III and IV. It is notable that in the critical museological texts and curatorial manuals reviewed for this study, subject indexes fail to include the archive as a topic in its own right, referencing it simply as a source for historical research or in relation to institutional recordkeeping. Therefore, the discourse of curatorship treats the ontology of the archive as self-evident but malleable. It enables curators to sidestep the archivist's definition of archives described in Chapter III and selectively draw from its varied connotations. Given the authority of museum representation, curators using the archive in public ways further legitimise the archive as the elaborated construct described in Chapter IV. Such broad evocation of 'the archive' makes typological slippage easy, blurring or denying the differences between collection types, museum documentation and archival records to suit different purposes.

Museum Labels as Archival Referents

This discursive complexity is intensified given the intertextuality of the museum. As the example of the Horniman museum demonstrated, although museums showcase visual and material objects, they are equally about the written word (Bal 1996; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 1994; Pearce 1992, 249–53). Museum texts include object labels, wall texts, directional signage, exhibition catalogues, educational guides and messaging in audio-visual and digital forms. Bearing in mind the broad range of contexts for curatorial practice and the contemporary 'distributed' nature of the museum (Bautista and Balsamo 2011), this intertextual presentation also extends into spheres beyond the museum itself, including through exhibition catalogues, online platforms, advertisements and subsidiary programming. (This point will be elaborated on in the following chapters.)

These concerns around intertextuality converge in a key curatorial device: museum labels. Captions and didactic labels are most commonly discussed in the literature reviewed.[57] Captions highlight information, providing for instance, notes about an object's creator, date of creation and form (George 2015; North 1957; Serrell 2015). Didactic labels craft a curatorial narrative. They ascribe cultural meaning to objects, representing them as cultural facts, stabilising and naturalising their meaning in a given discourse (Baxandall 1991). Both type of label helps to mask curatorial bias and the problematic terms of museum appraisal, classification, selection and exposition (Pearce 1992). It is conventional practice to employ neutral language in the third person to convey the impressions that the information provided is objectivity delivered and truthful (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). However, there is a third, less public type of label: object identification labels. In the museum storeroom, these labels – which may take the form as a simple identification number – link a collected artefact to the detailed records relating to its provenance, its physical attributes and condition, storage location and so on. The object label is a distillation of the documentation that envelopes the object and imbues it with its archival association.

In each of these instances, museum labels reinforce the construct of the museum as an archive. Labels can be understood as archival referents and operators which provide the structure and context of museum collections, giving them the quality of records as they move through different areas of practice and reception and different moments in time.[58] In other words, the label is not simply a narrative device; it also serves to safeguard an item's contextual envelope. Museum labels serve other tacit functions. In the exhibition space, they assert typologies and collection hierarchies. Labels are arranged to be in a dialogue with museum artefacts, but positioned in a supplementary and secondary role (Baxandall 1991). The placement, size and location of exhibition labels is not only a question of design; it is also a question of differentiating the collected object from its documentation (George 2015).

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[57] This is not to imply all museum exhibitions include exhibition labels. Curators of contemporary art exhibitions, for instance, may do away with conventional captions to encourage a less mediated experience and highlight the aesthetic qualities of artworks.

[58] At the same time, museum labels are a by-product of curation so also constitute a contribution to the museum archive and to related ideas of the museum-as-archive. This point will be revisited in Chapter VII in relation to the documentation of curatorial projects as part of the discourse around *curating*.

Labels also signify layers of authorship and agency (Clifford 1991). They attribute the artefact to a creator and assert ownership. They also constitute a form of *curatorial* authorship (George 2015; North 1957). Moreover, labels also encompass information generated by others over the course of an object's life, including museum staff and the object donors. In this capacity labels become a referent to other, more tacit points of authorship and agency. In larger institutions, the development of an exhibition copy is often a collaboration between different departments with significant input from the education and marketing departments (Macdonald 2002). Finally, exhibition labels are intellectual spaces in which a number of agents (the exhibition, the maker, viewer and exhibitor), come into contact, bringing different interpretations and modes of authoring (Baxandall 1991).

A much-examined exhibition that brings together many of the issues described is *Into the Heart of Africa*, held at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (November 16, 1989 to August 6, 1990). Drawing on critical museology, the exhibition curator and anthropologist Jeanne Cannizzo selected and arranged material from the museum's permanent collection in a manner aimed to construct a critical portrait of colonial collecting practices in Canada. Using an ironic tone, she juxtaposed African artefacts next to statements by missionaries and imperial authorities to put forward the museum's "condemnation of the colonial point of view" (Schildkrout 1991, 21). Pivotally, archival material featured prominently in the exhibition, including historic photographs, documents and information from accession records, as well as interviews with descendants of the collectors.

In principle, the museological and academic discourse at the time allowed for such an exhibition. Yet the intended critical commentary was lost on many people who read it instead as a racist exhibition that perpetuated colonialist imagery (Butler 2008; Clifford 1988b). On the one hand, the archive and the museum-as-archive were being handled as a subject of critical reappraisal. Stories around the museum's collection were presented as a way to re-evaluate its history of misguided and violent collecting and display practices. Yet on the other hand, the museum archive was drawn on as historic source material and set within the authoritative framework of the museum where archive material, and indeed *the museum and its collection as archival entities*, are likely to be read literally and in good faith as to their factuality.

In other words, the problematic construct of the archival 'facts' in the frame of critical curatorship was not dealt with adequately, resulting in "gross miscommunication" between the exhibition maker, the museum going public and the critics (Schildkrout 1991, 16, 20). This confusion was exacerbated by the intertextual nature of the museum displays. The curator presented objects in traditional museum frames (such as in cabinets of curiosities and a diorama of an African village), but relied on the labelling to qualify how these historical devices were used critically, resulting in a mismatch between the visual messaging and the labels, which did not reinforce each other (Schildkrout 1991).

This example points to an implicit responsibility around the curation of archives in a museum context. A consistent and authoritative, non-ironic handling of archives and archival referents emerges as a key public and professional expectation of museum curatorship. Although the metaphor of the museum-as-archive can serve as a curatorial rhetorical device, given the intertextuality of exhibitions and museum collections, it must not be applied in ways that undermine the truth-telling frame of the museum and the signalling of archives as factual. The potential intertextual entanglements in a museum thus reinforce a need for conventional approaches to presenting archival records in congruence with their representation as historical evidence.

xi. Conclusions

Characterised by its vocational and professional nature, curatorship is intricately tied to the museum, its collections, institutional aims and operations. In this chapter I identified three archival constructs which shape the curatorial approaches to archives in museums: archives as source material, the museum archive, and the metaphor of the museum-as-archive. I demonstrated how these three constructs support different conceptualisations of the archive simultaneously, from the most formal definitions of archives as empirical source materials, to more metaphoric associations that allow curators to dismiss or withhold the differences between museum collections, documentation and archival records. These constructs serve as rhetorical devices that both affirm and put into question museological and curatorial conventions and inheritances.

In this discursive arena, the ontology of the archive is tacitly authorised by the museum and its curators. Archives serve a representative function in the museum, yet the typology and the ontology of the archive itself is also being represented. The degree to which the distinctions between archival record and museum object, between archive as resource and archive as metaphor are asserted or dismissed, and how they are signposted, constitutes an area of curatorial decision-making. This is particularly salient in light of the intertextual nature of museums, the blur between different museological and archival constructs reviewed in Chapter V, and given the value-adding quality of museums and their exhibitions.

These different curatorial approaches to the archive are concomitant with the structural divisions of the museum and the dual orientation of curatorship. These dualities (behind-the-scenes and public spaces; collections and exhibitions) also establish ambivalence towards the mediating curatorial position, which colours curatorial work with and through the archives. This chapter also extended the discussions of archival gains and losses, showing that while archives support curatorial processes, they are also vulnerable to them. Curatorial use of archives instils additional layers of mediation, interpretation and valuation onto records, which engenders new areas of decontextualisation, fragmentation and commodification. Curatorial choices emerge in relation to how to account for and signal these modifications. The use of archival resources and constructs, as well as their distillation in museum documentation and labels, plays an important part in delineating, clarifying and authenticating curatorial collections, projects, authorial positions and narratives. In this regard, I describe museum labels as archival referents and operators with all the epistemological complexities and power dynamics implied therein.

In many ways, a broadening of the terms by which archives are deployed in museum curation is observed. However, the literature also reinforces how curatorial handling of archives is inherently conditioned by unequal power relations, both past and present. Moreover, even when taking into account the various ways curators activate archives and archival constructs, and acknowledge the contingencies of archival meaning, this chapter has also identified a continued expectation that curatorial

mobilisation of archival materials upholds the overarching representation of archives as authenticated information and historical proof. By extension, this expectation of curatorial practice reaffirms the vision of the museum as a truth-telling institution. Curatorship reinforces an expectation of conventional curatorial handling of archival records and encourages museum visitors to take archives and archival metaphors at face value. Through museum curation, archival records represent an authenticated past, and/or are mobilised as a tool for the critical appraisal of history without themselves being meaningfully contextualised or interrogated. Within the discourse of curatorship, commentators and curators treat the ontology of the archive as self-evident but malleable. In these ways, the dual collecting and exhibiting structure of the museum redoubles the representative models for museums, archives and archival constructs, and the interpretative frameworks by which they are valued. Archives help give value to museums. In turn, museums contribute to the representation of archives as manifold cultural resources. Curatorial engagement with archival materials and metaphors thus sets into play a mutually validating and authenticating feedback loop for museological and archival practices, frameworks, institutions, and artefacts and records.

Although this chapter has addressed the practice of exhibition making, it has done so assuming the context of the museum. Exhibitions in this context are in dialogue with, and draw legitimacy from, the larger collection and collecting framework of the museum. By comparison, the following chapter turns to analyse the discourse of *curating*, which denotes a distinguishable field of practice and discourse focusing specifically on exhibition making, which may or may not take place in museums. It looks to clarify how the discourse of curating engenders different conceptualisations and approaches to the archive, and the various points of opportunity and responsibility that these differences bring about.

Chapter VII. Curating and Concepts of the Archive

i. Introduction: A Turn to the Verb Curating

In the late 1980s, a number of commentators began to assert that curating had developed into a specific form of practice distinguishable from museum curation. By the late 1990s, an increasing number of publications, conferences and symposia proposed *curating* as an distinct field of practice (Brenson 1998; Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; O'Neill 2012a; P. White 1996). The growing prevalence of the term 'curating' around this time signalled this so-called curatorial turn away from museum curation and its administrative practices, towards the curation and critical discourse of exhibitions themselves (Farquharson 2003; O'Neill 2010). The "age of the curator" had begun (Brenson 1998). In a trajectory that has continued well into the current decade, commentators have worked to articulate the qualities of curating by articulating its particular strategies (P. White 1996), positions (Gleadowe 2000; O'Neill 2007), discourses and vocabularies (Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; O'Neill 2012a; Szakács 2011).

The following chapter examines these discussions and, comparing them against those of curatorship, identifies certain assumptions and conditions that shape this field of practice as it corresponds with archives and concepts of the archive. The chapter is divided into three sections: i) curating and the exhibition as the locus of practice; ii) curating archives in the exhibition frame; and iii) curating and the role of the archive in defining subject positions. In each section, debates and preoccupations in the literature will be explored in order to further illuminate the nature of the relationship between curation and archives, and to build specific understanding of how the archive is conceptualised and mobilised in the discourses around curating.[59]

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[59] The points of inquiry for this chapter have also been informed by project B, the exhibition entitled *Along Some Sympathetic Lines* at the Or Gallery, Berlin in 2013. The project set the stage for my thinking about the interconnections between curating, expanded ideas of 'the archive' and artistic practices, and the issues around caretaking and creativity, agency and authorship engendered by their interrelationship. The retrospective account of the project (Appendix ii) describes some of the resulting points of curatorial entanglement.

ii. Curating and the Temporary Exhibition as the Locus of Practice

As the previous chapter outlined, part of the critical museology project of the 1980s and 1990s involved examining how exhibitions operate as a specific rhetorical form and device and a topology that delineates a liminal and ritual zone, directs the visitor's experience and behaviour, and naturalises worldviews, ideologies and epistemic systems.[60] These designated areas for "showing and telling" configure objects, information, ideas and people in a temporary curated space (Bennett 1995). Exhibitions are hierarchical, value-adding, spatial, aesthetic and discursive frames through which dominant discourses are established, maintained and consumed through implicit and explicit messaging (Bal 2007; Bennett 1995; Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; O'Neill 2012a, 92).[61] They are cultural texts, representations and sites of practice that draw from, create and naturalise discursive formations as truthful (Bal 1992b; Haraway 1984; Staniszewski 1999). Exhibition forms are variable, and are subject to innovation, critique and co-option, and are themselves commodifying.[62]

Yet, these aforementioned studies presuppose exhibitions are set within the wider epistemological and ontological frame of a parent museum, where knowledge, meaning and experience are produced in large part through museological collections, conditions and systems. By comparison, the discourse around curating assumes the exhibition as the *raison d'etre* of curatorial practice, and therefore distinguishes a separate theoretical and methodological terrain of practice (Gleadowe 2000; Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; Heinich and Pollak 1996, 237). Here curation is not centred on the same ideas of perpetuity and care of collected artefacts, and the curator is not necessarily bound by the same institutional imperatives and structural divides that set the terms for museum curation. Indeed, many curating

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[60] In addition to the literature around museum exhibitions reviewed in the previous chapter, seminal publications include *Thinking About Exhibitions* (Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996), and Mary Anne Staniszewski's (1999) study of the installation design of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *The Power of Display*. Over the past decade, a number of publications emerged to attend in particular to questions of curating, including oncurating.org (2008), *The Exhibitionist* launched in January 2010 and the *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (2012).

[61] I use the term 'exhibition' to denote a temporary public display of art, cultural artefacts, archives etc., as well as its form.

[62] The relationship between exhibitions, artistic and commercial aims, and the curator's role therein, has been a point of ongoing tension in discourses of contemporary art. See for instance Alloway 1996; Buren 1973; Klonk 2009; O'Neill 2012a, 30; Staniszewski 1999.

degree programmes do not give attention to museum collections and collecting practices (Hernández Chong Cuy 2013; Morgan 2013). The separation of curating from the museum and its collections therefore alters and expands the contexts, conditions and discursive frameworks for curatorial approaches to the archive.

Expanding Exhibition Frames in the Discourse of Curating

As temporary events, exhibitions are seen to be more responsive to changing context, socio-political issues, and to the particular needs of a given curatorial project than the more collections-oriented activities of museum curation. Whereas the museum's so-called 'permanent' collection rests on a notion of posterity, and offers "a deep and continuous ideological backdrop" for the production and display of power and knowledge, by comparison, exhibitions provide a more malleable arrangements of artefacts and ideas that can "respond to shorter term ideological requirement" (Bennett 1995, 80). Canadian scholar Reesa Greenberg, writing in 1996, challenged the conceptualisation of the exhibition as a fixed text to be 'read' by viewers. Exhibitions, she argued, are "discursive events", not stable sites of knowledge production. An exhibition is a "temporally fluid phenomenon" where its importance can be measured in part by the amount and effect of discussions it generates – both intentionally and unintentionally (Greenberg 1996a, 120).

The discourse around modern and contemporary art curating in particular promotes the idea of the exhibition as a highly dynamic and ever-evolving form that is continually reinvented, elaborated and subverted to fruitful ends (Filipovic 2013; Klonk 2009; O'Neill 2012a). It emphasises the form's potential for experimentation, and for radical and counter-cultural activities aligned with avant-garde practices. Elena Filipovic has argued that the "ephemerality and lack of absoluteness" of the form, means, at its best, it can be "a crucible for transformative experience and thinking" (Filipovic 2013, 81). The exhibition is "the site where deeply entrenched ideas and forms can come undone" (Filipovic 2013, 81). This includes critical approaches to the exhibition form itself and the practices of curating therein. Taken together, the rhetoric around exhibitions suggests an ideal for exhibition curating that is, in contrast to the continuities of museum curation, distinctly *counter-archival.*

Even with this variability, the debates around curating pivot on two emblematic models: the modernist white cube and the biennial. Each model has been elaborated, historicised and problematised in turn, but each persist as important touchstones and central "rhetorical mode of display" (Wollen 1995, 10) of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The metaphor of the art gallery as a white cube was put forward in 1976 by artist and critic Brian O'Doherty in a series of articles for *Artforum*. It describes the clean, white-walled aesthetic for gallery spaces that gathered pace in the first half of the twentieth century, and which become the dominant mode of displaying modern art from the 1950s onwards (Grasskamp 2007; Sheikh 2009). The white-walled gallery gives the impression of neutrality and the autonomy of art and artists, and single-row hanging of artworks provides aesthetic resonance to singular works of art. Yet this apparent neutrality has the effect of further commodifying all that is displayed within its walls (O'Doherty 1999). Even in its most critical manifestations, the white cube generates and perpetuates its own meaning and value; it absorbs its own critique and further ascribes power to its form and the contents therein (Bishop 2005; Miller 1996; Sheikh 2009). Although subsequent histories have challenged O'Doherty's early historiography of this exhibition form (Grasskamp 2007; Klonk 2009; Sheikh 2009), the white cube endures as a significant template and common-sense aesthetic for curating in the field of art. It follows that this exhibition model also naturalises, aestheticises and commodifies any archival materials showcased therein.

By comparison, the biennial has been described by Paul O'Neill as "the exhibition model of our times" (O'Neill 2012a, 70). These large-scale, international "mega exhibitions" hover between the regularity of an institution and apparent flexibility and responsiveness of the temporary exhibition (O'Neill 2012a, 70). They have come to be a testing ground for more radical strategies of curating and the assertion of grand curatorial themes, and have elevated and legitimised curating as a geopolitical, transcultural globalised practice reaching far beyond the conventional sphere of the gallery (Grasskamp 1996). In this capacity, the biennial has been both celebrated and contested as an expanded forum for the elaborate and often self-referential production and circulation of curatorial discourse (Filipovic, van Hal, and

Øvstebø 2010).[63] By the same token, O'Neill has described the biennial as the "new white cube" in that it "requires spectacular art, as much as it necessitates an expansion in the global art market to fill its spaces"; it is thus a format that legitimises "certain forms of artistic and curatorial praxis within the global culture industry" (O'Neill 2012a, 72).

Smaller-scale exhibition venues have provided a counterpoint to the spectacle of biennials. Cooperative, 'alternative' and artist-run galleries, hybrid commercial and not-for-profit spaces, and 'off-site' curatorial platforms have also multiplied in recent decades, contributing to the diversification of the field of curatorial practice (Greenberg 1996b; Obrist 2014). Furthermore, curating is responsive to innovations in artistic practice. Performance art, so-called 'new media' art, installation art, online, social or collaborative art projects, architectural or publication-based – each of these areas of practice stretch the parameters of the exhibition. They also unsettle the assumption that exhibitions are the primary site and outcome of curatorial activity. This stretching of the exhibition frame has been compounded with the growing prevalence of subsidiary or so-called 'paracuratorial' practices (Hoffmann and Lind 2011), such as discussions, lectures, publications, events and off-site projects.[64] Together these activities have brought about an "extraterritorialization" of the curatorial space (O'Neill 2012b, 81). Thus, despite some uniformity, the exhibition form is not a singular, fixed form, but one that encompasses a vast range of presentational devices, situations and sites through which archives, and ideas of the archive, may operate.

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[63] Two regularly cited examples are Documenta 10, *100 days – 100 Guests* (1998), directed by Catherine David; and *Documenta11* (2001-2002) directed by Okwui Enwezor, which set up curatorial platforms as "discursive spaces" and events, in order to "deterritorialize" the exhibition and move it "outside the gallery space to that of the discursive" (Enwezor 2002).

[64] Curator Jens Hoffmann has been one of the more outspoken advocates for the continued centrality of the exhibition in the curatorial field of practice. In a 2011 editorial in the journal *The Exhibitionist*, he coined the term "paracuratorial" (with co-author Tara McDowell) to refer to how secondary or "parenthetical" discursive or educational practices traditionally operating outside exhibition making (such as screenings, performances, interviews, lectures, and events) have come to function as primary curatorial activities. According to Hoffmann, these 'paracuratorial activities divert curators from their core priorities, resulting in a "free-for-all" (Hoffmann and Lind 2011). Yet as Paul O'Neill points out, by insisting the gallery exhibition is "the only inevitable outcome of curatorial work", Hoffmann's stance rests on a false binary between core and auxiliary curatorial work that limits an understanding of the present curatorial expansion (O'Neill 2012b, 55).

The Exhibition as a Creative Form and Medium

However, even as ideas of the exhibition have expanded, and even though the
activities of curating have historically referred to a wide field of practice, it is
notable that the majority of literature directly addressing the subject of curating
concerns the curation of modern and contemporary art. This suggests a second key
presupposition shaping the discourse of curating: it assumes curating refers
principally to the curation of *art*.[65] Certainly critical museologies attend to practices
of exhibition making; yet it is in relation to art that curating gains traction and holds
a new degree of creative legitimacy and discursive operation (O'Neill 2010).
However, this bias towards art limits an appreciation of the breadth of practice
encompassed by the term 'curating' and underplays the interconnections between the
presentation of art and other contexts and practices of display. A focus on *visual*
representation, for example, expands the study of exhibition-making to include
scientific, medical, commercial and pedagogical practices and histories of display,
such as those of trade fairs, international expositions, and religious or medical
environments (e.g. Cooke and Wollen 1995). The hyper focus on the presentation of
art also risks attributing developments in exhibitions to individual artists or curators
by default, denying the interplay of display practices by other agents, in other
contexts (Grasskamp 1996, 2007; Klonk 2009).

The centrality of art in the discourse of curating also brings into relief the exhibition
as a creative form and medium (Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996; O'Neill
2012a). The creative use of an exhibition as a form and medium has evolved through
numerous artistic and curatorial developments over the past century.[66] Art practices
associated with minimalism and installation art, for instance, have worked as much
with the space of display as the exhibition 'content' (Bishop 2005). Approaching the
exhibition as an artistic medium engenders an explicit layer of creative authorship,

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[65] Although the seminal anthology *Thinking About Exhibitions* takes the exhibition as its topic, it
presupposes exhibitions of art (Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996). Similarly, even as one of the
more extensive examinations of the discourse of curating, O'Neill's assumes art practice as the driver
of curatorial development. He historicises curating in relation to the modernist and avant-garde
projects of the early twentieth century, relates the 'curatorial turn' back to the art production of the
1960s, and his analysis rests on interviews and literature pertaining to high-profile curators of
contemporary art active in the international art scene since this period (O'Neill 2012a).
[66] The artistic handling, critique and expansion of the exhibition form is too layered to rehearse here,
but overviews in relation to curating can be found in Filipovic 2013; Greene 2018; Greenberg 1996a;
O'Neill 2012a.

attached not only to the exhibition content, but to its curation, its design, and the establishment of its conceptual and practical parameters (Hoffmann and McDowell 2011; Filipovic 2017; O'Neill 2012a). Here artistic production is not easily differentiated from curatorial production; the lines between the exhibition content, context, interpretive frame, and the different forms of production (artistic, curatorial) may be opaque without signposting.

Curatorial Positions, Visibility and Hierarchies of Practice

The rise of independent or freelance curators has further impacted the parameters of the curatorial position. The term 'independent curator' signals a distancing of curators from the museum environment. The freelance curator is characterised as having a "new freedom of action" (Tannert et al. 2004, 10), a greater capacity to take risks and support emergent, experimental, political, or commercially independent practices (e.g. Heinich and Pollak 1996, 237; Von Bismarck 2007). Contrary to this lofty rhetoric, the rise of the so-called independent curator since the 1990s is also a consequence of increasing precarity of curatorial roles in cultural institutions, which have been brought about by a number of complex factors including the expansion of museums, the increase in number and scale of temporary exhibitions, and post-Fordist labour and neoliberal market conditions (Heinich and Pollak 1996; O'Neill 2010). Furthermore, as commentators have pointed out, true independence from the institutions is not possible; curatorial activities, positions and reputations in the cultural field are legitimised through institutions, including funding agencies, commissioners, lending museums and so on (O'Neill 2005; M. C. Ramirez 1996).

Yet even so, the potential independence of the curator, and the evolution of the exhibition as medium have brought the more visible aspects of curation to the fore. These developments have fostered a curatorial turn in the field of art towards a heightened level of curatorial participation in artistic production, a change in the curator's position from behind-the-scenes, to front and centre, in which "individual practice, the first-person narrative, and curator self-positioning" can dominate (O'Neill 2010, 242). O'Neill traces this shift back to the "demystification" of curatorial practice in the late 1960s, when the role and figure of the curator came under scrutiny by the avant-garde as part of the wider critique of the art system. Over

the following decade, the curatorial role was "re-mystified" as a singular and dominant position, typified in the figure of the exhibition auteur who creates thematic, often ahistorical, exhibitions (Heinich and Pollak 1996). Here curators are defined by their individual curatorial vision and creative output over their position in an institution.[67]

Together these developments have further eroded the distinguishing features between the role of the artist and the curator (Brenson 1998; Von Bismarck 2004), as demonstrated by the appearance of the metaphor of the curator-as-artist (O'Neill 2012a). Although the permeability between the position of the artist and curator has a long history (Greene 2018; Huber 2004; Wade 2000), it is telling that the distinction between the roles are repeatedly stressed within the literature surveyed. The work of the curator and that of the artist are said to belong to different "economies of representation" (Andreasen and Larsen 2007, 26) and "function within different discursive spheres" (Bishop 2007). Curatorial practices are said to "cultivate 'secondary' modes of production" (Draxler 2012) and "curatorial selection is always an ethical negotiation of pre-existing authorship, rather than the artistic creation of meaning *sui generis*" (Bishop 2007). Yet as O'Neill points out, these differences were claimed "precisely at the moment when these distinctions were eroding, and when the interdependency of practices and the hybridity of agents at work in the field of cultural production were being tested and revealed" (O'Neill 2010, 242).

The assertion of 'independent' curatorial expression using the exhibition as form and medium created a conflict between the stewardship of the artist's vision on the one hand and that of the curator on the other. The grand and heroic discourse put forward by some curatorial practitioners further animates the tension between commitment to the artist and the artwork-in-and-of-itself and the creative authoring of curatorial projects in which art is put in the service of the curatorial vision (e.g. Farquharson

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[67] Curating as a new form of practice that focuses principally on the production of exhibitions is evidenced in the disavowal of the term 'curator' by some practitioners and commentators (Baxandall 1991; Storr 2006), notably Harald Szeemann who preferred to call himself an "exhibition maker" (Derieux 2008).

2003; Miller 1996; Rogoff and von Bismarck 2012).[68] Rather than teasing out points of overlap, these debates declare a hierarchy of practice in curating, one based on the enduring belief that artists and their work must come first (e.g. Buren 2013; Fischer, Gleadowe, and Manacorda 2010; Graham and Cook 2007; Groys 2008; O'Neill 2010, 2012a; Storr 2006; Vidokle 2010). This hierarchy of practice infuses the "space of possibles" (Bourdieu 1993a, 176) for curators handling archive materials in the frame of exhibitions, as will become clear.

iii. Curating Archives in the Exhibition Frame

Even with these areas of cross-pollination and blur, and even as practitioners push at the parameters of the exhibition and undermine its scaffolding, it persists as a unifying concept around which ideas and practices of curating circulate. The following section builds on the discussions around archives in museum curation, to look more closely at the *curating* of archives (and ideas of the archive) in relation to exhibition-making.

As discussed in the previous chapter, curating is a rhetorical activity centred on the selection and arrangement of cultural artefacts towards particular messaging and experiences. Display strategies (such as the isolation and ordering of objects, the lighting, the look and feel of background, the placement of labels, the type of framing devices etc.) directs a viewer's attention and effects meaning (Bal 1992a; Baxandall 1991; M. Hall 1987; Karp and Lavine 1991; Moser 2010; Newhouse 2005). In principle, a broader appreciation for the formal and material qualities, and the multiple affordances of archival records described in Chapters III and IV has enriched potential curatorial approaches. As described in Chapter VI, archive records can be staged and arranged to bring different qualities of information and different experiences of archival material (visual, aesthetic, material, tactile, sensorial, symbolic) to the fore (Bessel 2015). A document may be arranged in vitrines to be

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[68] The controversy around the 1989 exhibition *Les Magiciens de la terre* at the Pompidou Centre, Paris is a case in point. The exhibition was notable not only for being the first exhibition of its kind and scale to include artwork by non-Western artists in a postmodern and postcolonial context, it also demonstrated how the curator-as-artist had breached curatorial ethics by removing the cultural specificity of the works "for the sake of his own rhetorical curatorial narrative" (O'Neill 2012, 54–60, 58). For Michael Brenson, the exhibition was an example of "the conflict between a commitment to art and a commitment to using art to serve other agendas" (Brenson 1998, 23).

ambulated around, or laid out in boxes, on shelves, in drawers, or digitising for touch-screen access. The integration of archival records of different media (film, audio recordings, digital, paper and photographic records) into exhibition environments pluralises experiences of both archives and exhibitions (Weng 2013). As described in Chapter IV, artistic practices have also introduced new vocabularies of display for archives, providing audiences with alternative ways to visualise and experience archives, and to contemplate their infrastructures and affects (Bismarck et al. 2002b; Connarty and Lanyon 2006; Greenberg 2012; Marx et al. 2007; Schaffner and Winzen 1998; Simon 2002; Spieker 2008).

Yet while exhibitions are highly variable, intertextual and multidimensional, curatorial selection is biased towards *visual* presentation. This results in a tendency to select and showcase records that are visually engaging and easily legible, or those with the intention for visual presentation built into their very fabric; privileging for instance, photographs and film, postcards, magazines, posters, sketches, designs and models, architectural drawings and so on. This emphasises their presentational value, and, in line with collected museum objects, prompts curators to select, arrange and design the display of these records (through framing, reformatting, digitising, lighting, translating, labelling and so on) in ways that showcase their aesthetic, formal and affective qualities as their principle 'evidentiary' value. Conversely, the capacity to highlight and singularise particular archival records means curators may foreground their historical aura and documentary aesthetics over an individual item's position in relation to fonds and series of records. Alternatively, the use of reading-room apparatus, such as study tables, filing systems and pull-out drawers and archival boxes, emphasise the "informational characteristics" of a presentation (Graham and Cook, 173). An archive-focused exhibition may give an overall effect of "an abundance of visible research", place the viewer in an immersive research mode, and encourage them to "read or watch rather than contemplate" (Greenberg 2012, 162).

Showing and Telling of Time: Temporalities of Archives and Exhibitions

Temporal associations attached to both exhibitions and archives also texture curatorial displays. As has been shown, archives are themselves chronological

referents. Any curatorial engagement with the archive is enmeshed – implicitly, explicitly – in the archive's multi-directional relationship to time – pointing at once to the past, to the present, and the future-yet-to-come (Chapter III, IV). Most overtly, archive records signal events in the past. Chronological arrangements in exhibitions harness this characteristic of archival records. They time-stamp artworks and artefacts and signpost movements or periods of cultural development. They imbue the exhibition contents and curatorial narratives with an aura of *historical* actuality (Bal 1992a; Crookham 2015; A. Wilson 2007).

Conversely, the exhibition's temporary and ephemeral nature, the *eventness* of the exhibition itself, reinforces an orientation to the present. This is particularly felt in the field of contemporary art, where exhibitions support an ontology of contemporaneity (Ribas 2013; A. Wilson 2007). Even 'archival art', for all its signposting to the past, concerns current cultural conditions, phenomenon and "archival impulses" (Foster 2004), and is itself an engagement with contemporary art discourse. However, this fluid construct of the contemporary renders its historicity indeterminate (and in ways that often fall outside of critical inquiry) (Foster 2010; Ribas 2013). In this 'post-historical' rhetoric (Ribas 2013, 107), the presence of the archive, in its literal and symbolic forms, grounds the nebulous 'contemporary' with chronological specificity.

Furthermore, exhibitions are also historic forms with their own historical agency (Ward 1996). As such, exhibition frameworks not only mediate archive records on display, but are also in dialogue with them (Myers 2011). This ontological layer is apparent by how curators can use historical styles and strategies of display to contribute to the rhetoric of a given curatorial presentation (Meijers 1996; Rugoff 1995). Antique vitrines and frames; the arrangement of objects in the style of cabinets of curiosities, or paintings hung 'academy' or 'salon style'; artefacts presented in plan chests with pull-out drawers; modernist white gallery walls; antiquated audio-visual platforms or contemporary digital interfaces – each of these devices and conventions of display contribute to the rhetoric of an exhibition (Moser

2010), as much as the overt 'informational' qualities of the archive presented therein.[69]

These different display strategies signal a relationship between the archived event and that of its archival animation. The present can be framed as compatible with the archived past (celebrated in the mode of legacy, or in narratives of progress, or a nostalgia look back) or put in tension or in competition with it, signalling a difference between then and now. Documents can be presented chronologically to imply continuity in time, or they may draw attention to historical ruptures by giving visual presence to historical gaps or overlaps, and showcasing conflicting accounts between the past and the present (Greenberg 2012, 175). The mobilisation of archives and archival motifs in the exhibition frame therefore also concerns the articulations of temporal relations between exhibited entities, exhibitionary forms, curatorial concepts and subject positions in both tacit and explicit ways. Archival records in exhibitions can help to configure and clarify temporal and chronological points of reference.

Exhibition Histories and the Role of the Archive

The historicity of exhibitions has been foregrounded in a growing body of literature on exhibition histories across a number of areas of display cultures, including museums (S. Knell, MacLeod, and Watson 2007). In contrast to the study of exhibitions in other fields, texts focusing on twentieth-century art histories tend to read exhibition histories for correlations between curating and the artistic avant-garde.[70] Echoing conventional biographical art historical narratives, they are apt to highlight the work of individual innovators in exhibition-making, such as Arnold Bode, Harald Szeemann and Lucy Lippard. A number of publications surveyed showcase previously unpublished archival records (e.g. Altshuler 2008; Derieux 2008). Given this framing, the presentation of the curator's archive reinforces their

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[69] This strategy of drawing on different display techniques to present archival material was used in project B (Appendix ii).

[70] Recent texts constructing an art history of curating include Altshuler 2008; Cranfield 2012; Daniel and Hudek 2009; Derieux 2008; Fisher 2009; Grasskamp 1996, 2007; Greene 2018; László 2009; H.-J. Müller 2006; Myers 2011; Obrist 2008; O'Neill 2012a; Dimitrakaki and Perry 2015; Staniszewski 1999; Ward 1996. Exhibition history has also been the topic of a number of special issue journals, including the *Exhibitionist* no. 4; two issues of *MJ Manifesta Journal*, "Archive: Memory of the Show" (no. 6, Autumn/Winter 2005), and "The Canon of Curating*"* (no. 11, 2011). See also the *Exhibition Histories* series published by Afterall books, launched in 2010.

profile as an auteur; it testifies to their vision, method and originality. For example, the publication *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (2008) places the curator's archive centre stage. The authors use the archive as the springboard for examining his methods and output, as well as the historical context of his work. His archive is positioned as a key tool of his trade but it is also his artistic legacy (Derieux 2008). The curator is celebrated as an exhibition auteur as well as an archive creator-curator.

Curating as a distinct field of practice is also historicised through the re-staging of past exhibitions (Greenberg 2009, 2009; Melvin 2015b; Spencer 2015). Reesa Greenberg has identified two types of exhibition in this vein. The first type – what she calls the "remembering exhibition" – positions artwork as the central subject of the exhibition (Greenberg 2009). Well-known examples include Harald Szeemann's 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*, revisited at Fondazione Prada, Venice in 2013; and *Growth and Form*, produced by Richard Hamilton at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in 1951 and reconstructed by Tate Modern in 2014. The second type, "*archival* remembering exhibitions" (emphasis mine) privilege archives records. For these exhibitions, curators adopt a documentary approach by situating the historical exhibition "in a nexus of period documents that elucidate the specifics of production and reception" (Greenberg 2012, 161-62). Two examples of this model are *Telling Histories: An Archive and Three Case Studies* (2003), which examined three controversial exhibitions between 1970 and 1993 at the Munich Kunstverein; and *FB55* (2015), an archival display in the ICA reading room in London, which looked back at Francis Bacon's 1955 inaugural solo exhibition in the UK. In both exhibitions, no original artwork was included. In the case of the latter, the historical Bacon exhibition was reanimated through photographs, press reviews, invitation cards and related publications, and then situated in relation to a multi-layered timeline chronicling the artist's life, artistic activities, and the parallel (de)criminalisation of homosexuality in England.

These projects put forward a number of curatorial and archival refrains. They are framed as acts of collective memory and memorialisation. They commemorate artistic practices, which also help to correct the 'amnesia' and repressions around past curating practices (Daniel and Hudek 2009; Dimitrakaki and Perry 2015; Fisher

2009; Greenberg 2012; Obrist 2014). In this way, these histories reaffirm the vision for curatorial *and* archival restitution by staging the dialectic of the visible/invisible and the lost/found, remembered/forgotten of historical knowledge.

Exhibition histories are also commonly conceived as chronological activations. They draw on archival fragments of the past, in the present exhibition moment, towards future-use value, representing the re-staged exhibition and its research documentation as archival resources for the future.[71] A number of exhibition histories evolve from conferences or symposia, which have been in turn, developed into publications or online "meta-archives" (Greenberg 2009). (These will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.) Indeed, online environments offer new platforms to disseminate exhibition histories and their documentary sources in interactive archive-oriented platforms, which support displays and online exhibitions that are themselves subject to analysis.[72] Historical projects that are simultaneously restaged and archived thus reaffirm the value of both exhibitionary and archival practices, and the role of curation and individual curatorial practices therein.

Yet, as Greenberg points out, "the choice of the seemingly neutral archival mode is often highly polemical" (Greenberg 2012, 163). Given the associations between archives, authenticity and proof that continue to circulate in cultural discourse, archive-focused curatorial projects signal to viewers a factual presentation of history while masking complex organisational politics and positions. Institutions may celebrate a legacy of innovation in order to claim their own contemporary relevance, and promote the present-day institution as progressive and transformational (Greenberg 2012), while at the same time upholding their regulating, hegemonic and commodifying presentational frameworks. Additionally, for non-collecting institutions such as the Whitechapel Gallery in London, the collection and curation

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[71] To offer one of numerous examples, for the Museum of Modern Art library exhibition *Documenting a Feminist Past: Art World Critique* (25 January-27 March 2007), the stated goal of the project was to "situat[e]the feminist future in the context of the feminist past" ('Documenting a Feminist Past: Art World Critique | MoMA' n.d.).
[72] For example, *The Parallel Chronologies: An Archive of East European Exhibitions*, developed by transit.hu, is a multi-phased research project and exhibition, as well as an online archive that gives international visibility and accessibility to records of East European exhibition and event series (László 2009). A second example is MOMA's online exhibition history archive, which showcases a digital collection of documentation from over 4,000 exhibitions ('Exhibition History | MoMA' n.d.).

of archives can offer a cost-effective alternative to collecting art. Archive-based exhibition projects can reinforce the forward-facing ethos of contemporary art spaces while at the same time giving historical weight, authority and continuity to their activities, both in the past and present (Yiakoumaki 2009).

However, these archive-oriented exhibitions also foreground a fundamental limiting condition of exhibitions as historical artefact – their ephemerality. The impossibility of fully documenting these temporary, multi-dimensional experiences and events is highlighted when curators and historians attempt to reconstruct or study their contours and effects (Grasskamp 2007; Spencer 2015). Paradoxically, the showcasing of archival records gives a tangibility and fixed quality to what is otherwise a transient exhibition form (Greenberg 2012, 175). Therefore, although the contemporary orientation and temporary condition of exhibitions suggest a form that is *non-archival* (unlike museums), archive-oriented exhibitions and curatorial activities work to counteract this ephemerality.

Furthermore, archive-oriented curating is both extractive *and productive*; curating also contributes to the archive of exhibition and curatorial histories (Yiakoumaki 2009), rendering it doubly useful. Oral history has become a common method for enhancing the documentary record around histories of curating (Obrist 2008). Hans Ulrich Obrist's "conversation project" is exemplary on this point (Obrist 2002). It is an ongoing and extensive series of interviews with artists, curators, critics and intellectuals, driven by what one commentator described as "possessive archivalism" (Balzer 2015, 16). The interviews are presented as publications and symposia, hybrid and cross-over exhibition/event formats that are simultaneously being produced, disseminated and 'archived' in different curatorial configurations. In such instances, the curator creates archival material with the explicit aim of generating content and context for current and future curatorial projects (Obrist 2008), and, as observed with Szeemann's archive, securing their own legacy in the process. Therefore, these activities are also in part a means of positioning and linking past creative practices with a curator's own current curatorial practice and output (O'Neill 2012a).

Moreover, as discussed previously, because archives carry their own inferences to authenticity, originality and truth, the exhibition and production of archival material

as part of a curatorial project compliments and further naturalises the exhibition's authoritative, truth-telling frame. The inclusion of archival records helps to uphold the curatorial responsibility to historical accuracy and scholarship inherited from curatorship. The unease in the discourse around 'ahistorical' exhibitions – presentations that eschew chronological presentations in favour of themes (Meijers 1996) – point to an ongoing tacit association between curating, even in its broadest manifestations, and a responsibility to historical accuracy.

The Archive as Shared Artistic and Curatorial Theme and Medium

As part of the alchemy of the expanded archival discourse and the elaboration of curatorial practices, in the late 1990s the archive appears as an explicit *curatorial* conceit and exhibition theme. This enabled curators to attend to the metaphorical value of archives alongside their historical value. Curators have mobilised and made use of ideas of the archive with the same plasticity as they circulate in the popular imagination (Breakell 2008). Drawing on the construct of 'the archive' has enabled curators to explore the very truth-telling mechanism of power, representation, agency, authority, evidence, memory and memorialisation, time and (im)permanence – themes that also impact curatorial practices, in terms not dissimilar to those employed by artists (Chapter IV). The rise in archive-related exhibitions and curatorial strategies has been described as an "archival turn" in curating, a shift from treating archives as a source to also handling them as a curatorial subject, tool and legacy.[73]

The interplay between the exhibition as form and medium, and the archive as source, subject, form, medium and metaphor, gives rise to a myriad of shared formal and conceptual associations that can be configured by artists and curators through the frame of the exhibition. The exhibition *Interarchiv* held at the Kunstraum of the University of Lüneburg in 1999, organised by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artist Hans-Peter Feldmann, focuses on the interplay between curating, archives and art practices as expanded and interconnecting fields of practice. The starting point for

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[73] For example, an event on the topic of "Curating the Archive" at the ICA, London, on 7 March 2014 posed the questions: "What do recent archival presentations make visible and render invisible? What is the role of the archive in contemporary curatorial and artistic practice? How do archival traces reveal and trouble the structures of an institution?" ('Friday Salon: Curating the Archive' n.d.).

the project was Obrist's personal archive of art-related material from the 1990s, which included catalogues, invitation cards, texts and related ephemera. The archive was set to be loaned to the university as a research collection but was then reimagined as the locus of a curatorial project and a tool "for examining the functions of archives and the relationships within them as well as for testing alternative forms of handling" (Bismarck et al. 2002b, 417). The corresponding catalogue, *Interarchive: Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field* (2002), is a weighty publication showcasing the work of over 100 artists and artists' groups who have constructed and reconfigured archives in experimental modes of display. It also presents a number of archives and archival resources, and related commentary by critics and curators.

Overall, the project assumed loose parameters for the exhibition form (including, for instance, publications, performances, off-site interventions and discursive events), an elaborated understanding of curating and archival practices, and a vague conceptualisation of the archive. Working in a "counter-archival" mode (Bismarck et al. 2002b, 417–18), participants were invited to askew and interrogate the conventions of archival collections and access systems, and pivotally, to question these as, *in part,* curatorial conventions and practices. The organisers describe how their treatment of the archive is centred less on the collected material itself, than on the "*conditions affecting its visibility* … It is not the endurance of the archived information that is dealt with but *its reference to the present viewed against the foil of a policy of presentation and visibility, its aims and the techniques used*" (Bismarck et al. 2002, 418, emphasis mine). The focus is less on questioning archives per se, than on using the construct of 'the archive' to interrogate and elaborate, to imagine differently, archival and curatorial practices. In subtle ways, the project entangled alternative archival practices with curatorial ones.

iv. Entangled Curatorial Positions in Archival Exhibitions

Projects such as *Interarchive* reinforce how both the exhibition and the archive constitute a nexus of potential cross-over and cross-pollination of different curatorial and artistic practices, platforms and subject positions. The selection, arrangement

and display of archive material (loosely defined) in an exhibition can be both an artistic and curatorial activity; these practices are tangled, and at times, indistinguishable. For instance, for their work *Evidence* (1977), artists Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel selected a number of unclassified archival photos from institutions such as NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratories, and developed these into an exhibition and photobook. The rearrangement of these photographs can be understood as an act of curation; however through their position as artists they transformed these archived records into a work of art (Sultan and Mandel 2018). The entangled nature of artistic, curatorial and archival practices and positions is compounded by the permeability of the boundaries between archival records and works of art described in Chapters IV and V, and between the artwork and the curated exhibition described above.

In this context of hybridity, curated projects are subject to being misread without adequate signposting as to the respective positions of participants and the categorisation of component parts. The curator is held responsible for averting misunderstandings, clarifying the position and product of the curator in relation to both the artist and the archive, and by extension, upholding the primacy of artistic authorship.[74] Exhibition histories also provide an opportunity for artists to clarify their position for the historical record, as is the case with Lucy Lippard stating she was "never a proper curator", describing herself instead as a 'compiler' (Lippard 2009). Furthermore, as discussed previously, archival records already encompass multiple points of authorship on a spectrum of intentionality, agency and criticality (Chapter IV). It follows that the curating of archival materials brings about an interplay – at times moral tension – with different points of authorship along the records continuum.

Curatorial (De)professionalisation and Academicisation

The question of authorship has been further complicated by the expansion of the curatorial field of practice. As exhibition making has diversified and expanded, the number of curators has multiplied; as curator Ralph Rugoff reflected in 1999,

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[74] Project B (Appendix ii) offers an account of this dynamic playing out, in which my curatorial arrangement of archival materials in a gallery space rendered the difference between the role of the artist and that of the curator unclear.

"suddenly everybody started doing it" (Rugoff 1999). Yet as curating appeared to be increasingly de-professionalised, it was also developing into a specialised area of academic study, as demonstrated by the number of advanced degree programmes established in European and North American universities since the late 1980s.[75] In fact, a significant amount of the literature addressing the proliferation of curating can be traced back to centres of higher education, with curating becoming an increasingly self-affirming discourse and economic stream for institutions of higher education (O'Neill 2012). Curatorial manuals produced for this context, such as the Independent Curators International *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's vade mecum* (2001), reflect a contradictory understanding of curating. The texts within this volume vacillate between ideas of radicalism and professionalism, and between creative, administrative, academic and theoretical pursuits. It is pitched as a professional guidebook to contemporary art curating, while simultaneously claiming, "no rules exist in the field of curatorial work" (Kuoni 2001, 11). On the whole, related literature on contemporary art curating draws heavily from critical theory (Balzer 2015), celebrates curatorial individuality and highlights radical curatorial practices, while at the same time, acknowledges a need for standards in practice, and for humility, diplomacy and project management skills (e.g. George 2015).

Yet despite the plethora of texts on the topic, there is a persistent uncertainty about what it is the curator *does* (O'Neill 2012a, 3). Attempts to describe the curator in the field of contemporary art often do so by way of analogy (Baert 1996; Graham and Cook 2007; Morton 2006; O'Neill 2012a). The diversity of the comparisons point to an ambivalence around the mechanism, platforms and purpose of the curator's work, and where allegiance to people, objects, ideas, institutions and projects should ultimately rest. Exhibition making is therefore also concerned with the presentation and legibility of curatorial positions and practice itself. The exhibition of archival materials concerns the articulation of subject positions from an array of possible stances with different (non-)professional, curatorial, scholarly and artistic status and different claims to expertise and authority.

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[75] The development of curatorial education has been subject to significant discussion in recent years. See for instance Fischer, Gleadowe, and Manacorda 2010; Gleadowe n.d.; Hernández Chong Cuy 2013, 60–63; Morgan 2013; O'Neill and Wilson 2010.

The Curator as (Archival) Mediator

Whereas criticism of museum curation could be levelled through the institutional frame, curating as an 'independent' form of meaning-making highlights the curator's role as mediator in more general terms (Andreasen and Larsen 2007; Draxler 2012; Grasskamp 1996; Lind 2013; O'Neill 2012a, 25). In the literature reviewed, there is a marked preoccupation with the curator's position as a "cultural intermediary" in the broader cultural field (Bourdieu 1984) and their "opaque presence in social space" (Andreasen and Larsen 2007, 20). On the one hand, the figure of the mediator arouses suspicion in contemporary discourse. They are cast as an insipid, self-serving "parasitical agent responsible for short-circuiting authenticity" (Andreasen and Larsen 2007, 20), and a middleman and "cultural broker" (M. C. Ramirez 1996, 22) between producer and consumer. On the other hand, the curator's intermediating position also endows them with the potential to bring about positive change. A curator can be a diplomat, negotiator or translator, and an essential facilitator to creative production (Andreasen and Larsen 2007, 27). An ideal curator utilises this intermediary position to both resist institutional, professional and market pressures, and to mediate art with integrity in the greater interest of an educated and progressive, enlightened and self-reflexive society (Alloway [1975] 1996).

Given these points of ambivalence, different handling of archival records and archival conceits can authenticate different notions of curatorial mediation to audiences. For example, an idiosyncratic, or thematic, ahistorical arrangement may align with the image of the exhibition auteur (Grasskamp 1996; Heinich and Pollak 1996; Storr 2006). The careful presentation and contextualisation of a highly select number of records from an official archive collection asserts the curator as editor and art historian. Copious archival materials or references support the image of the curator as a "public intellectual" (Andreasen and Larsen 2007, 25). Making archival records available in a curatorial teaching environment can reinforce the profile of the curator as educator, who embraces counter-hegemonic educational practices as part of the so-called educational turn in curating (O'Neill and Wilson 2015b, 19). This is not to cynically suggest these strategies are always at the forefront of a curator's mind, but that tacitly, they operate as part of the current "space of possibles"

(Bourdieu 1993a, 176) for those mediating archives in the contemporary field of curating.

Curating and the Rhetoric of Subjectivity, Self-Reflexivity and Provisionality

The discourse of curating also advances exhibition making as a reflexive process. Towards the turn of the millennium, a number of symposia, seminars, conferences, exhibition projects and publications began to focus on the provisional and performative nature of curating and foreground curatorial subjectivity and uncertainty. Writing in 1996, Canadian curator Renee Baert called for curators to claim a place for the "scraps and undersides" of curatorial methodology (Baert 1996, 117). This rhetoric places a different accent on ideas of curatorial transparency and self-reflexivity to those promoted in critical museology. It positions the curator as a singular subject engaging with her own curatorial practice, which is fallible and idiosyncratic in ways that are worthy of public discussion and exposure. This inquiry into *individual* curatorial practice has been naturalised as part the curatorial turn as a way to render transparent the subjective processes of cultural production and unfix curating from any authoritative claims to knowledge (O'Neill 2012a, 34).

Yet such posturing implies new responsibilities of the curator and curatorial projects. As Michael Brenson described in 1998, it "implies a sophisticated awareness of the histories and implications of the ideas [curators] are working with and of the economic and political systems they are working within, as well as an ability to build this awareness into their curatorial presentations" (Brenson 1998, 19). Over a decade later, O'Neill described the consequence and disconnect that comes from this reflexive orientation: "Despite numerous claims to the contrary … prioritization of the contemporary and the curatorial gesture has created a particular model of discourse that remains self-referential, curator-centred, and curator-led, with unstable historical foundations" (O'Neill 2012, 42).

The Archive as Curatorial Method, Medium and Outcome

The showcasing of curators' archives has emerged as a self-reflexive curatorial gesture in this ambiguous discursive terrain (Richter and Drabble n.d.; Von Bismarck 2002). Yet this strategy also runs the risk of melding documentary and

curatorial authorship in ways that put the authority of the resulting archives into question. The *Curating Degree Zero* project and archive is a much-discussed case in point. Like *Interarchive*, this project uses curators' archives as a springboard. Growing out of a symposium organised in Bremen in 1998 by freelance curators Dorothee Richter and Barnaby Drabble, the Curating Degree Zero Archive (CDZA), was created between 2003 and 2008, reformulated into a touring exhibition and programme of live public events and discussions, and later gifted to the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK) as a permanent reference collection (Richter and Drabble 2015). The collection comprises exhibition documentation, catalogues, DVDs, magazines and ephemera that documents curatorial discourse at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as well as later additions of documents generated as the project toured to different sites. The curators worked "toward an open narrative structure" in part by changing the modes of display at each venue (Richter 2012, 242). For each iteration, the archive was reconfigured into a different "discursive situation" (Richter and Drabble 2015, 4); it "turned itself into a visual manifestation of a discourse about the displaying and mediating of contents" (Richter 2012, 244). For the curators, "making available and relinquishing the archive and its interpretation" was a way to ensure authorship was "polyphonic" and power "reversible" (Richter 2012, 246). Moreover, it was an "attempt to hold the relationship between artists and curators in suspense" (Richter 2012, 241).

Yet while the curators aspire to share the power of defining the archive and determining its interpretation, the reading of their archive was preconditioned by the self-referential frame around its creation and presentation. The archive came into being not through conventional archival practices, but was constituted and legitimised through their curatorial conceit. In this instance, the archive is whatever *the curators* deem it to be.[76] This gesture inverts the conventional archival pathway; the curators defined this archive as such and only latterly, after its curatorial activation, did this collection become part of an institutional archive.

Furthermore, such archive-based exhibitions destabilise exhibition hierarchies (O'Neill and Wilson 2015b). Archival material may be given parallel, or heightened

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[76] In this regard, project B is also an example of a curator legitimising individual creative practice through the presentation of 'archive' records from my own family history.

viewing priority over that of the artwork. In Richter and Drabble's project, at different venues a number of artists were invited to design the viewing and reading apparatus. For the aforementioned *Telling Histories* project described by Greenberg, artist Liam Gillick designed a "spatial platform" and "reading table" for the exhibition (Greenberg 2012, 166). Therefore artworks developed for these archive-oriented projects support and legitimise the value of the (curated) archive material and archival project, rather than the other way around.

Unsurprisingly, Richter and Drabble faced criticism because they privileged a curatorial position over the artistic one (Vidokle 2010). Negative reaction to this project again suggests a curatorial duty to maintain hierarchies of practice in exhibition projects, and that archival records be handled as (historical) evidence in support of artistic processes, rather than curatorial ones. Even in the context of curatorial experimentation and the hybridity of roles, and even when taking into account alternative archival forms and research methodologies, it suggests the curator's handling of their own archival collections is best undertaken *outside of the gallery*. Comments by Richter and Drabble demonstrate an ambivalence around their own position within the discourse they are asserting. In the post-exhibition publication, they describe how they moved from the position of curators, to those of artists (Richter 2012, 243). Elsewhere they frame the project as curatorial research (Richter and Drabble 2015).

This research-centric framing of curating sidesteps some of the fractious dynamics described above, while still foregrounding individual curatorial practices and narratives. In their 2015 anthology on the topic of "curating research", O'Neill and Wilson distinguish two modes of practice in this vein: research in preparation for an exhibition, and curating itself as a method of research (O'Neill and Wilson 2015b). In this latter mode, the "research exhibition" is the site for carrying out curatorial research; it is conceived of as a "research event in its own right" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015a, 21). O'Neill and Wilson relate this recent conjunction of curating and research to a refusal to simplify curating as the display of autonomous works of art, or to valorise it as a type of academic and professional expertise. Crucially, they write: "Inevitably, the archive looms large in many of these discussions, and the archive-on-display might risk appearing as the new orthodoxy, seeking to displace

the autonomous-artwork-on-display" (O'Neill and Wilson 2015b, 18). Implicitly, given these affordances, the archive (as a curatorial material, product and conceit), allows for greater curatorial manoeuvring and authorship than works of art.

Exhibition as Research / Exhibition as Archive

In the same volume, Simon Sheikh provides an example of a research exhibition he curated at the Inter Arts Center university gallery in Malmö, Sweden, in 2012. The exhibition, entitled *Unauthorised*, was "a showcase for various archival artefacts and works of art" brought together under the theme of "unauthorised cultural practices" (Sheikh 2015, 43). In a subtle twist, Sheikh describes this research exhibition *as an archive*. He writes, "The works and objects were presented in the form of an archive, with internal, and perhaps uncertain, rules, while shedding light on the processes of researching, collecting and exhibiting" (Sheikh 2015, 46). Here Sheikh seems to equate the curating of a (curatorial) research exhibition with the production of a (creative) 'archive'. Similar evocations of the exhibition as an archive emerge in the literature reviewed (e.g. Hahn 2002), but more commonly, the analogy is used in vague ways, which has the effect of loosely linking an exhibition to past records, events and entities and so on, but also implying contemporary curatorial practices worthy of archival status and preservation for *future* historical research.

The evocation of curating as research thus elides a number of interrelated archival associations in ways that are hard to disentangle. Such framing assumes (curatorial) archives are a research tool, one that can be used on a spectrum of criticality. The archive is a shorthand for research and research outcome, yet the terms 'archive' and 'research' are left undefined and unproblematised. Comparing this rhetoric to that of museum curation shows how this construct of curating-as-research assumes a practice-as-research (PaR) model described in Chapter II; it privileges a practice-led, creative, *rather than historical*, model of curatorial and archival research. The key driver of such projects is the research proposition and its undertaking, rather than the work of art (Jackson 2015). It reinforces how, in the frame of curating, archives, and notions of 'the archive' can be employed by curators in ways that consciously or unconsciously shift focus onto the curatorial practice itself.

v. Conclusions

Comparing the collections-based museological frame of curatorship with the specific terrain of exhibition curating shows how the discourse carries different accents in the deployment of archives and notions of 'the archive'. Focusing particularly on the discourse of contemporary art curating, I show how even with its elasticity, the exhibition is a particular discursive construct with its own grammar, politics, hierarchies, histories and parameters of practice, and distinct mediating conditions which direct the curation of archives and archival constructs.

In conjunction with Chapter VI, the chapter has traced how curating can elicit and make use of different affective, emotional, intellectual, material, aesthetic and temporal qualities and 'affordances' of archival records and conceits towards a variety of rhetorical purposes. Archival records serve as curatorial research resources, as rhetorical tools and design elements in gallery spaces, and narrative devices by which to contextualise the objects and artworks on display. Archives provide historical counterweight to the ephemerality and present-ness of the temporary exhibition form, and stabilise and historicise the work of non-collecting organisations and 'independent' curatorial projects. Archive-oriented exhibition histories and the restaging of past exhibitions reanimate artistic and institutional initiatives and personalities in gestures of collective memorialisation, celebration and/or critical revision.

I argue that these archive-oriented exhibition projects, curatorial authorship is being asserted in two ways: through the construction of an exhibition, and through the constitution and definition of the archive itself. A focus on the discourse of curating highlights the role of the curator in establishing and authenticating the overarching conceptualisation of the archive in the frame of the exhibition, determining it as an artistic or curatorial resource, theme, medium and research method or project outcome, or any combination thereof. Moreover, the literature highlights how curating the archive is both extractive and generative. The archive is mobilised as a key resource and metaphor for exhibitions, but can also function as a highly visible outcome of individualised (rather than institutional) curatorial practice.

Because curating asserts *individual* curatorial practices, it renders archive-oriented strategies more likely to be self-referential than those of museum curatorship. I have outlined how the archive is mobilised as a form of curatorial self-presentation and position-taking, in both tacit and stated ways. Archive-centric strategies may be employed by curators towards self-reflexive and transparent modalities. Curators may handle archives as a medium and merge the production of exhibitions with archival resources and platforms. Some curators have made use of archives in line with artistic practice-as-research models. These often stress experimental, self-reflexive, exploratory initiatives. Other curators and historians have posited the exhibition itself as a form of archive. Each of these approaches support, and at times promote, more pluralistic conceptualisations of the archive than those fostered through museum curation.

However, these archive-based tactics also employ hazy and fluid definitions for archives and archival metaphors. Moreover, the exhibition constitutes a nexus of potential crossover of different curatorial and artistic practices, platforms and subject positions. In this context, the archive can be used to clarify who's who, and who's doing what, when, where and why, both in the past and present. Yet given that curating is also a potentially critical and creative practice, and the archive is a source and subject for curators and artists alike, the use of archival records and conceits in exhibitions can also render practices and subject positions more opaque. In particular, creative, thematic and theoretical approaches to archives and archival constructs in an exhibition frame place curators and curatorial activities in a parallel but contested position with the activities and the subject positions of the artistic avant-garde. Additionally, the creative or alternative handling of archives by curators can upset the naturalised associations between curating and historical modes of address. The potential points of blur, confusion, misinterpretation or misrepresentation generated by archive-oriented curating can therefore reinforce the need for, but *also the ambivalence around*, the mediating role of the curator. For each of these reasons, questions of curatorial authorship, authority and accountability, and visibility are here reignited as a tension point within the literature. The discourse around art curating in particular foregrounds authorship as an important area of curatorial responsibility and liability, which in other contexts may be easily glossed over.

Additionally, I argue that this chemistry reinforces imperatives for curators to signpost different subject positions, typologies of material, and the terms of archival handling identified in the previous chapter. As seen in the discourse around curatorship, archives can help accomplish this by differentiating points of curatorial and artistic authorship along the records continuum. Given the range of curatorial stances that can be taken in this expanded field of practice, different modes of archival handling signal different subject positions. These range from conventional, institutional positions to academic, artistic and even amateur ones.

Despite the rhetoric of experimentation that infuses many discussions around curatorial practices, the archive, as an entity and a metaphor, is not so malleable that it can overcome discursive preconditions of exhibition and curating. Rather, it is at once animated, elaborated and contained by them. The discourse suggests that upholding and communicating different temporalities, subject positions, hierarchies, and terms of practice remains a core expectation of the curator. This means that a curator remains accountable to uphold the (art)historical modalities and conventional handling of archive materials, particularly within the exhibition frame itself. I suggest this mean that positioning archive-oriented curatorial projects as 'paracuratorial' or research-oriented activities and situating these *outside of the exhibition frame* helps to sidestep some of the tensions described. It also allows for more flexible, self-reflexive and experimental terms of archive-oriented curatorial practice.

The elaboration of archival ontologies and constructs, and the expansion of curatorial parameters is increasingly felt in relation to the discourse of 'the curatorial' which I turn to next. Without the museum or exhibition as a touchstone, curatorial positions, manoeuvres and technologies are distributed, in subtle and overt ways, which extend and complicate the terms by which curators deploy and generate archives and notions of 'the archival', as will be shown.

Chapter VIII. Archival Entanglements in the Expanded Curatorial Landscape

i. Introduction

In recent years, curatorial practices have proliferated into new terrain. As much as the last twenty years has seen an 'undefining' of the archive (Chapter IV), it has also witnessed an undefining of curation. Curatorial practices and lexicon have come to be deployed across an increasingly diverse cultural topography. Expanded conceptualisations of curation can be found in fields of practice as varied as marketing and publishing (Bhaskar 2016), music distribution (Jansson and Hracs 2018), information management (Ray 2009), biology (Bateman 2010), the performing arts (Brandstetter 2012), and art and its pedagogy (Martinon 2013). This chapter shifts focus from curation as a localised form of practice linked to museums, exhibitions and their *fields* of practice, to attend to the broadened terrain of curatorial operations as they have manifest across a wider cultural milieu. In this discourse, curatorial activities and rhetoric are scaled up and stretched across a constellational *landscape* of practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015).

The concept of 'the curatorial' serves as point of departure for this chapter.[77] The term has been adopted and explicitly theorised by a number of European curator-academics active in the field of visual art. It describes at once a radically expanded arena for curatorial practice, a distinct mode of critical curatorial practice, and a novel area of academic study and pedagogy (Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012). However, acknowledging this extensive landscape of practice necessitates casting a wider net across a number of divergent discourses. In dialogue with discussions of 'the curatorial', I bring into the fold additional texts from the fields of digital humanities, information, communication and media studies, as well as from

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[77] In this chapter, I use the term 'archival' as an umbrella term through which to bring together the multifarious definitions of archives (a corpus of records, institutions and practices for the same, see Chapter III), as well as the broader loose construct of 'the archive' (Chapter IV). I employ it with intentional fluidity, using it as an adjective that associates entities, ideas, arenas and practices with archives, both unofficial, official, and the literal and metaphoric. Likewise, I use the adjective 'curatorial' to describe and qualify those activities, entities, remit and positions relating to curation, as the concept has come to be liberally applied through this expanded landscape of practice. I differentiate this adjective from the notion of '*the* curatorial' as theorised below.

those addressing curation from broader popular media and business perspectives. The chapter places these disparate sources in productive tension in order to clarify how the archive is being conceptualised and mobilised in the expanded landscape of curatorial practice, and to illuminate how this proliferated territory of curation deepens points of interconnection and entanglement with the archival.[78]

ii. Theorising 'the Curatorial' in its Relationships to the Archive

The explicit theorisation of the curatorial as a new paradigm for understanding curation emerged roughly a decade ago (Lind 2009), although many reference points in the literature pre-date this period. The concept extends curation beyond the activities and spaces of the gallery/museum to also encompass any or all of the epistemological mechanisms, modes and reflexive practices and dynamic conditions in play in artistic and cultural production (Drobnick and Fisher 2012; Lind 2009, 2010; Martinon 2013; O'Neill 2012a; O'Neill and Wilson 2015b; Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012). Given this framing, advocates presuppose curatorial practices are in operation across the highly globalised and digitally networked cultural landscape. They assume curation at once draws on, constructs and mediates an increasingly distributed and disparate array of practices of cultural production and consumption. Moreover, the curatorial constitutes a dynamic and constellational set of relations between objects and agents, actions and ideas in a field of practice characterised by heightened interactivity, heterogeneity and transdisciplinarity (e.g. Lind 2010, 63; O'Neill 2012b; Rogoff and von Bismarck 2012).

Writing in 2009, Maria Lind described the curatorial as an elaborated and critical mode of curating and a "renegotiation" of the conventional terms of curatorial practice. Its development, she argues, relates to the "site-specific and context-sensitive" forms of artistic and cultural practice influenced by institutional critique, and which highlights aspects of performance, choreography and logistics (Lind 2009, 2012, 12). For Von Bismarck et al., the concept encompasses a "whole field of knowledge relating to the conditions and relations of the appearance of art and

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[78] The points of inquiry for this chapter have also been informed by project C, the pilot phase of the Slade Archive Project, Slade School of Fine Art, University College London (2012-2015). The project set the stage for my thinking about the elaborated ideas and application of curatorial practices as manifest in a collaborative, digitally oriented landscape of practice. The retrospective account of the project (Appendix iii) describes some of the resulting points of curatorial predicaments.

culture and the different contexts by which they are defined" (Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012, 8). By comparison, Rogoff describes the curatorial as "an epistemic structure" that moves away from ideas of a singular identifiable end product of curating (such as an exhibition or publication), toward a broader "trajectory of activity" at work in curatorial processes (Rogoff and von Bismarck 2012, 29).

Proponents of the idea describe curation as the setting up or launching of a critical event (Lind 2009). No longer pertaining solely to the temporary exhibition, the curatorial is said to account for the more elastic, fluid and elusive construction of situations, to open-ended "events of knowledge" that relate to "making culture manifest", to use Rogoff's phrases (Rogoff 2006, 2). It marks a shift towards a "post-representational" curatorial practice (Sternfeld and Ziaja n.d.). In this view, curatorial activities are said to be centred on things taking place rather than things being displayed; they focused on time, rather than space (Lind 2012). Recurring metaphors of curatorial *platforms* or *stages* speak to this vision for fluid and unfixed, non-representational practices (Martinon 2013; Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012). In this modelling, the curatorial offers a jumping off point and stage through which to set in motion elements in a constellation that not only generates knowledge, but also effect change and garner political and social value (Martinon 2013). This discourse also elaborates the familiar rhetoric of curatorial criticality and modesty described in Chapters VI and VII. The curatorial is said to involve inquiry into the "material and discursive framings" that condition curatorial events (Von Bismarck 2012, 24-25), the "nature of knowledge imparted", "the ideologies embedded in these performances", and the sources and limits of this knowledge (Rogoff and Martinon n.d.).

Yet underneath these romantic claims, the degree to which the curatorial can be understood as a new field of knowledge, an elaborated landscape of practice, a new modality of practice (Lind 2012), a knowledge structure (Rogoff and von Bismarck 2012), a "philosophy of curating" (Martinon 2013) or a refashioning of familiar curatorial activities (Esche 2013), is subject to debate. Furthermore, although the concept shifts emphasis from the exhibition towards the cultural field more generally, the discourse reveals a hesitancy – or perhaps inability – by its advocates to truly

take on board the broadened scope of practice. On the whole, the texts referenced above take 'cultures' of the curatorial to mean *contemporary art cultures*. While theorists may imply *trans*disciplinarity across the cultural landscape, proponents of the concept are working within a small network of academics, curators and museum directors linked to higher education and visual arts centres in Europe and North America, who rely on art institutions, exhibition spaces, biennials and related platforms as sites and forums for the discourse. This attachment to insular arenas of art-centric discourse reinforces familiar biases described in Chapter VII, including hierarchies of authorship (Richter 2012; Vidokle 2010) and visual modes of presentation.[79]

Moreover, this discourse has come out of arts-oriented universities. In this context, proponents prioritise the theorisation of curatorial practice as a critical, creative, intellectual and pedagogical area of inquiry over the more practical debates relating to exhibition making and museology (Lind 2012; Sternfeld 2012). The evolution of this discourse is part of a cluster of interrelated developments including the educational and research turns in curation discussed previously (O'Neill and Wilson 2010, 2015b; Rogoff 2014). The concept of the curatorial has also been positioned as an extension of pre-existing critical institutional and pedagogy frameworks promoted by the new museum project in the 1980s, or the 'new institutionalism' of the 1990s (Crone 2013; Farquharson 2014; V. J. Müller 2011). It is telling that a number of publications dedicated to the topic of the curatorial have been produced by educators of graduate level university courses, positioning this highly theoretical and pedagogical form of curatorial discourse in a self-affirming feedback loop.[80] In this context, practices under the banner of the curatorial ironically lend well to the audit-based, neoliberal landscape of higher-education institutions. Programmes can be promoted as being at the forefront of intellectual activities while also producing

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[79] For example, the editors of the *Journal of Curatorial Studies* write that the publication aims to foster scholarship "in the theory, practice and history of curating, as well as that of exhibitions and *display culture in general*" (Drobnick and Fisher 2012, emphasis mine). Through the PhD course they founded at Goldsmiths College, London, Rogoff and Martinon aim to assist students to "discover the various frameworks within which work by curators, artists, organisers, editors and funders, is articulated as they assemble *visual knowledge*" (Rogoff and Martinon n.d., emphasis mine).
[80] For example, Rogoff and Martinon founded an MPhil/PhD programme at Goldsmiths College, London, called "Curatorial/Knowledge" in 2006. The "Cultures of the Curatorial" postgraduate programme was initiated by von Bismarck in 2009 at Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (HGB) Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig. See also Bellini 2016.

measurable research and public-facing cultural outputs. The new theorisation of curation can therefore also be understood more cynically as a contribution to the viability and marketability of curatorial education.

More broadly, a number of commentators link the socio-political relevancy of curation to the contemporary post-Fordist economy. Maurizio Lazzarato, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theorisation of 'immaterial labour' is a common reference point in related literature (e.g. Lazzarato 1996). Through this lens, the rise of curation as cultural practice is seen as a manifestation and consequence of the shift away from manufacturing and productive labour, and towards the creation, management, distribution and commodification of 'immaterial', informational and conceptual labour (Krysa 2006a; O'Neill 2012a, 65–67; O'Neill and Wilson 2010; A. Phillips 2010; Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012). Curatorial practices of assembling, arranging, editing, sampling and publishing are all forms of such immaterial labour. It stands that this discourse both interrogates the impact of this form of labour on curatorial practices, but also, by its very nature, promotes it through the precarious, project-based and distributed conditions underlying its practices (Gielen 2013; Eric and Vukovic 2013).

Together these qualities put into question how far the concept can be extended before it begins to lose its value and its distinguishing characteristics (Hoffmann and Lind 2011; Myers 2011). As Julian Myers suggests, the overreliance on theoretical concerns at the heart of the concept of the curatorial has rendered it, at worse, a "half-abstracted metadiscourse", which lacks a true subject and professional footing (Myers 2011). Perhaps because of this combination of insular origins and broad remit, even advocates such as Maria Lind question its viability and incorporate its speculative quality into its ontology (e.g. Lind 2009, 2012). The difficulty of moving forward with the concept of the curatorial comes into focus when trying to understand how the archive, in its multivalent guises, is being mobilised in this particular discursive frame. Specific examples of the curatorial as theorised above are difficult to pin down, and those showcased within the literature tend to more readily align to the discourses around curating as was described in the previous chapter.

An exception can be found in O'Neill and Wilson's (2015) aforementioned recent volume on curatorial research. In one chapter, the notion of the curatorial was used by Hyunjoo Byeon to describe and conceptualise the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong. Byeon explicitly positions the active acquisition and interpretation of the centre's archive as a manifestation of the curatorial; the organisation, she writes, "performs *the notion* of the curatorial within a mode of research practice" (Byeon 2015, 187, emphasis added). Curatorial and archival endeavours are given equal significance and weight; they function as interconnected and interdependent valuing frameworks and entities. The centre's many activities include an archive acquisition programme, online exhibitions and a "discursive programme" (artists' talks, symposia and workshops), as well as grant, residency and oral history programmes in support of archival, artistic and curatorial production (Byeon 2015, 193). However, in another context, these activities could equally be framed as part of a museum's programming, or as part of an archive's outreach programme described previously. The use of this particular rhetoric therefore represents a point of position-taking towards the art-centric curatorial discourse itself, which embraces a curation-led model of archival production. It asserts archival and organisational value through curation; this curatorial approach "determines its legitimacy by deciding what to archive and disseminate" (Byeon 2015, 191). In this instance, curation directs the constitution and framing of the archive as a multivalent, generative, and highly curated research resource.

iii. Curation in the Digital Landscape

The recent theorisation of the curatorial has, for the most part, not focused on the role of technology in new modes and areas of curation; contributors tend to take the digital and computationally-networked facets of cultural life as a given, and thus perhaps no longer worthy of their particular focus. Yet discussions from a number of vantage points (e.g. in relation to museum and exhibition curating described in Chapter V and VI), do continue to spotlight the impact of computational technologies and environments on curation. In relation to art practices, for instance, curators and scholars have traced a number of ways in which the "behaviours" of new media and net art (including their heightened interactivity, performativity, connectivity and computability) have unsettled the foundational models and

conditions for curation (Graham and Cook 2010; Paul 2008). Such artworks extend curatorial stewardship onto online, digitally distributed, 'real-time' networked, entities and experiences. The 'immaterial' nature of the production, circulation, consumption and documentation of these practices have also fostered a shift in curatorial attention "from the object to processes to dynamic network systems" (Krysa 2006b, 7). It stands that the conventional modes of curatorial care, display, representation and acquisition, as well as ideas of agency, participation and collaboration, authorship and interpretation in play through curatorial work have also been tested (Graham and Cook 2007).

Digital Humanities and Enhanced Critical Curation

Although the discourse above pertains to artistic practices, it opens the door to understanding how these developments significantly alter the ontological parameters and extend the possibilities and issues for archive-oriented curatorial activities. As a point of comparison, the discourse of digital humanities addresses the computational turn in scholarship (Berry 2011) and illuminates how digital media, and the migration of digital cultural materials into networked environments, have elaborated the ways in which researchers can curate archival content as scholarly activity (Palmer 2004). Burdick et al. argue that, in addition to the practices of "animating archives" described in Chapter IV, "enhanced forms of curation" constitute another central knowledge model of the digital humanities (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012, 34). Digital and networked artefacts and environments, massive cultural datasets, interactive and hyper-textual interfaces and multimodal models of information exchange provide new opportunities and imperatives to select, arrange, study, model, present and disseminate – and to *curate* in their words – "the cultural record of humankind in order to create value, impact, and quality" (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012, 34). The authors of "Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0" also argue that the augmentation of scholarly practice through curation is a central activity for the future of the humanities disciplines. The digital humanities "recasts the scholar as curator and the curator as scholar" (Schnapp, Jeffrey, Presner, and Lunenfeld 2009).

This celebration of digitally-led curatorial practices is underpinned by a tacit assertion that the influence of technology on scholarship (and the archive, and

curation) is innately positive. Yet bridging digital scholarship and curation does not render activities and outputs inherently enhancing, despite implications otherwise. Although digital media and computational platforms *may* help refine or expand curatorial and scholarly practices in positive directions, as described in Chapters IV and V, they may equally diminish them by foreclosing interpretive pathways, by reinforcing uneven power relations, and further excluding and limiting access to cultural material, including archival information.

Like ideas of the curatorial, the digital humanities are also enmeshed in the socio-economic conditions of academic institutions. In this context, digital technologies have helped renew the fledgling and underfunded humanities sector (Berry 2011; Liu 2011; Schnapp, Jeffrey, Presner, and Lunenfeld 2009). Digital humanities research projects in this frame are fuelled by hopes for the transformative potential of information technology; they offer a "credible allegory of the humanities of the future" (Liu 2011, 29–30). Yet any such activities are also implicated in the relationship of digital humanities to the knowledge economy. They are part of the corporate arena of higher education immersed in economic markets and ideas of productivity that direct the "postindustrial paradigm of knowledge work" (Liu 2011, 10). The curation of archival material in the context of digital humanities is textured by the quest to be technologically innovative, to build and produce, and to conduct activities that have instrumental value (Ramsay 2011a, 2011b), and ultimately, financial traction. The digital humanities are also, as Brian Lennon has remarked, implicated in questions of surveillance and security through the harvesting and processing of data, and analytic modelling for such purposes (Lennon 2014).

Critical lenses on digital humanities highlight the tendency to oversell and naturalise the transformative potential of technology. In this frame of practice, there is a risk of slipping into positivist frameworks, of reaffirming cultural canons, and of losing sight of critical discourse and traditions in favour of celebratory, techno-centric, metric-driven and economically-directed practices and outputs (Bishop 2018; Liu 2011). Activities may conceptualise, handle and produce archival records and entities as also an instance of 'enhanced curation', and may do so in service to these interests in ways which undermine foundational scholarly, curatorial and archival principles. By their very design, many digital humanities projects are driven by

untested and precarious technological configurations. They support the construction of multivalent curated research resources that integrate multiple points of inquiry, apply different methodologies and technological drivers, and are realised through different digital platforms. These engender complicated and often contradictory areas of stewardship.

The many points of interpretation and mediation, and multiple agents and imperatives in digital-oriented, collaborative and multivalent projects foster exciting intellectual, curatorial and archival possibilities, but increase the likelihood of complications and compromise. Additionally, any ontological alterations and rearrangement of original records is more often than not, not made clear to users. The digital reworkings, maps and visualisations – the digital curation – of archival information is taken at face-value while being naturalised as an enhanced form of curation and an augmentation of evidence by virtue of it being digitally layered and distributed. Taken together, these activities also foster the remystification of the production of curatorial and archival knowledge.

Moreover, a significant amount of digitisation efforts are being built on proprietary platforms through corporate initiatives, which commodify data and platforms. These activities bely sticky questions around access and ownership of records and the terms of their use. As Jussi Parikka states, "the archive functions as the key node in the cultural politics of digital culture" that is subject to intense commercial interests and control (Parikka 2008, 75). Media and technology corporations may purchase or acquire the rights to license archives, and, to varying degrees, make them publicly available through digital technologies, while also keeping them in private hands (Rosenzweig 2003). For instance, Google Cultural Institute is a not-for-profit branch of the parent company, which digitises and makes publicly available cultural collections from around the world. The corporation frames its activities through a rhetoric of cultural preservation and the democratisation of access to cultural heritage. However, the underlying systems that facilitate new modes of public access are proprietary, and any data generated through its use is subject to commodification, data mining and restrictive licensing.

Curation as a Digital Communication and Marketing Practice

As a counterpoint, commentators addressing curation *outside* of academic and cultural sectors spotlight the interrelationship between curation, communication technology and commodification, by proclaiming it as a ubiquitous and interconnected social, technological and commercial practice. In wider cultural discourse, curation has come to denote the activities of selecting, presenting and ascribing symbolic and/or financial value to all manner of objects, entities, ideas and experiences (Balzer 2015; Bhaskar 2016; Rosenbaum 2011). Curation is a necessary tool in the context of over-abundance; cultural excess has generated an unprecedented need for the intermediation, filtering, refining and repackaging content in order to generate meaning and value, be it commercial, cultural, intellectual or creative (Bhaskar 2016; von Hantelmann 2012). By this definition, curation occurs through multifarious and interconnected media and tools, and across a myriad of sites and contexts of practice, including cultural events, online platforms, and physical consumer environments such as hotels, restaurants and retailers (Balzer 2015; Bhaskar 2016; Cairns and Birchall 2013; Jansson and Hracs 2018; Rosenbaum 2011; Schlatter 2012).

In the digital environment, information is made discoverable and meaningful for users through so-called content curation (Popova 2011). This term describes the selection and arrangement of digital content towards user engagement. It can also involve combination of marketing platforms and analytics to generate advertising revenue (Bhaskar 2016). Given the ubiquity of information flow in the digital environment, successful curation helps users find or encounter content, and facilitate its recirculation and "amplification" (Rosenbaum 2011). Digital archival representations are part of this content overload subject to digital curation. Archival material – as well as different motifs of the archive – circulate as commodifiable cultural information in this "commercial milieu of the digital culture" (Parikka 2008, 73). It is a setting that supports curatorial selection and presentation of material that is visually enticing or intriguing – so-called clickbait. It asks curators to prioritise what is easily digitised, out-of-copyright, aesthetically pleasing and so on, selecting singular archival representations out of their contextual envelopes with the aim of

gaining traction in the digital sphere. It supports the digital marketability of archival resources, in both implicit and explicit ways.

This digital landscape deepens archival and curatorial concerns with how archival representations are being remediated and represented in the digital landscape (Chapter III) and by what criteria of inclusion and exclusion. It reinterates critical questions around how material is brought together and under what terms of ownership and use, by whom, and for what purpose. These questions apply not only in relation to original collections, but also to the metadata attached to digital representations, and to the data generated by their reuse in the digital landscape (Parikka 2008, 75). This is not to suggest that the interconnections between archives and curation have previously functioned outside the reach of technological and corporate interests – far from it. Rather it points to how the digital cultural landscape has further layered, diffused and blurred the interconnections between curatorial, archival, commercial, technological and scholarly endeavours.

iv. The Computational Landscape as Tangled Curatorial and Archival Terrain

These distinct areas of practice highlight the networked computer as a key locus for expanded and intertwining curatorial and archival practices. The computer is a shared context for both practices, and is an environment which exist alongside and as an extension of, their more conventional sites of practice (museums, the archives, exhibitions and academic institutions). However, while computational systems play a central role in this interconnected landscape, their workings remain resolutely behind-the-scenes in most practices. Although an analysis of the technological landscape for curation is beyond the scope of this study, the following section sketches three interconnected computational layers as they mediate, and are mediated by, curatorial and archival practices in order to bring more clarity to their operations and the issues they bring about.

Interface, Software and Algorithms as Curatorial and Archival Terrain

Computer interfaces (specifically graphic user interfaces) allow communication between users and computers. Interfaces organise and present information, and

structure users' experience in computational environments (Manovich 2001). They are a common gateway and environment, and an initial structuring mechanism for both archival and curatorial practice (Dietz 1998; Hedstrom 2002; Ruecker 2015). Johanna Drucker emphasises their constellational and multifaceted nature, describing them as a "space of relations" that "supports interpretative events and acts of meaning production" (Drucker 2011, 12). In this capacity, user interfaces have parallels with conventional curated environments such as exhibitions. Speaking schematically, they also connect activities that take place in the operational workings of a given platform (its 'back-end' design and functionality), with that which is made visible and accessible to the user (its 'front-end' content and experience). Interfaces are part of the toolkit for curatorial storytelling. They link different cultural forms and logics, the collection and the exhibition, or as Lev Manovich would conceptualise it, the database with narrative (Manovich 2001). In this way, user interfaces also parallel the aforementioned structural divides in archives, museums and exhibitions. They also delineate a liminal area of potential curatorial activity, oversight, responsibility and control (Krysa 2006a), a point of (de)contextualisation and (re)mediation of cultural artefacts and records (Graham and Cook 2010). In each guise, curatorial practices of ordering and arranging, designing, labelling, signposting, contextualising, authorising and so on, come into play.

Computer interfaces offer ways for users to combine and interact with visual, textual, spatial and acoustic manifestations of digital archival material in idiosyncratic ways, far beyond the limited range of narrative and spatial pathways in the more controlled museological or exhibitionary environments (Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013a; Dietz 1998; Krysa 2006b). They facilitate user navigation across a range of data and media forms in rapidly changing frames, to the extent that "no common ground for organizing experience exists" (Drucker 2011, 15). Yet, although interfaces offer more open-ended interpretive pathways, they also condition and mediate them in unseen ways (Chun 2011). The back-end binary coding, algorithms and databases construct users' experience and restrict the access and interpretation of cultural information in ways that are not readily alterable or understood, often even to those responsible for 'front-of-house' curation.[81]

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[81] The pilot phase of the Slade Archive project is a case in point (project C, Appendix iii). A joint initiative between two university departments (Slade School of Fine Art and UCL Centre for Digital

Software is a second computational layer conditioning curatorial and archival practices and environments. Software denotes a set of instructions by which computer hardware operates. It has become a key language, media and context of contemporary intellectual and cultural work (Berry 2011). It is used to create, structure, store, distribute and access cultural artefacts and information and gives shape to the authoring and reading environments for curatorial activities, including internet browsers, word processing software, collections databases and so on (M. Fuller 2008; G. Cox 2006; Manovich 2013, 2014). Software can be used to curate in a very direct way, for example, through online exhibitions or social media platforms (Cairns and Birchall 2013; C. Hall and Zarro 2012). It can also be harnessed towards critical, investigatory and collective curatorial practices (Krysa 2006a), and be made more democratic through open access paradigms (Paul 2006). However, most software, like user interfaces, is designed to naturalise the way it structures information and action. It is ubiquitous and typically taken at face value, leading to a theoretical and practical blind spot around its role in cultural practices such as curation (M. Fuller 2008; Manovich 2014).

In turn, codes and algorithms constitute a third layer underpinning contemporary computational ecologies. Algorithms are instructions that establish how programmes read, collect, process and analyse data in relation to its outputs (Goffey 2008). They are dynamic cultural forms and socio-technical systems that give functionality to digital communication and knowledge-based exchanges, such as search engines, social media platforms and newsfeeds. They can often be complex with high levels of plasticity and responsiveness to their use and dissemination, and may also be designed to operate in a frame of corporate or state secrecy (Seaver 2017). These characteristics make algorithms enigmatic (Goffey 2008). Furthermore, algorithms are cultural entities that are themselves subject to inherent and emerging technical and systematic discrimination and cultural biases (Nissenbaum 2001; Noble 2018; Putnam 2016; Sentilles 2005).

Humanities), the curatorial design, navigational tools and functionalities of the project's crowdsourcing website were limited to what was possible in a quick 'mash-up' of social media and face recognition software programmes. Its core components were proprietary tools offering varying degrees of access to the programming and algorithms underpinning them, available to those with specialist knowledge.

Given how these computational layers mediate cultural understanding and social behaviour in ways that are difficult to locate, and in ways that typically fall outside the area of expertise of many curatorial practitioners and scholars, there is a risk of overlooking their operations and letting their particularities fall outside critical discourse. The impacts of computational workings (such as algorithmic biases) on curatorial and archival activities thus warrants further investigation. For the purposes of this discussion, it stands that curatorial and archival embeddedness with computational environments intensifies the familiar concerns with systems of knowledge and power, the politics of access, visibility and transparency in relation to interconnected archival and curatorial knowledge production.

Online Archival and Curatorial Configurations

These components and their dynamics converge in multifaceted online archive-oriented repositories and websites that digitally reconfigure curatorial and archival materials, activities and discursive framing described in the previous chapters. Through these projects, computational environments and tools meet familiar cultural forms and refrains. For example, the aforementioned Tate *Archives and Access* programme (2012-2017) is a multi-faceted project aimed at facilitating digital access, participation and learning through the Tate's institutional archive. It interweaves a number of archival and curatorial tropes, interpretive pathways, methods and value frameworks described in the previous chapters, but are here facilitated through digital technologies. In addition to publishing over 52,000 digitised archival items online, staff produced a number of digital tools and resources to "support discovery of the digitised collection" (Tate n.d.).

The project was designed along participatory archival models, making use of social media, crowdsourcing tools, or by handing over facets of creation, arrangement, navigation and augmentation of archival and curatorial content to users. This includes an 'Album' feature, which allows users to gather and share "collection pieces" published on the Tate website, and a playfully branded crowdsourcing tool called *AnnoTate* used to assist in the transcription of records, and help to "uncover the lives of artists". The *Animating the Archive* video series features archive-oriented

stories to bring to light the records "behind the artists and artworks" (Tate n.d.). The films provide a carefully choreographed look at backstage curatorial and archival activities, offering insight into salient methods, topics and skills such as conservation, oral history and copyright. Some films focused on the biography of the archive itself, with curators featured discussing the acquisition and interpretation of specific collections. Related programming also included creative workshops, exhibitions, community events and a volunteer programme with the overarching aim of connecting audiences with local and national art, artists and heritage.

The design and curation of such online digital archive resources structures archival records, representations, systems and protocols toward different and multiple effects, experiences, interpretations and points of access. The degree to which archival conventions are adopted, highlighted and made transparent is in itself a point of curatorial decision making (Melvin 2015a). Project design in this vein may uphold archival principles, classification systems and finding aids (Zhang and Mauney 2013), thereby showcasing digital contents as authoritative historical resources. Alternatively, interface design and search functionalities may alter or render the hierarchical arrangements of archives unseen. Moreover, project teams may describe a project as an archive, while doing away with, or neutralising the very conditions that make records *archival* (Palmer 2004). For instance, projects such as the William Blake Archive, despite its phraseology, are centred on the arrangement of digital resources as *thematic* collections rather than as archival ones, which would traditionally be ordered hierarchically according to provenance (Trant 2009). Other projects may structure user pathways as an overt creative treatment of archival resources. For instance, developers of the John Latham Archive employed "creative archiving principles" to configure the artist's archive as an extension and reflection of his vision and work (Velios 2011).

The Curatorial and the Archival as Navigational

Moreover, given the proliferation of cultural content brought about by the digital era (over 50,000 records in the Tate, for example), upholding the paradigm of access for archival materials brings about a need for curation. In the context of 'big data', projects may focus on the curation of cultural data across vast, and often distributed,

repositories (Rosenzweig 2003). Here, emphasis shifts from the accumulation, care, study and presentation of cultural artefacts and records, to the digitisation, aggregation, interlinking and *navigation* of *datasets*. Archive-based projects in this vein include the *Old Weather* project, the *Trans-Atlantic Slade Trade Database* and the *Mapping the Republic of Letters* project (Sabharwal 2017). The overabundance of information and potential pathways at this scale reinforces curation as a filtration and wayfinding tool. A final report of the Tate's *Archives and Access* project identified the overarching need "to 'storify' the archive content through curation and navigation by an archivist, artist or virtually" (Wilmot 2017, 53). This effect was also observed by Elizabeth Stainforth in her study of the Europeana digitisation project. She describes the project's necessary shift in focus from "portal to platform", that is, from user access via the project portal, to user access via *curated* presentations such as slideshows, thematic groupings, online exhibitions and the like. This focus on the curation of content is required in order "to make the content serviceable" (Stainforth 2016, 329). Yet in turn, underpinning such curatorial activities are foundational archival and records management activities that also provide mechanisms for wayfinding, most explicitly in the form of systematic cataloguing practices and finding aids (e.g. Yakel 2007a). In other words, discoverability and navigation of archival information are reinforced as shared and mutually-beneficial curatorial and archival issues.

Elaborating the Curation of Archives in Interactive Digital Environments

Digital tools and environments also promote new models to access and interpret archives as visualisations at a macro level. These efforts scale up the curatorial selection and presentation of archival content, in the mode of what Manovich has described as 'cultural analytics' (e.g. Manovich 2010). Even at a more micro level, non-linear, hypertext structures of websites allow for a shift away from the uniform and static presentation of documents (typified in HTML formats), towards interactive, layered and dynamic vector-based presentations (Kirschenbaum 2010; Saklofske 2010). Digital visualisations of modest but heterogeneous archival record sets have been used to chart networks of people and trace patterns of influence, and present these as interactive online platforms (e.g. Moriarty 2016). Three-dimensional visualisation tools facilitate the presentation of archived datasets in immersive and

participatory environments (Kenderdine 2015; Presner, Shepard, and Kawano 2014). The mArchive interactive collections browser for the collections of Museums Victoria merges a number of these potentials. The project is both an interface and installation, built as a circular, 360-degree situated browser experience set within the museum's gallery. It allows viewers to be surrounded by a data cloud representation of the museum's 'archive' of over 80,000 records and images. It is, in essence, a digital elaboration of the museum-as-archive metaphor. Developer Sarah Kenderdine describes the project as "situated experiments … that articulate, for cultural archives, a reformulation of database interaction, narrative recombination and analytic visualization" (Kenderdine 2014). The project also functions as an augmented user survey, with the capability of tracking of user patterns built into the project design.

In a more far-reaching example, Google Arts and Culture have partnered with numerous high-profile museums and archives to generate and publish images of their collections, and interconnect them with Google's other collections, datasets and technologies (such as Google Maps Street View). Cultural organisations that partner with Google gain not only with potentially enormous audiences, but are also given access to their storytelling tools, social media channels and platforms, advanced imaging and collections management systems. Each participating organisation benefits from the assets of the another.

As part of their activities, Google Cultural Institute showcases a number of online exhibits, including a commemorative celebration of the Hayward Gallery in London, "Hayward Gallery at 50: Uncovering the Archive" ('Hayward Gallery at 50: Uncovering the Archive' n.d.). A selection of recently digitised archival records serves as the launch point to story the institution's history through numerous interpretative avenues, including timelines, featured exhibitions and articles, and filmed oral history interviews where archival records have been used as a springboard to capture participants' reflections. This multi-pronged online exhibition history echoes the 'archival remembering exhibition' model described by Greenberg (Chapter VII). Yet in this instance, the historiography doubles as a digital archival resource; it becomes another node within Google's vast information empire. It is notable that, in this instance, exhibition and publication dates are not provided and, in the main, authors and curators are uncredited. Instead, the project's 'archival'

presentation is naturalised as part of Google's always-contemporary digital sphere, and its ubiquitous collecting and curatorial activities, which gain cultural credibility by association with a public institution like the Hayward.

Google Cultural Institute's platform also showcases a number of 'experiments' at the "crossroads of art and technology", including artists' projects ('Arts & Culture Experiments | Experiments with Google' n.d.). In a particularly noteworthy example, Hans Ulrich Obrist's book *Ways of Curating* (2014) has been developed into an online catalogue that maps his curatorial oeuvre. (It is, ironically, searchable by themes, exhibitions and timeline, but not artist.) A cursory review of such experiments suggests a tendency within the project to reaffirm cultural (and curatorial) canons, and to collate and rearrange material in relatively superficial ways that render it an attractive and novel cross-promotional vehicle, rather than a particularly insightful or useful resource. Pivotally, these projects also double as a mechanism to feed Google's algorithms and test its machine learning technologies.

Other institutions have made their archived datasets of collections documentation available for analysis and mobilisation as curatorial and archival resources. Cultural organisations such as the British Library and the Museum of Modern Art have made a selection of their collections datasets available to researchers for 'content mining' and secondary analysis. The *Curatorial Voice: Legacy Description of Art Objects and Their Contemporary Uses* (2018-2019) research project based at the University of Sussex, for instance, involved the digital translation of the curatorial catalogue records of Georgian satirical prints in the British Museum. The resulting dataset was then made available under a Creative Commons licence as part of the project, thus scaling up the museum-as-archive value framework to the level of digital data and outputs. In another example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York has collaborated with Google to use their machine learning technologies to identify artworks in their collection of archived exhibition photographs. This project digitally reworks and augments the exhibition-as-archive model identified in Chapter VII ('Exhibition History | MoMA' n.d.).

Initiatives such as these demonstrate novel ways to curate archival materials, but equally reinforce existing cultural forms and discursive framing. They rely on

conventional exhibition, collecting and archival constructs, as well as graphical forms more broadly (Drucker 2010; Greenberg 2009; Saklofske 2010). Scholars, curators, project managers, web and graphic designers and so on, rework familiar cultural forms and refrains into multifaceted and interconnecting digital resources and experiences. These morph pre-existing cultural, corporate and computational practices with novel ones in idiosyncratic ways. Thus, these projects are built on familiar tensions and engender the same potential pitfalls associated with any curatorial, archival, collecting and exhibition activities, but are here refracted and elaborated through the distributed, dynamic and pluralistic context of the digital environment.

However, while it may be acknowledged that curation plays a role in this landscape of practice, it is often unclear *where* and *when* this curation takes place (Dietz 1998; Graham and Cook 2010). Activities that could be described as curatorial are so dispersed and interwoven with other practices and systems as to render the parameters of curation indeterminate. Moreover, at what point curatorial activities meld into archival ones is equally up for clarification. The conditions of the digital landscape complicate the process of identifying the moment and place of curatorial 'events of knowledge' or moments of 'archivisation'. The continuous nature of data flows on the Internet (Manovich 2009) destabilises information, exaggerating its conditional orientation towards an ever-unfolding present moment. Real-time forms of digital publishing converge the moment of content creation, publication and its access and reception. The mobility of users and their devices, further un-fixes information and its points of production, interaction and preservation (Drucker 2011).

Moreover, the traditional museological and exhibitionary markers, and their institutional and site-specific conditions by which to define and study the materials being curated become harder to grasp. Without clear touchstones, anything can be described as curatorial or archival content, platforms and activities. Likewise, these conditions deepen the challenges of differentiating *between* curatorial or archival entities (Chapter V). Different bodies of literature place accents on different constructs. For instance, the discourse emerging from the arts tends to emphasise *curatorial* knowledge, practices, constellations and events; the digital humanities emphasises *cultural* corpuses, data and knowledge; while more commercially-

oriented arenas focus around ideas of curated *digital content* and its values. These make up the range of matter to be accrued and remediated in different projects, that (again speaking schematically), when deemed historic and preserved, are being described as *archival*, but when selected, arranged and displayed are being described as *curatorial*.

Archival Anchors

As rehearsed previously, archival principles can be applied to help anchor information in this slippery terrain, situating it in relation to its broader context of creation, and retaining links between its content, context and form (Chapter III). The use of archival records and the application of the term 'archive' in online curated environments signals the capture, preservation, date-stamping and controlling of cultural information, reflecting its image in the broader cultural imagination. However, this type of caretaking is particularly at risk in the hyper-changeable real-time frames of contemporary digital curatorial platforms and modalities. It stands that the very notion of a digital archive gives an illusion of stability, permanence, authority and order in a unsteady, disordered and precarious information landscape, and where the capabilities for archivists and/or curators to uphold archival principles are increasingly pressed upon.

Although it may be relatively easy to generate and publish digital archival content, its embeddedness in the digital ecology generates complex and ongoing responsibilities for its maintenance (Sabharwal 2015). Curatorial and archival practices are both, in different ways, concerned with the stewardship of cultural content as it travels and mutates across ever-increasingly complex communication pathways, different media forms, repositories, networks, software and computer interfaces, and through processes of digitisation, commercialisation and so on (Sabharwal 2015).[82] This expectation is also connected to the paradigm of access so fundamental to archival and curatorial practice (Chapter V), and that is reinforced in the rhetoric of democratising access to archival collections that infuses the rationales of many of these projects. This paradigm of access presupposes not only the

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[82] The use of persistent interoperable identifiers, or DOIs, in digital networks is one tool addressing this issue (https://www.doi.org/).

preservation of the archival content, but also their digital archival platforms and access pathways (e.g. online exhibitions, archival datasets, hyperlinked pages). Yet the functionality of these points of engagement is dependent on systems and infrastructures with a high rate of obsolescence and future inaccessibility (Rosenzweig 2003). Moreover, as the debates within the archival studies, digital curation and media archaeology remind us, 'digital archives' do not necessarily preserve records; institutional servers are not inherently secure. Rather archivists and digital curators can employ practices to organise records as "persistent representations" (Yeo 2010, 100) towards hoped for future accessibility and use.

There is a tendency within many of the discussions of curation as an expanded landscape and form of practice to account for the need for preservation, but to keep it at an intellectual and practice distance, easily passed forward onto a future imaginary caretaker or tacitly, as in the case of the discourse of the curatorial, deemed to be not relevant to the theoretical iterations of curatorial discourse described above. This tendency, combined with distributed curatorial roles and precarious labour conditions, reinforces a schism between the activities of curatorial interpretation, and preservation-based archival and curatorial stewardship precisely when these areas are increasingly enmeshed.

Additionally, the precarity of the conditions for cultural and knowledge work, and the high degree of project-oriented, grant-funded, or corporate-led timelines and conditions pose further challenges to the long-term stewardship of archival-oriented curatorial initiatives. Reading the fine print relating to the aforementioned mArchive project, the preservation of the project's infrastructure and datasets appears to be contingent on securing additional funding. Indeed, many of the web-based case studies surveyed for this chapter are no longer fully operational. Even in the Google Cultural Institute site one encounters dead links, malfunctioning software and de-contextualised information which undermines the trustworthiness and value of its online projects as curatorial and archival exercises.

v. Locating Curatorial and Archival Mediators in the Expanded Landscape of Practice

The extended reach of curatorial practice has also elaborated the curatorial subject position. Curatorial roles are found in all manner of creative, educational, commercial and informational environments. Curators are variously described as cultural mediators, content specialists or strategists, or data curators, digital curators, content curators, blog curators or even a "curator of cross-disciplinary interestingness" (Popova 2011). If the curatorial figure became hyper-visible in the discursive frame of *curating*, the position of the curator in this capacious curatorial frame is paradoxically ever-present, but also subject to heightened levels of obfuscation. Indeed, given multivalent definitions of curation in this broadened frame of practice, curatorial practices may be undertaken by individuals who do not necessarily identify themselves as curators.

This diffusion of the curatorial position has evolved from a number of directions. In digital culture more broadly computer users may occupy (informally or formally) the position of curator, as they create, filter, arrange, contextualise and recirculate digital content with frequency and ease. Digital and net-based art has fostered systems curation (Graham and Cook 2010), and of "public curation" (Paul 2006). Community-led curatorial projects, or those trialled through institutional critiques and experimentations (such as those under the umbrellas of the 'new museum' and 'new institutionalism'), have supported participatory curatorial models. Parallels can be drawn between the user-curated digital landscape and the user-centred participatory archival landscape (Chapter III) which harnesses the archival imaginary as "evidence of me" (McKemmish 2011). Projects that bridge archival and curatorial entities and undertakings can potentially redouble this participatory and identity framework. For instance, the National Museum of African American History and Culture's Community Curation Program invites individuals and organisations to identify, gather *and curate* stories into an "online archive of some of the never before known histories found within African American communities" ('The Community Curation Program' 2016).

In each of these ways, the contemporary landscape of practice suggests alternatives to the contested model of the singular curatorial figure and a redressing of the balance of curatorial power. Advocates of the curatorial welcome the distribution of curatorial activities among multiple mediating agents (e.g. Andreasen and Larsen 2007; Lind 2009; Moon 2013). They steer focus towards "cultural practices that insist on collectivity, changing subject and object relations, and dynamic hierarchies" with roles being swapped and redistributed (Von Bismarck, Schafaff, and Weski 2012, 12). However, given the history of overemphasising the singular curatorial figure in this field, this avowal of the individual curator also reanimates familiar critique of false curatorial humility (Vidokle 2010).

Destabilising the Curator as Expert

The expansion of curatorial practice further erodes the notion of the curator as an authoritative, subject-area expert (Chapter VI). This development has, within the rhetoric of the curatorial at least, been described as the necessary unfixing of curatorial knowledge. Proponents of the concept emphasise curatorial understanding as ever-unfolding and contingent. The curatorial is said to be concerned with "speculative actions and open-ended forms of production" (O'Neill 2012b, 56). Again, analogies with performance associate curation with more ephemeral and embodied forms of knowledge (Brandstetter 2012; Moon 2013; Rogoff and Martinon n.d.; Schafaff 2012). They paint a portrait of the curatorial agent as the reflexive and responsive performer-participant-learner, practicing "a form of ontology" that advocates "living things out" rather than "pronouncing on them" (Rogoff 2006, 3).

Similar rhetoric is found in the literature around digital humanities, where scholars embrace the value of risk-taking, productive failure and experimentation towards the development of new hermeneutic tools and epistemological frameworks (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012; Ramsay 2011b). In both of these quarters, there is a leaning towards romanticising novelty and elevating experimentation above the established methods and histories of practice that underpin such activities (e.g. Husemann 2012; Sternfeld 2012). For instance, proponents of the curatorial tacitly assume that other practitioners – a more conventional museum curator or archivist, for instance –

continue to take care of cultural artefacts and records and indeed, preserve the specialised forms of practice that provide the material, infrastructure, platforms, users and audiences and so on, through which such critical curatorial ontology can operate.

In a cultural landscape where seemingly anyone can be a curator, some commentators, particularly those from within the art-centric discourse, differentiate the role of the curatorial agent by positioning them as cultural critic and agitator. They envision curatorial practitioners/agents who are not only highly aware of their mediating role in the neoliberal knowledge cultural economy but have also internalised the resulting critiques and reworked them towards self-reflexive, politicised interventions. A number of curatorial degree programmes promote a vision of curatorial theorist/practitioners *as activists* rather than the less glamorous realities of the provision of workers for the cultural industry (e.g. O'Neill 2012b; Lind 2012; Rogoff and Martinon n.d.).

Yet as described previously, this posturing runs the risk of generating a self-referential web in which the theoretical ambitions for a project can only be realised as self-affirming exercises. Practitioners are obliged to take a critical position in relation to very conditions they set up; they must take their project (its frameworks, discourses and so on) as the subject of curatorial attention (Draxler 2012; Myers 2011). Furthermore, although this depiction presumes an associated democratisation of curatorial positions, paradoxically, this type of curatorial knowledge can only be actualised through a command of highly specialised and theoretical discourse, a *habitus* typically solidified through a significant amount of advanced training. The characterisation of the curator in business and media sectors counterbalances this idealised vision of a critical curator. In this context, the curator is a marketer and entrepreneur and their role is legitimised less by institutional, academic or artistic discourse, and more by the number of visits to websites, or clicks that reroute and remediate content to profitable ends.

Additionally, computational systems can also function as active curatorial agents and knowledge producers, further diffusing the curatorial position in unprecedented ways (Bhaskar 2016; Birchall 2014; Krysa 2006a). As Alan Liu explains, through machine

learning, some activities in digital humanities allow computers and humans "to share responsibility for the full act of interpretation"; they link human and computing processes in feedback loops where computers are "co-discoverers" not just empirical testers (Liu 2011, 21–22). This intertwining of computer and human curation brings about a new layer of uncertainty as to where, when and how curation is taking place, but also crucially, *by whom*.

Because computational technologies often obscure their own workings by design, their role in curation can further re-mystify the position of the curator. It makes curation opaquer, and re-ignites the issue of curatorial power and transparency. Moreover, the contemporary computational environment also supports curatorial activities without the input of a curator. This "disintermediation" of the landscape of practice (Sabharwal 2017, 248) is characterised by the absence of an intermediary such as a curator or archivist.[83] These factors stretch the "space of possibles" (Bourdieu 1993a, 176) for curatorial agents along a spectrum of presence and absence, and explicit or tacit engagement with the associated regimes of competence of a given community of practice.

The Role of the Archival in Concretising and Legitimising Curation

On the one hand, the literature reflects a need to understand curation as a more open-ended activity and practice, one that appreciates it as distributed, unfolding and unfixed. Yet on the other hand, accounting for this practice requires pinning down, or at the very least, articulating a moment in time and space by which activities can be claimed *as a curatorial occurrence,* be documented as such, and pivotally, be attributed to an individual curatorial figure or system. Without this coordinate, there is difficulty assigning authorship, assessing contributions, but also holding individuals accountable to received ideas of curatorial trustworthiness and value.

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[83] This was also a condition of the initial projects of the Slade Archive (project C, Appendix iii). The project team was comprised of a digital humanities scholar, a computer programmer, an artist and art historian, and a research assistant. No one person was designated as curator or archivist on the project, and a number of curatorial and archival areas of responsibility were left inadvertently unattended to. Moreover, the short-term funding and staff contracts attached to the project did not support future stewardship of the piloted projects, so future activities remain contingent on securing additional funding.

In more general terms, the digital environment also elaborates pre-existing curatorial concerns related to the stewardship of authorship described earlier (Chapter VI, VII). The digital landscape supports "a technological matrix that almost demands the repurposing and remixing of cultural content" (Burdick, Anne et al. 2012, 30); it is a territory where "content curation is a new kind of authorship" (Popova 2011). Content curators may hold more privilege and garner more value (both in economic and cultural terms) than the original content creators, deepening a familiar antagonism between creation and curation. This contemporary cultural milieu is also marked by high levels of co-production, hybrid practices, collaborative knowledge production, and the precarity and outsourcing of 'immaterial' labour. Discussions and regulations around copyright, licensing and fair use in the digital realm speak to these concerns, which are also continually negotiated through open access and code sharing initiatives (Paul 2008; Krysa 2006a), and the development of attribution systems in the digital environment, such as Creative Commons licenses or Maria Popova's "Curator's Code" (Bhaskar 2016, 246).

As discussed previously, archival records and practices assist in anchoring, historicising and assigning authorship to curatorial actions and outcomes that are otherwise transient or elusive. They help identify individual practice, clarify the context of production and the role of the producer therein, and thus demarcate credit and responsibility. As shown in Chapters VI and VII, this can be achieved through collections documentation or through so-called paracuratorial activities, and the creation and presentation of archives relating to curatorial events and figures. In the digital realm, archival practices of preserving the contextual information pertaining to records can also support an understanding of how information is being utilised and remediated through curatorial practice. However, such efforts themselves engender new points of archival and curatorial responsibility (Sabharwal 2015).

Moreover, archival records in this environment also concern individual authorship and agency, which is activated along a spectrum of empowerment and disempowerment. To be 'on record' is not always desired; attribution also concerns privacy, and the protection of individual data engendered by corporate data mining and state surveillance activities. Moreover, as discussed in Chapters III and IV, the broadened social role of archives, and the loosening ontology of archival records

means authorship operates in more fluid ways. As Bearman noted in 1997, the digital age fosters iterative "creative authoring events" that are both technological and human in nature (Bearman, cited in Cook 1997, 42). In essence, the terms for both curatorial and archival authorship are potentially more elusive.

There are complex dynamics at work in this shared arena between the flourishing of new archival and curatorial constructs, the potentialities for distributed authorship, the co-option of authoring environments, and the disappearance of mechanisms to ascertain authorship brought about by the intertwining conditions of practice described above. These tensions are compounded given the changeable nature and rapid obsolescence of digital media, and the de-professionalisation, 'disintermediation', distribution and commodification of archival and curatorial activities, platforms and subject positions.

In light of these complexities, the interconnections (both digital and non-digital) between curatorial and archival arenas warrant ongoing critical attention. The attention required is both practical and theoretical, and is focused on understanding this expanded landscape of practice as a shared, but also entangled, curatorial-archival landscape. Here, the post-custodial paradigm of archival and curatorial care – a concern with the conceptual, and the physical and digital stewardship of records – serves as an important touchstone. This discussion also confirms a need to appreciate the multiple affordances of records, and show curated archival materials and their platforms, as well as archived curatorial entities and platforms, function along interconnected continuums of use (Chapter III). It demonstrates an imperative for the critical *curatorial and archival* discourses to inform such projects, even those produced in online environments that are not necessarily produced by archivists and curators. It necessitates, in other words, that ongoing, cross-disciplinary academic perspectives such as those surveyed in this study, be brought to bear on this particular area of professional and cultural engagement.

vi. Conclusions

Casting this wide net over curatorial discourse has brought to the fore the breadth and diversity of contemporary possibilities for curatorial discourse, positions,

materials and actions. The characteristics of this expanded curatorial landscape are also those of the elaborated *archival* landscape. Connecting this curatorial discourse with the proliferated archival discourses illuminates a number of qualities that give shape to this territory as a shared landscape of practice. In particular, a focus on the digital and computational qualities of this terrain brings into relief structuring mechanisms that are at once technological, cultural, intellectual and commercial points of power in play in curatorial and archival practices and their outcomes. These qualities elaborate the potential mechanisms, terms and points of curatorial mediation in generative ways, to the extent that archives and curation seem ubiquitous. Yet these same circumstances also paradoxically support the disintermediation of the landscape and re-mystify curatorial (as well as archival) activities and agents.

Throughout this study, archival and cultural practices have been shown to be mutually informing and affirming cultural practices and discursive frameworks. However, in this distributed and elaborated terrain, the nature of their interdependence is accentuated. In the current cultural arena, curatorial and archival frameworks constitute overlapping mechanisms and traditions of practice which assist in the grounding, navigation, assessment, validation, mediation and interpretation of cultural materials and information in their overwhelming volume, variation, mutability and hyper-connectedness. Curatorial and archival activities and entities are deployed as a means of filtering, authenticating, wayfinding and fostering discovery in a context of unwieldy and overabundant shifting content and its many avenues of production and consumption.

Furthermore, the respective ontologies and epistemologies of curation and archives are also subject to being confirmed and validated through these mechanisms, redoubling their interdependency. In this uncertain and precarious terrain, and as the conventional touchstones of curatorial practice become harder to grasp, archival materials, systems and metaphors can be drawn on to function as much-needed anchors. Archives, archival themes and methods give 'immaterial' curatorial labour and its outcomes historical weight. Archives, and notions of the archive, help concretise what is post-representational, 'dematerialised' and dispersed. The archive contributes to the reassertion of representative modes in a 'post-representational'

curatorial landscape. Conversely, as the terms of archival practice have loosened and its definition 'undefined', the value of curation as a practice by which to filter, frame and differentiate the archival is heightened. Curatorial practices help confer archival status onto activities and entities. They also reassert the representative function of archives, singling out and assigning meaning to archive records – and indeed overarching concepts of the archive – as part of broader cultural narratives.

Changes in related terminology, exemplified in the adjectives 'curatorial' and 'archival' are reflective of these various developments. They provide useful pliable discursive constructs. However the capacious nature of this vocabulary means its application also supports generalisations, slippages and oversights in related discourse and practice. These terms signify a host of meanings, and can be associated with a dizzying array of potential usage, terms of reference and examples to draw on, rendering them inherently imprecise. The same qualities that make them useful, and that drive the modelling of the curatorial as an expanded landscape of practice for this thesis, are the same qualities that render them problematic in both practice and analysis.

Additionally, this chapter also highlights a disconnect between the rhetoric, and the ideals and imaginaries for elevated curatorial and archival practices, and the nuances of their reality. There is a propensity in the discourse to focus on changes, and on 'enhanced' and 'augmented' curatorial activities and outcomes, and overlook the ways in which the contemporary curatorial landscape continues to rest on overarching and established principles of practice and forms of curation. This terrain is equally conditioned by, and equally bolsters, existing and traditional culture forms, practices and systems, which carry forward familiar predicaments and problematics, but are here accented by additional complexities.

These dynamics reveal a need to interrogate the points of novelty claimed with regards to archive-oriented curatorial practices, so as not to lose sight of the rich histories of practice and critical learning across a number of respective fields. The elaborate and knottiness of this curatorial and archival landscape also reaffirm an imperative to continually reflect on how conceptualisations of archives and curation are operating beyond discrete academic and professional orbits, and to attune to fault

lines across broad swathes of discourse and practice in order to understand how they test curatorial and archival principles of care. It demonstrates an imperative for critical curatorial *and* archival discourses to inform archive-oriented curatorial activities. It necessitates, in other words, that ongoing, cross-disciplinary academic perspectives be brought to bear on this particular area of professional and cultural engagement.

Chapter IX. Conclusions

i. Research Overview

This thesis set out to answer a number of research questions in order to bring clarity to the interweaving threads of curation, archives and notions of 'the archive'. It asked:

- How is the archive conceptualised and mobilised in different curatorial contexts?
- What is the nature of the relationship between curatorial practices and archives?
- How can this relationship be understood through a tripartite model of curatorship, curating and 'the curatorial'?

This research developed from the initial assertion that the points of interconnection between curation and archives have not been thoroughly analysed, despite the prevalence of both of these practices in contemporary cultural and academic life. I theorised that by using an interdisciplinary lens, three broad areas of curatorial discourse could be identified, and that each of these three discursive areas engage with ideas of the archive in different but overlapping ways. I proposed that by comparing and contrasting the discourse emerging from these three areas of curation (curatorship, curating, and the curatorial), and setting them in relation to literature relating to the archive, the nature of their connection would emerge more clearly.

I set the following research aims for the study:

- To develop and structure a research project that facilitates a critical overview of curatorial practices in relationship to the archive
- To test the working theory that different contexts of practice for curation conceptualise and handle the archive in different ways
- To design and test a tripartite model of curation as an analytic framework for this research.

Additionally, the initial literature review pointed to the variable and often superficial treatment of the archive as a construct. This demonstrated a need to clarify the terms of reference for discussions around the archive before engaging in questions of curation. It required giving archival discourse equal weighting in the research by integrating professional and academic archival literature. This inclusion has further refined the aims for the study listed above.

Chapters I and II provide an overview of the project and its rationale, presenting both archival and curatorial discourse as multivalent, complex and thus necessitating a number of entry points. In **Chapter II**, I layout a theoretical and methodological framework for the study in response to a number of observed conditions of this research terrain. Using a *bricolage* approach, the research methodology has facilitated the examination of these two arenas of discourse and practice through a number of intellectual paradigms and vocabularies, which have been selectively drawn on throughout the study. This chapter also sets the terms for the development of the tripartite analytic model of curation. The framework has enabled me to delineate, describe, compare and contrast different archival and curatorial discourses and trace patterns and tendencies within the literature. It has allowed me to attend to divergences and parallels in the discourses, and to do so according to different scales of practice; from communities and fields of practice, and more latterly, to a shared curatorial and archival landscape of practice. By structuring the literature in this way, I set the stage for the research to test the working theory that different frameworks for curation engender different tendencies and patterns around the mobilisation and conceptualisation of archives.

Chapters III and IV then turn to addressing discourses around the archive. In **Chapter III,** I foreground key principles of practice and debates in archival studies and in related professional archival literature. I show that although common definitions for archives can be delineated, the ontology of the archive is subject to changing currents within the professional discourse, and that archival records have various affordances in different discursive contexts. Even though it has been interrogated, the conceptual link between ideas of archives and evidence prevail in the rhetoric of the profession. I outline a number of common drivers for archival and

curatorial activities, and situate archival practice as an area of professional and social interconnection with that of curation.

Chapter IV focuses on archive-related discourse from a number of scholarly and creative fields in order to better understand how archives are approached outside of the profession. In this chapter, I trace how a complex configuration of academic, socio-political and technological developments over the last fifty years has expanded the terrain for archival activities and elaborated the ways in which archives are understood and used. The 'archival turn' in the arts and humanities has led to a development away from treating archives solely as a source, to understanding it also as a subject in itself, and has drawn broader cultural attention to its many areas of subjectivity and contingency. Additionally, I highlight how archives are an intellectual, philosophical, creative and experiential resource for curation. I show how the discourse at once complicates notions of archival evidence and reasserts it. I also determine that any curatorial engagement with archives brings about questions of archival agency and multivalent authorship manifests along a spectrum of empowerment and disempowerment.

The widened notions and applications of archives and archival constructs described in chapters III and IV extend the terms of reference for archive-oriented curation. These two chapters laid the groundwork to understand the expanded field of archival practice as, in part, an expanded terrain for curatorial practice. At the same time, they also show enduring values and continuities in practice and discourse, which are equally brought to be bear on contemporary curatorial activities.

Moreover, in this first part of the thesis, I demonstrate how a study of the nature of the relationship between curation and archives must take into account the multivalent and complex nature of archives and archival discourse. Synthesising the literature, I profile the archive as a pluralistic construct that draws on many knowledge paradigms, histories and contexts of activity. The archive is a nexus of cross-pollination and hybrid practices. The definition of the archive – and concerns with how it is created, accessed, utilised and valued – are areas of ongoing debate in the discourse surveyed. Moreover, I show how the ontology of the archive constitutes a

salient 'conversation' in the discourse, one that is subject to being negotiated through curatorial practices.

Chapter V bridges the two parts of the thesis and outlines how archives and museums, archival records and museum objects, archivists and museum curators, share a field of influence. I discuss how their institutional interconnections manifest along a spectrum of convergence, overlap and divergence. Archives, archival practices and museum curation constitute mutually validating practices and frameworks that also assert and uphold their distinguishing features. I argue that the differences between entities, sites and forms of practice constitute an area of negotiation in play at the intersection of curatorial and archival activities. Throughout these discussions I foreground collections documentation as a common and mutually validating (and at times overlapping) area of practice for the negotiation of these typologies, and for upholding the worth of both archives and museum curation.

Chapter VI analyses different concepts of archives in relation to museum curation, taking into consideration critical and post-critical museological discourses. In the chapter, I review how curatorial positions and mediating activities are conditioned by a dual collecting and exhibition framework, and by the structural and organisational divide within the museum that delineates activities taking place behind the scenes, with those taking place in the areas of public presentation. From this, I identify three key archival constructs mobilised through curation: the archive as source, the museum archive and the metaphor of the museum-as-archive. I argue that these constructs bridge multiple aims of the museum. I also show how archives and museum curation are, in essence, mutually validating forms of cultural production. Archives support the social and epistemological function of museums; and museums, in turn, reinforce the cultural and evidentiary currency of archives and archival records.

In **Chapter VII**, I examine the discourses of *curating*, focusing in particular on the production of temporary exhibitions, and draw heavily on the discourses around contemporary art. This area foregrounds the display of archives and the presentation of archival constructs towards a variety of rhetorical purposes. In this chapter I trace

how the discourse around art curating emphasises the archive as a source and medium for artists and curators alike, and highlights authorial positions in exhibition spaces as a contested area of curatorial negotiation and responsibility. Despite the rhetoric of experimentation that infuses many discussions around curating, I show that the preconditions of exhibition forms, spaces and practices at once animate and alter, but also restrict, the curatorial handling of archives. I assert that upholding and communicating different temporalities, subject positions, hierarchies and terms of practice is an enduring expectation of the curator in this terrain. I also suggest that the curator remains accountable to maintaining (art)historical modalities, and to the conventional handling of archive materials as historical resources, particularly within the exhibition frame itself.

In **Chapter VIII,** I address how the elaborated contemporary cultural landscape of practice has scaled up and rendered more complex the interconnections between archives and curatorial practice. Highlighting in particular the discourse around digital humanities, new media art and media studies, I chart how digital tools and computational environments redraw the guideposts for curation. The landscape is characterised by rapidly shifting terms and terrain of practice and an overabundance of information increasingly processed and consumed as digital representations. I argue that in this contemporary context, archival and curatorial practices, discourses and entities are reconfirmed and elaborated as mutually influential and enhancing, but also highly pluralistic and crossdisciplinary, cultural frameworks. Moreover, I contend that these conditions make curation and archives increasingly prevalent and necessary, but paradoxically, harder to grasp.

ii. Curation and its Conceptualisations and Mobilisations of the Archive

Addressing the question of how the archive is conceptualised and mobilised in different curatorial contexts, I put forward a number of findings. The tripartite model supports the assertion that each of these three discursive areas engage with archives in variable, but overlapping ways. I describe how, in all three modes, archives and archival motifs are naturally associated with historicity and the past, and with the preservation of records through time. The use of archives colours curatorial practices,

narratives and positions with notions of authenticity, originality, truth, proof and scholarly credibility. However, I also demonstrate how these various settings stress different priorities and concerns, which lead to the foregrounding of different modes of thinking about and handling archives towards different ends.

In **museum environments** (Chapter VI) archival values and practices are naturalised as part of the collecting rationale of the institution and the custodial model of curatorship. In this context, archives provide foundational historical underpinnings to curatorial collections and expertise, supporting the museum as a centre of knowledge, cultural memory and heritage. This value is traceable in the commonsense understanding of archives as research resources for curation; in the role of the museum archive (as both extractive and productive for curation); and in the metaphor of the museum-as-archive. It is also apparent through the value placed on collections documentation and labels in museum collections and displays, and through the institutional principles and practices (both archival and museological) that safeguard information associated with artefacts and records. In museums, archives are typically institutional in nature, paralleling the collections model of museums. However, in this chapter I also determine that these archival constructs both reinforce museological systems and representations, and facilitate their critical re-evaluation. Moreover, in this context, the ontology of the archive is determined jointly by the archive creator/collector, the museum and the museum curator. Yet, I also argue that the discourse of curatorship enables curators to treat the ontology of the archive as self-evident but malleable.

In **exhibition environments** (Chapter VII), exemplified in this study by the discourse of art curating, archives and ideas of the archive garner their significance through public display. In turn, the broad evocations of archives circulating as cultural imaginaries are reinforced through their presentation in these highly visible and authoritative rhetorical spaces. In the exhibition frame, archives function as a research resource for curating, but have also been reimagined and showcased as a creative and critical medium, conceit, vocabulary, form and outcome of curatorial practice. I trace how the overt presence of archive material and themes in the gallery frame also provides a counterweight to the temporary and ephemeral nature of exhibitions and related curatorial practices, and argue that archive-oriented curatorial

strategies are used in exhibitions to demarcate (creative) authorship and agency. This has included using archives and archival practices as a gesture of curatorial transparency, reflexivity and self-presentation. Additionally, I posit that the creative or alternative handling of archives by curators can upset the naturalised hierarchies of practice and the associations between curating and historical modes of address. This means the curating of archives can also reinforce the opacity and ambivalence around the mediating role of the curator identified in the museological discourse.

Additionally, I demonstrate how archive-based tactics of curating support wide-ranging definitions of archives. I conclude that curatorial authorship is being asserted not only through the making of the exhibition, but also through the constitution and definition of the archive itself. The art-centric discourse of curating foregrounds the role of the curator in the overarching formulation of the archive in the exhibition frame by authenticating it as an artistic or curatorial resource, theme, medium and research method or project outcome. In this discursive frame, the definition of an archive is variously put forward by the archive creator/lender/artist, but also by the exhibition curator.

In the intricate and highly digital **curatorial landscape** (Chapter VIII), archival entities circulate in many guises. Computational tools and platforms emerge strongly as important elements and/or co-contributors in the curation of archival materials and representations. Projects are likely undertaken by more than one organisation or figure, and there is a marked increase in hybrid forms of practice and multivalent cultural forms. The curatorial conceptualisation and mobilisation of archives and archival constructs is informed by the distribution of curatorial activities across heterogeneous arenas of practice, both physical and digital, and through a myriad of potential sites of cultural production and commodification. I show how in this context, there is a further loosening of the definition and ontology of the archive. I argue that the concept of the archive has been rendered so ubiquitous and nebulous that it can serve as a rhetorical qualifier for all manner of (curatorial) activities. I suggest this encourages the use of the adjective 'archival' in related rhetoric, as much as the noun (an archive), verb (to archive) and metaphor ('the archive'). Given the wide-ranging and pervasive nature of archival entities and the highly variable and distributed forms of mediation, the definition of 'the archive' and 'the archival'

can be determined by a variable constellation of agents, including (but not limited to), archive creators, curators, users, cultural institutions, corporate entities and computer systems.

Elaborated Archival and Curatorial Ontologies

Overall, the research therefore affirms a trajectory towards the diversification of notions of the archive in curatorial framing. In the discussions of museum curatorship, I identify three archival constructs that pivot around relatively familiar representational practices based on site-specific museums and their collections, and through relatively clear curatorial roles. In the frame of exhibitions, the discourse expands to encompass a more metaphorical re-imagining of archives. The construct of 'the archive' enables highly individualised, creative appropriation of archives, archival vocabularies and motifs, which render the parameters of the concept hard to pin down. In relation to the discourse of 'the curatorial', the adjective 'archival' functions as a vague attribute that can be applied (in part through curation) to all manner of collected records, documents, artefacts and/or disseminated digital content and corpuses, datasets, aggregates and metadata – entities that can equally be conceptualised as curatorial in nature.

I assert that these various notions of the archive are part of what is being handled and articulated through these various curatorial practices. However, the research also outlines how these competing evocations of the archive are equally viable within curatorial imagination. Therefore, the research does not chart a linear progression, but rather traces ongoing overlap in the evolution of a territory of interconnected and multidirectional practices. I argue the discursive frames modelled are additive; they do not chart either/or, but rather both/and in the broadening conceptualisations of the archive. The model also traces how the use of the term 'curation' has expanded in equal measure. I argue that as part of this development, the archive has been harnessed to give definition to specific instances of practice in uncertain and shifting discursive terrain. Moreover, I show that archival discourses contribute to the expansion of curatorial possibilities, and curatorial discourses to archival ones. These are mutually influencing spheres of discourse and practice. The curation of archives and archival constructs is a form of participating in the shifting currents of

archival theory and practice. Conversely, curatorial ontologies and epistemologies are also manifested, activated and developed through archive-oriented practices. The study therefore points to a deepening interconnection – at times entanglement – between archival and curatorial discourse and practice.

iii. Clarifying the Nature of the Relationship Between Curation and Archives

Throughout this study, I demonstrate how the nature of the relationship between archives and curatorial practices is one of mutual influence. They are interrelated in theory and practice, and in tacit and explicit ways, which are traceable in the discourse through common and connected practices and vocabularies, shared value frameworks, and in related debates and points of tension. These links can be discerned along different levels of practice (localised communities, fields and landscape of practice), and through various critical commentaries, professional standards and protocols. As was summarised in Chapter V, these interconnections are historical and function along a spectrum of convergence and divergence.

Complicating Archival and Curatorial Terms of Engagement

The tripartite model also reveals a progression towards more layered terms of engagement between curatorial and archival practices, contexts and outcomes. It traces a development from institutional parameters of practice associated with curatorship, to more individually-led curatorial activities associated with heterogeneous exhibitionary contexts. These parameters of practice have become further unbound in the highly distributed, computationally networked activities, where interconnected projects, platforms, resources and subject positions may at once be both curatorial and archival in nature. The research charts a proliferation of potential contact points, areas of exchange or crossover that have rendered the connections between curatorial practices and archives more layered, and at times, disordered.

Tracing Trajectories of Mediation

The pathways of curatorial and archival mediation have also proliferated. In curatorship, curatorial mediation follows relatively traceable trajectories. Curatorial mediation of archives concern movement of objects, ideas and people in and out of the museum, and in and out of its public and professional spheres. With regard to curating, the use of archives and archival metaphors pivot around display practices and their historical legacies. However, in the realm of 'the curatorial', the vast, multifaceted and dynamic terrain for potential curatorial intervention renders trajectories of archival engagement, presentation, production and care highly idiosyncratic and rhizomatic. Here, the archival and curatorial constructs and entities alike can operate through a noticeable lack of conventional physical, institutional or professional touchstones for practice. The likelihood of curatorial decontextualisation and disintermediation is heightened in this terrain.

A number of curatorial and archival practices are accentuated as a result of these developments. I assert that the filtering and navigation of information, longstanding facets of both curation and archival practices, are brought to the fore as shared and intertwined activities in the conditions of overwhelm, brought about by excessive and ubiquitous cultural production and circulation. The research also highlights the shared curatorial and archival function and responsibility to provide signposts for users and audiences. Interwoven responsibilities in this regard include clarifying authorship and subject positions, delineating typologies of cultural resources, and providing temporal guideposts to users and audiences relating to cultural resources, narratives and events. In this regard, I have demonstrated how curatorial and archival activities are reciprocal. Archival practices assist with curatorial signposting and position-taking; and conversely, curatorial activities can clarify archival subject positions, authorship, definitions and use-value in public forums.

Continuities and Discontinuities in Practice and Discourse

On first review, the modelling also suggests a progression away from conventional curatorial approaches to archives. There is a strong emphasis on continuity of practice relating to, and supported by, the use of archives in museum curation. In relation to curating, the temporary quality of exhibitions foregrounds more singular

and idiosyncratic iterations of practice where the archive can be used in highly distinctive ways. By comparison, the discourse around the expanded and distributed curatorial landscape emphasises theoretical and/or technical novelty in ways that tend to naturalise or suppress traditions of practice.

Yet, in this study, I also outline how traditional and radical modalities function in tandem. In addition to showcasing innovation and transformation, the literature also brings into relief the tacit points of continuity in practice and discourse. Histories of practice continue to weigh heavily on contemporary activities. Given this dynamic, the research also suggests a need to appreciate the intellectual and practical traditions underpinning this terrain in order to clarify the degree of innovation being purported. In this frame, archival records and themes can be used by curators to articulate and showcase different modalities of curatorial practices along this spectrum of continuity and change. Conversely, curation asserts historical, contemporary and future relevance and value onto archival collections, practices and subjects in ways that both reaffirm and provoke rethinking of archival principles and inheritances. Together these insights bring into focus how the relationship between curatorial and archival entities, contexts and subject positions – as well as their discourses and practices – is one of mutual and multivalent influence, value and functionality.

iv. Reflecting on the Tripartite Model for Curation and its Implications for Future Research

The tripartite analytic model of curatorial discourse provides a useful, provisional framework for clarifying these complexities. It is a fruitful "contingent system of interpretation" that has helped to conceptualise and position curatorial practices in their relationship to the archive (Reckwitz 2002, 257). Differentiating each discursive area in this way provided a shorthand, a way of illuminating tendencies and typical conditions in this cultural arena in order to detangle what is multifaceted, knotted and often difficult to make out.

At the same time, I show how the parameters between these categories are porous and at times fluid. Different modes and fields of curatorial practice function simultaneously and are interconnected. This blur is particularly evident in the

discourse around the expanded curatorial landscape analysed in Chapter VIII. The capacious nature of this category, and the dynamic, generative, global, digitally networked and often opaque qualities of the activities described within, make analysis difficult. This challenge is compounded by the fact that the digital-centric nature of this discourse and practice has rendered much of the literature and structures of these projects ephemeral and unstable. Dead links, obsolete systems, undated or unattributed sources give the findings precarious underpinnings. Therefore, I also suggest that one of the intellectual risks in modelling curatorial and archival discourses and practices in this way is that it gives the appearance of containment and stability precisely when the discourses and practices in question are increasingly unbound, messy and unstable.

Given these factors, I argue there is an imperative for ongoing critical vigilance around different evocations of the archive at the points of connection with curation. I assert a need for researchers and practitioners to appreciate the multifarious terms of reference for both curation and archives, and to define their terms of use with more precision. This imperative is affirmed in light of the ubiquity, but paradoxical obfuscation, of curatorial and archival practices in the contemporary cultural landscape, and given the place of these activities in systems of knowledge and power. It also chimes with the repeated calls for curatorial and archival transparency stated across these related fields of practice.

Moreover, through this research I reveal an intellectual necessity to address this area of entangled activity from interdisciplinary perspectives that can take into consideration the web of activities, materials, subject positions, motivations and complex histories of practice in play. This includes approaching this entwined area of cultural production in ways that appreciate not only the academic and professional discourses, but also those curatorial and archival imaginaries circulating in popular, commercial and social arenas. Ongoing cross-disciplinary analysis of this terrain is ever more relevant given the increasingly interactive and diffused character of curatorial and archival mediation, and the focus on collaborative, public-facing and participatory engagement activities. It is also warranted in light of the pervasive commercial interests in this area.

The sheer breadth and variety of material encompassed in the research terrain also qualified the modelling of this study. The literature puts forward incalculable number of reference points, each bifurcating and splintering in different directions. This has resulted in a push-pull between undertaking a broad survey of the literature and attending to the specificities of different instances of practice and discourse. The examples selected therefore illuminate particular threads of argument, and are presented as indicative of a much broader territory of practice. By the same token, the expansive overview and structuring of this terrain points to many and diverse directions for future research (e.g. focusing on specific collections, historical periods, subject areas or collaborative projects).

The variability of the research terrain also highlights the subjective nature of this research trajectory in ways that stand in productive tension with the analytic structuring of the discourse. This returns me to reflect on the role of my own curatorial projects in this research. They have served as useful reflexive touchstones throughout the study. To that end, I have chosen to retain some signposts to them in the thesis in order to acknowledge them as shadow source material. But they also bring discomfort. They are personal, peculiar and point to vulnerabilities in practice. Their placement in a peripheral position as appendices reflects my ongoing ambivalence around their position in this research. However, their presence also speaks to the currency linked to the vulnerabilities of archive-oriented curation that will form the basis of my research and curatorial activities moving forward.

Two additional observations about the analytic modelling of this research can be made. First, the research demonstrates a need to acknowledge the university as an important context of practice for intersections in archives and curatorial practices. The university is a discursive site and frame for archive-oriented curatorial practices that is often left unquestioned in discussions emerging from related cultural sectors, which more readily focus on museums and exhibitions as sites of practice. A second observation is that the efficacy of the tripartite model was due in large part to the groundwork done in fleshing out the archive as a complex discursive and practical area in its own right. This finding supports the assertion that future studies in this area benefit from a research design that gives equal weighting to both archival and curatorial discourses.

v. Original Contribution to Knowledge and Significance of Research

It is envisioned that this study will be of interest to museum and curatorial practitioners and scholars, as well as archivists, archival scholars and to those working in cultural heritage environments who concern themselves with archival and curatorial collections, theories and activities. It is anticipated that this thesis will form a contribution to academic and professional literature in a number of ways. An in-depth study of the nature of the relationships between archives and curation as two mutually-influencing constructs and fields of practice has not previously been undertaken. This is the first cross-disciplinary study to address and give structure to contemporary curatorial practices and discourses as they relate to archives, archival practices and concepts of 'the archive'.

The research also brings new rigour to existing discussions of archive-oriented curatorial practices. It does this by a) giving equal weight to the professional archival literature and that of archival studies to ground the study in a wide-ranging analysis of archival theories and practices; and b) by analysing and synthesising these findings as part of a broad, but comprehensive survey of related curatorial discourses. Furthermore, the study develops and tests a research framework to illuminate areas of intersection, overlap and entanglement between archives and curatorial practices. In particular, the development of a tripartite analytic framework for curation is a key outcome of this project.

This analytic modelling reveals how the three discursive areas tend to privilege different, but overlapping conceptualisations and mobilisations of archives, archival activities and constructs. It illuminates a number of conditions that shape specific areas of practice, and which result in tendencies in practice that may otherwise be left unquestioned and thus lead to oversights in related activities and analysis. In reading across discursive areas and fields of practice, this research also brings to the fore other previously unexamined correspondences and configurations. It prompts new perspectives and insights that help better grasp the divergent conditions and contexts for curatorial practice in engagement with archives. By bringing diverse perspectives into contact with one another, this research denaturalises context-

specific discourses. In this way, the research also serves a critical function of illuminating tacit presuppositions and inclinations underpinning the various discourses around curation and archives and therefore promotes knowledge exchange between different fields and communities of practice. The project also contributes to the historiography of archival and curatorial studies by tracing the impact of the so-called archival turn on curation over the course of the period addressed.

In this thesis, I also show a number of ways in which archives and curation are mutually informing and valuing cultural frameworks. I demonstrate how archives, archival and curatorial practices play important, and often interdependent, roles in articulating subject positions, cultural typologies and boundaries of practice in public forums. I demonstrate how the relationship between these two facets of cultural production have become more knotted and layered. Whereas professional contexts and boundaries of practice can be identified with some clarity in relation to the discourse of curatorship and curating, more recent discourse grappling with the expanded curatorial and archival landscapes reveals proliferating points of possible mediation, entanglement and opacity. Moreover, I show how these areas of interconnection are subject to negotiation through curatorial and archival practices themselves, further interweaving their discourses and practice. Overall, I argue that this study demonstrates an imperative for academic perspectives to continue to inform this area of activity; I assert archive curation is a significant area for future inter- and cross-disciplinary research. The project provides a comprehensive analysis of points of curatorial and archival entanglement that, in and of themselves, offer fertile ground for further investigation.

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Appendix i. Project A: *Misfits (What are living beings compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?)*

Introduction

The account that follows is a retrospective sketch of an exhibition I curated comprised of three 'orphaned' museum objects and their 'archival' remnants held at Bodgers & Kludgers Cooperative Art Parlour, Vancouver, in 2007. The process of reflecting on this project helped to identify some initial points of inquiry explored in Chapters VI-VIII, particularly around the notions of museum curation. It also informed the development of the tripartite structure for analysing curatorial discourses.[1]

The Exhibition Context and Site

In the spring of 2007, I curated an exhibition entitled *Misfits (What are living beings, compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?)*.[2] The exhibition took place in the front parlour-cum-gallery of a 1930s house in East Vancouver, Canada. This 'gallery' was situated in an area known equally for its rough edges as it was for its gentrification, evidenced by a growing number of artists' studios and an expanding property market. The three residents of the house – curator/artist Jonathan Middleton and artists Aaron Carpenter and Miguel da Conceicao – had transformed the front room into a "makeshift space for contemporary art". They called this space *The Bodgers and Kludgers Co-operative Art Parlour* (BKCAP).[3] The gallery space was a single open and flexible room, with overhead lighting and simple window covering to dim the natural light. Even with this gallery staging, the room retained a sense of intimacy, positioned at the boundary between the semi-public area of the receiving

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[1] This retrospective account of the project was undertaken during the first phase of research. It was shaped by my recollections as well as a review of my personal papers relating to the exhibition, including the limited (and rather poor quality) photographs, exhibition texts and loan request. As a result, the ideas expressed here are not fully resolved and do not always align with the main body of the thesis.

[2] The subtitle *What are living beings compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?* is a line taken from the novel *The Sea* written by John Banville (2005).

[3] Despite its success, the BKAP enterprise was short-lived: an archived website (http://www.bodgers-and-kludgers-cooperative-art-parlour.ca/) once listed five exhibitions that took place from August 2006 to June 2007, but is now offline.

room (which swelled with guests on opening nights), and the personal and familial realm of a domestic space.

Figure 1. Exhibition detail, *Misfits*, BKAP gallery, 2007.

The invitation to curate this show entailed working with the particular qualities of this space and all that they evoked; beyond that the brief was open. In this sense, the exhibition developed in response to the possibilities the gallery afforded and drew from its hybrid and peripheral nature. This was a space that could support the work of the bodger or the *bricoleur*, s/he who makes do with and constructs from what is already to hand.[4] Yet what exactly were the component parts I was working with? In addition to the qualities of this temporary exhibition space, what were the anchor points that underpinned this project and gave shape to its discursive frame?

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[4] Bodge, n.1: "A clumsy patch; a botched piece of work." OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/20898?rskey=eW7I2J&result=1 (accessed October 23, 2014).

Matters of Curatorship: The Museum, Its Orphans and Its Documentation

A few years prior to the exhibition, I had been working in the Collections Management Department at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), a large civic museum of art in Western Canada. There, I assisted with the documentation and shipping of works of art. I reveled in working behind the scenes and in the stores, amongst the rows of artworks hung on racks and arranged in drawers according to a logic that only the insider could decipher. At some point, I was charged with the task of whittling down a bloated list of what collections staff referred to as 'orphaned' museum objects, artworks, artefacts and documents that lacked the appropriate provenance or parental records.[5] These items were homeless and rootless, and tested the terms of museological classification and handling. The choice of the word orphan in this context seemed to invite intervention; it attuned me to their vulnerability and brought forward the enticing possibility of rescue. Even so, I was less concerned with assigning these objects a home, or crossing them off the museum's list. Instead, I was drawn to the ways in which these objects held their narrative potential, and the ways in which they provoked a desire to interpret, to show and to tell, and to work in service to their stories and those of their makers and their caretakers.

From this collection of misfits, I selected three objects for display on a singular wall in the BKCAP gallery. Hung on the left was a small landscape painting attributed to the renowned Canadian artist Emily Carr (1871-1945) (see fig. 2). The watercolour had been bequeathed to the Gallery only to be later identified as a fake – a "pseudo-Carr" as an unidentified member of the museum's staff described it (fig. 3).[6]

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[5] I would later learn that the adjective 'orphan' was common in museum parlance. A report published in the UK in 2009 concluded that five to ten percent of public collections were comprised of such objects, whist in archives, this proportion was noticeably higher (Korn 2009). While the report defines 'orphan' objects as works without clear copyright status, with hindsight, I see that the Vancouver Art Gallery staff has been using the term 'orphan' differently. We used it to indicate objects with in-between status, and where our care and use of these objects – and our attachment to them – was suspended by our uncertainty of their place in the scheme of things.
[6] These early digital photographs are highly degraded. They are offered as indicators of the nature of these artefacts for lack of any other available documentation available.

Figure 2. Watercolour in the style of Emily Carr, original attribution to Emily Carr by Alex Fraser Galleries (now out of operation). A.J. Simons Bequest (INV 422)

Figure 3. Detail, verso, watercolour in the style of Emily Carr, showing museum labels (INV 422)

Next to it, in the centre of the wall, hung a painted canvas depicting a lovelorn man leaning against a sofa with a bouquet of flowers abandoned on a skewed checkered floor (fig. 4). A scribbled note attached to the canvas stated that the picture had been donated anonymously to the museum by a vandal in a gesture of misguided compensation (fig. 5). It read:

> Donated when the gallery was defaced
> She was one who did it.
> This is compensation.
> Received by S/B
>   April 25/85

No other details were provided to shed light on who this vandal was, or the nature of their crime.

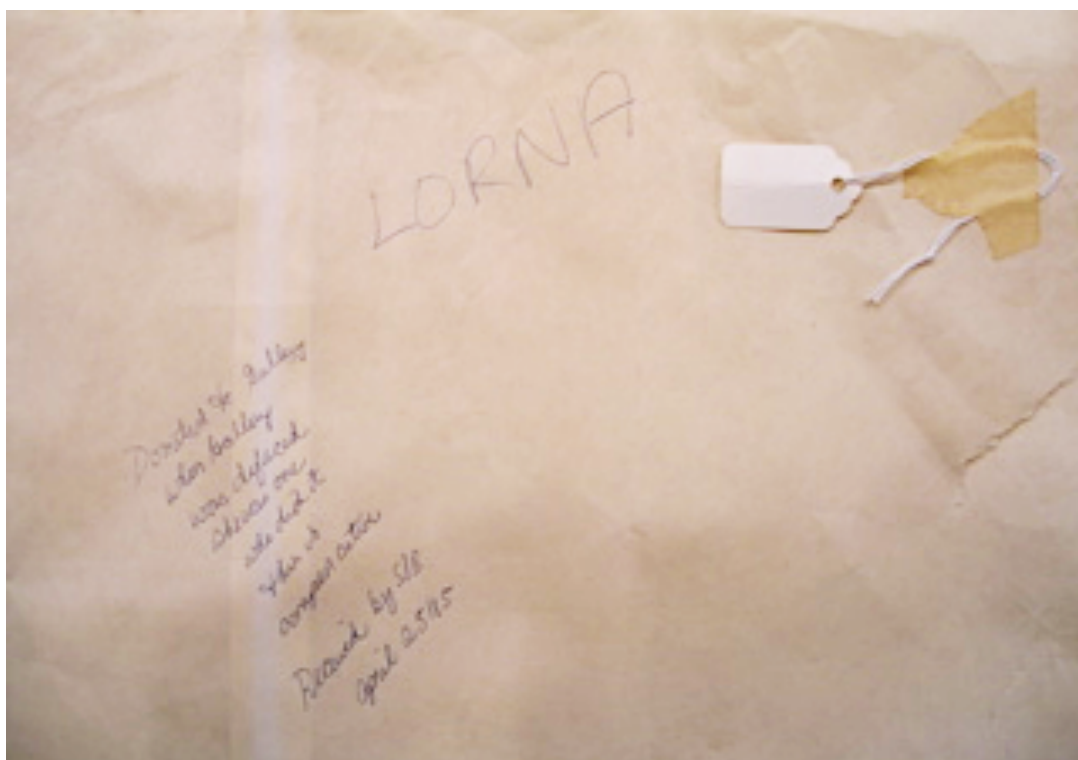Figure 4. Detail, anonymous painting, c. 1985 (INV 351)

Figure 5. Detail, packaging for anonymous painting, c. 1985 (INV 351)

Lastly, to the right, hung a reproduction of the sixteenth-century engraving *Melancholia* (1513-1514) by Albrecht Dürer (fig. 6)*. The faded print, stored in a dusty mat, was thought to have been used as a teaching tool by the museum's education department and was deemed too beautiful to be disposed of. The following note was attached:

> Christine – Here is something for you and Holli to add to your collection of misfits pseudo works of art (seemingly belonging to the VAG). It was found in the catacombs in 1992 and we wondered at that time if there were any more from the same set. Possibly, in the past, such facsimiles were used by the Education Dept. It's quite beautiful, so shouldn't be disposed of. If it turns out not to have an owner, perhaps it can be sold at a future VAG Garage Sale.
>
> Nancy
> June 10/96

Figure 6. Snapshot of print of Albrecht Dürer's *Melencholia* (1513-1514), date of print unknown.
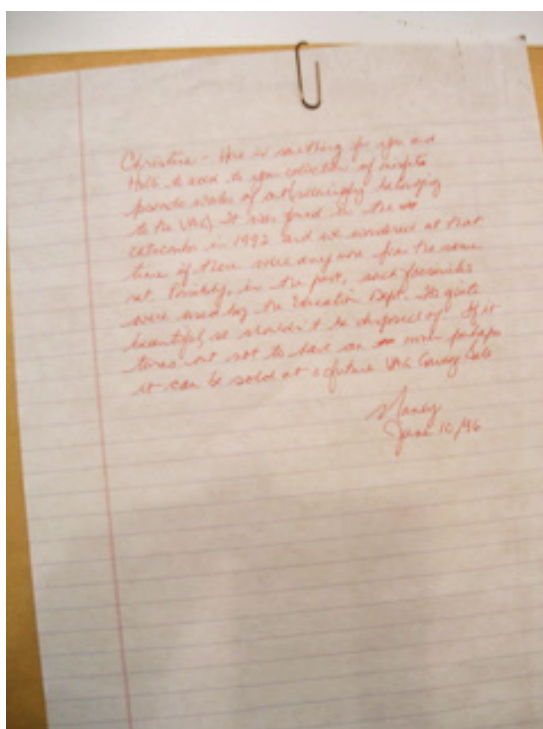
Figure 7. Note accompanying print of Albrecht Dürer's *Melencholia*

Three components make up the *matter* of this project, above and beyond the gallery space. The first, and most tangible component was the material, those objects that are the focus of curatorial consideration and care. The second component was the museum, that is, the contextual frame and apparatus that determines the value of these objects and encases them for specific uses and readings. The third component was the sphere of curatorial activity, the strategic and haphazard informational and presentational practices, and ideas of professionalism that framed the exhibition and its narratives. Each of these components is understood by way of the other, and each are enmeshed in the overarching enterprise of collecting, selecting, valuing, studying and displaying material culture through the conventions of museology.

Turning Towards the Museum Archive

However, the notes corresponding to these misfit museum objects introduced documentation as an additional area of interest; the scribbles, labels and fragments of packaging point to *the archival* as another subject for curation. The ambivalence that had come to characterise these artefacts was not self-evident. Rather, their orphan state had been assigned to them through a combination of curatorial procedures and happenstance that was traceable only through the documentation that accompanied

each item in storage. It was only when read together – objects and documentation – that their misfit status could be articulated. In this way, the tags and labels assigned to the items spoke to something other than the object; presenting these scraps of documentary evidence alongside the museum objects with equal billing became a way of giving presence to that *something other*. The shreds of evidence that had accumulated through the museum's more haphazard curatorial practices became an invitation into the more nebulous side of the museum. They highlighted other selectors, alternative criteria and surreptitious pathways into the institution and the instability at the core of curatorial practices. These practices dependent on archival records that, in and of themselves, reveal areas of ambivalence, subjectivity, mystery and vulnerability.

On reflection, it was this point of entanglement between object, record and the museological space that piqued my interest. I wondered: What kind of encounter could be set up by presenting these items together in a gallery space? What was the nature of the dialogue between the currency of the museum object and that of its record, and between the institution and its archival practices and legacy? How would the presence of the record next to the artwork engender a different experience and a different narrative around the museum object? And what was the nature of this vulnerability – of the objects, the makers, their handlers – that seemed to circulate through these artefacts and labels?

Professional Positioning and the Terrain of Museum Curation

A press release forms the only official record of the temporary, and otherwise ephemeral exhibit and points to another related area of inquiry: The idea of curation as a profession. In the press release I summarised the exhibition as follows:

> *This project arose out a questioning of the historical role of the curator as caretaker and the more contemporary understanding of the curator as discoverer and contextualiser. By removing the objects from the institution in which they were found and displaying them together in the semi-residential space of the Bodgers & Kludgers Co-operative Art Parlour,* Misfits *playfully reasserts curiosity and empathy in the curatorial process. […] The in-between status of the works highlights the capacity of objects to embody vulnerability: that of their makers, their caretakers and those who encounter them.*

The statement outlines the clear curatorial intent: to present these orphan museum objects in a new context as a means of opening up for consideration the nature of the relationship between them, their position, and that of their creators and institutional handlers. With authoritative tone, the description suggests a clear and self-reflexive curatorial rationale. It presents the exhibition as a fully realised curatorial 'work' based on the selection, arrangement and exhibition of museum objects using conventional exhibition strategies, employing rhetoric that draws on a well-practiced form of institutional critique. Yet, in practice this project was full of uncertainty. It arose from an uneasiness with the very nature of curatorship, and grew from an interest in testing the parameters of curatorial concern. It questioned what was feasible and permissible, what meaning could be expressed through these objects and their archival remnants in this specific space.

In revisiting the *Misfit* project, it has become clear to me that I had been exploring my own ambivalence around curatorial practice in ways that were not necessarily evident to me at the time. While working at the Vancouver Art Gallery, I was also studying for an MA in Critical and Curatorial Studies at the University of British Columbia, a course that been recently launched as part of a cluster of graduate programmes in North America and Europe that sought to extend curation as its own academic field of inquiry. The course aimed to equip its graduates with an understanding of the contemporary theoretical landscape of curatorial practice in terms broad enough to be practically applied to any manner of cultural materials, activities and contexts of presentation.[7] At the same time as its proponents advocated this expansive approach, there was an underlying sense that museum curatorship represented an outmoded practice bogged down by a stagnant institutional framework. Curation was now the subject of significant critique, and in this critical context, the curation of contemporary art (with the built-in critical potential of the avant-garde), was held above other forms of curatorial discourse and practice. Furthermore, there was a tension at the heart of the programme between the

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[7] Although the course is now firmly situated within UBC's Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory, the programme was originally envisioned as a collaboration with the Department of Anthropology, which was known for its innovative and self-reflexive curatorial approaches to working with indigenous communities at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver. The programme considered the traditions and discourse of curatorship across these two areas, which, framed by notions of self-criticality, were then to be tested through a course practicum in the form of a curated exhibition.

promotion of curatorial practice, and an articulation – and indeed a persistent critique – of its seemingly irreconcilable problems. I completed the course with more uncertainty than when I began. What empowered me to determine who, what, and how to exhibit the work of others? And what made my skills 'specialist' and more suitable than those of another curator, an artist or even an engaged non-specialist? In this contested landscape, what were the meaningful and enduring qualities of curation?

Despite my conflicted feelings towards the profession, by the time of the *Misfits* exhibition I was working as a Curatorial Assistant at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Whereas the university had worked to equip me intellectually to become a member of the curatorial profession within its academic framework, my employment offered a more hands-on understanding of museum and gallery environments, and of the affective, and often emotional weight of objects and the duties they can inspire. Through this work, combined with previous experience working in gallery specialising in photo- and media-based art,[8] I identified myself as a curator.

Yet, even within my chosen field of art curation, I found myself interested in the boundaries of different areas of practice. Indeed, many of the projects that inspired me were centered around archival objects and themes, including exhibitions of photographs and ephemeral records that had been amassed and reworked into 'archival' displays by documentarians, enthusiasts or hybrid producers such as collector-curators, academic-exhibitors and artist-collectors.[9] Furthermore, although I was working in a curatorial capacity within an art gallery, I had not yet earned my way to curate in its official spaces. Straddling positions both inside and outside of the profession, and working across different sites empowered me to work behind-the-scenes in the authoritative space of Vancouver Art Gallery, but curate in another, peripheral gallery space.

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[8] The Presentation House Gallery, now the Polygon Gallery in North Vancouver, Canada.

[9] For instance, the 1997 exhibition *Indian Princesses and Cowgirls; Stereotypes from the Frontiers*, curated by Marilyn Burgess and media studies scholar, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis; *First Son: Portraits by C.D. Hoy* curated by photographic artist Faith Moosang, 1999 (all at the Presentation House Gallery); and *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, curated by Ydessa Hendeles 2002. Each of these exhibitions seems to work at intersections of different practices - curator/artist/archivist - with flexible idea of art/document.

As an employee of the museum, I was ensconced in the protocols of curatorship. But my interest in working with the dregs of the museum collection did not conform to its conventions. These were collection rejects with little perceivable value. I was familiar with the procedures for borrowing works of art, but knew that in this instance, a formal loan request was not called for; there was no need to approve the borrowing institution's environmental conditions or security arrangements, and no need to insure or condition report these bedraggled items that had been sequestered in a utility room. Even so, I was compelled to seek formal permission to borrow and exhibit these artworks, and sent a letter to the museum director penned in the language of an official loan document. I sought her approval to present these objects, but also to give them respect, and place them on par with the other, official collected works. The sense of obligation to these artworks spoke of the impulse to *take care*, but also to a corresponding vulnerability that wove its way through the objects, the activities of their custodians and into the bones of the institution. This duality of vulnerability and care can be traced through the archival remnants attached to each misfit object. Additional questions follow on from this observation: What ideas of curatorial caretaking are at stake in this project and how do these risks correlate with curatorial opportunity? How does the presence of these remnants from the museum's "archive" attune us to the more tacit principles of curatorial care?

The exhibition was, on the whole, well-received and the points of connection, humour and curiosity I'd experienced encountering the works, and the pathos I sought to elicit within the exhibition, had, to my knowledge, been experienced by visitors. Yet the audience for the show was small and familiar; it was, after all, an insider's project. Indeed, the project was not in itself particularly innovative, except in its unique configuration of time, place and materials. It drew from multiple histories of practice and was – tacitly and explicitly – informed by many precedents, a myriad of projects in which artists, curators, archivists and related professionals have interrogated curatorial and archival practices to propose institutional critiques of the museum. Revisiting the *Misfits* exhibition has directed me to ask: What were the professional, academic and creative discourses – tacit or otherwise – that informed this instance of practice and made this configuration of objects and records, and of curatorial strategies and sites, feasible, plausible and legible? Put another way, what are the discursive coordinates that underpinned this exhibition and how

can they point to a more detailed understanding of the relationships between curation and archives?

Appendix ii. Project B: *Along Some Sympathetic Lines*

Introduction

In 2012, I was invited to curate an exhibition at the Or Gallery in Berlin. The resulting project, entitled *Along Some Sympathetic Lines*, was an exhibition in two parts: artworks by Martin John Callanan in one room of the gallery, and an archive project I curated in another. The exhibition ran from 23 February to 27 April 2013. This project informed my thinking around the curation of archive-oriented exhibitions specifically, as developed in Chapter VII.

The Exhibition Context and Site

The Or Gallery, an artist-run centre founded in 1983, focuses on exhibiting work by local, national and international artists "whose art practice is of a critical, conceptual and/or interdisciplinary nature" ("Or Gallery Information" 2015). Its principle site is in Vancouver, and a second satellite location is located in the Kreuzberg neighbourhood of Berlin. At the time of the exhibition in question, the Berlin gallery was comprised of two adjacent rooms in an inconspicuous mixed-use building. One needed to know the gallery was there, pass through a courtyard and walk up a flight or two of stairs to find its entrance. It had the typical qualities and apparatus of a small contemporary art space: an urban location, hollowed out for different configurations of displays, with (almost) bare white walls and a movable desk for the invigilator, with the paraphernalia from drink sales tucked underneath.

The gallery director had given me an open brief, although he did mention an interest in expanding the gallery's profile beyond its existing communities in Berlin and Vancouver. In addition to being a freelance curator and oral historian, I was at that time working at the Slade School of Fine Art in London as the interim assistant to the school's director. My involvement with the contemporary art world was longstanding but increasingly I was turning my attention away from the production of art, towards the production and care of archives. However, it was at the Slade that I encountered the work of Martin John Callanan, an artist who was then also working at the school as a part-time lecturer. Callanan's conceptual practice focuses on (in his words) "the individual's place within systems" (Callanan n.d.). Using a variety of

photographic, imaging and printing technologies and techniques, he hones in on traces left by financial, political and military interactions, their markings, tallies, demarcations and datasets, which he reformulates into new documentary and aesthetic configurations. His interventions into systems of exchange make use of different information technologies (such as embossed letters, newsprint, photographic media and apparatus, data systems and their mechanisms for displays) in ways that give presence to their fault lines of power. I interpreted his work to be an exploration of the intersections between human subjects and documentation practices. The archive, writ large and in the very loosest sense, is a motif in his work.

The second point of inspiration for the exhibition emerged from the administrative workings of the art school. While I was working at the Slade, a colleague showed me a box containing letters written by a number of discontented applicants and aspiring artists (fig. 8). Some contained artworks. Some evidenced the distress and pain of their authors. There was no official place for these letters within the office documentation systems, and no imperative to retain them for the university archive. Even so, they had been tucked away by the administrators. Perhaps with an eye on any future issues, perhaps because of the vulnerability they encapsulated, they could not quite bring themselves to dispose of these letters. And so they remained, neither discarded nor officially kept.

Figure 8. 'Misfit' letters boxed away by administrators at the Slade School of Fine Art, London

These letters brought to mind another informal archive: a tattered shoebox containing bundles of audiocassettes recorded by my paternal grandfather in the 1970s. He had a habit of taping his family's chatter with the backdrop of easy listening radio broadcasts. Years later, when playing back these recordings, I encountered one particular audiocassette. In the recording, my grandfather affects the tone of a radio broadcaster and begins to narrate an account of his life. Yet his voice soon rises in intensity, and delusions of grand truths and great insight take over. As the soliloquy turns into a fevered sermon, the narrative collapses. It is only with the knowledge that he suffered from bipolar disorder that one can begin to make sense of it.

Despite the tenuous associations, I began to contemplate how, and if, these alternative archives could be curated. What would be the effect of showcasing them as types of shadow archives? What ideas of curatorial caretaking are engendered and how do these correlate with curatorial opportunity? How does the presence of these remnants from the art school and curator's personal archive attune us to the more tacit principles of curatorial care? The Slade letters were too sensitive to be exhibited, but the odd fragments of my family archive offered something of the same currency and could, given my own relationship to the material, be made public.

With these questions and touchstones in mind, the exhibition began to take shape. I saw a correspondence between Callanan's work and the curation of an alternative archive. Both relate to the politics and poetics of visibility, exposure, access and agency in the reconstruction and reconfiguring of the documentary traces of lives, but did so in very different ways. I envisioned a display of artwork and archive in different rooms; the strategies of artist and curator would be set in interplay.

Gallery 1: Artworks by Martin John Callanan

On entering the gallery one encountered Callanan's artwork first with a work entitled *Letters 2004-2006*. The work consists of a display of letters received by the artist in response to those he sent to various political and religious leaders over a two-year period. For example, Callanan wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking, "When will it end?". He also requested written confirmation of the existence of public

figures under the Freedom of Information Act, and penned a letter to the former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stating, "I respect your authority". The replies Callanan received implicated each recipient in a transaction that documents their fallibility and impermanence. Rather than confirm their power, the letters lay bare the flimsy bureaucratic apparatus that underpins their authority, and evidences how documentary processes can be manipulated to alternative aims.

Figure 9. Exhibition detail. *Letters 2004-2006: Confirmation that you still exist; I respect your authority; When will it end.* Photo reproduced by permission from Martin John Callanan

Two more works were positioned to the right of the gallery entrance. *Grounds* (2012-) is an ongoing photographic 'archive' of banal images of carpeted, tiled or concrete floors. These were projected in loop on an archaic slide television (fig. 10). The images document the security demarcations that restrict access to significant public buildings. Next to this on a pallet on the floor was a work entitled *Zu Meinen Lebzeiten 1982-2013 (Wars During My Lifetime)* (2013). The work is comprised of a list of all the global conflicts fought during the artist's lifetime, collated in the form of a newspaper for distribution across the city over the course of the exhibition (fig. 11). The listing is inherently ongoing in light of the continued conflicts around the world, so the newspaper is produced anew for each presentation.

Figure 10. Exhibition detail: *Grounds, 2012-* (left) and *Zu Meinen Lebzeiten 1982-2013 (Wars During My Lifetime)* (right). Photo: Martin John Callanan

Figure 11. Exhibition detail: *Zu Meinen Lebzeiten 1982-2013 (Wars During My Lifetime)*. Photo: Martin John Callanan

A single image from the series *The Fundamental Units* was hung on the final wall of the first gallery (fig. 12). For this project, the artist photographed the lowest domination coin from each of the world's active currencies using an infinite focus 3D optical camera. The resulting large-scale image reveals a level of detail beyond the capacities of human vision. Fine-grained scratches criss-cross the surface of the coin, testament to their use as tactile tokens of exchange. In this instance, the scratched one-cent Euro coin has been elevated to a luminescent globe.

Figure 12. Exhibition detail: *The Fundamental Units (Euro)*. Photo: Martin John Callanan

Gallery 2: An Archive Project by Liz Bruchet

Entering the second gallery space, visitors encountered a brief wall text that I wrote to introduce the archive project, as follows:

> *All objects in the exhibition were found in the personal archive of Joseph Bruchet (1915-2010), the curator's paternal grandfather. A Canadian life insurance salesman working in the 1950s and 1960s, Joe Bruchet suffered a severe head injury as a young man and was later diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Subject to spells of religious fervor and autobiographical ponderings, he was a natural documentarian, a faithful bookkeeper, clock collector and aspiring radio presenter. Wife Catherine Jean (nee McKenzie), 3 sons, 5 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren.*

To the right was a small display of Joe Bruchet's personal ephemera, including a photograph of him as a young man, some bank statements, and an old inspirational poster which was found amongst his paperwork, which asks and answers the question, 'What Makes Men Successful?'.

Figure 13. Exhibition detail. Joe Bruchet archive. Photo: Martin John Callanan

An open household accounts book was presented on a plinth, with receipts left loosely as they had been found, available to be rifled through or taken away (figs. 13, 14). The arrangement broke curatorial protocol by making the items on display

available for handling and removal. Taking cues from the unspoken codes of gallery behaviour, very few people turned the pages or handled the book, and no one walked away with its contents.
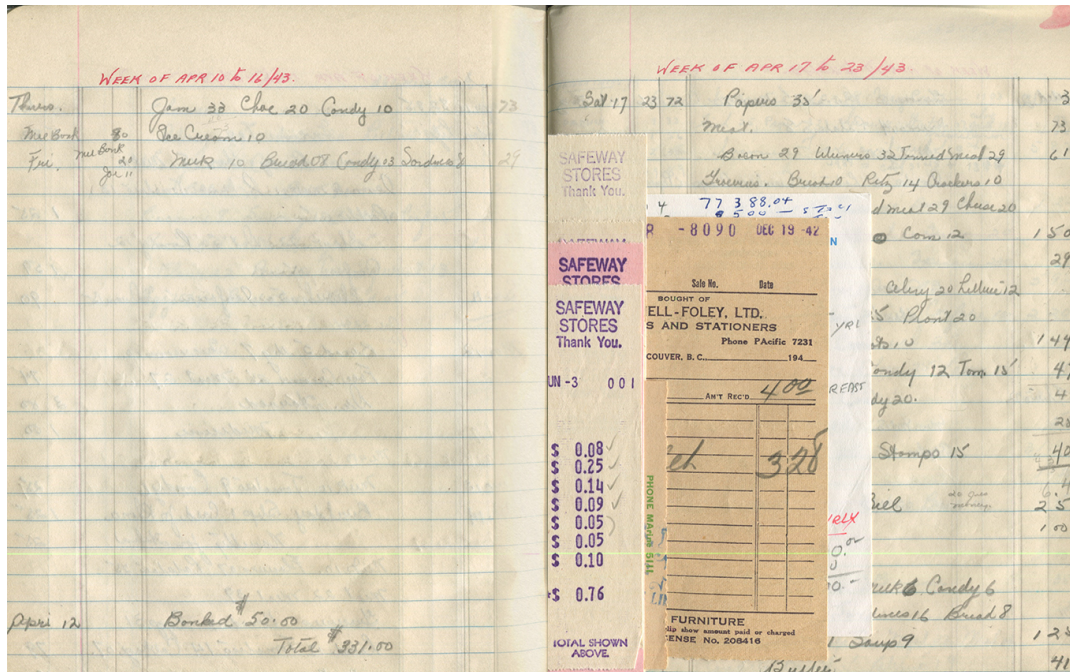

Figure 14. Exhibition detail, Jean and Joe Bruchet's account book

On the floor opposite this display, a subtitled segment of the 1974 audiocassette recording was screened (fig. 15). The audio reverberated around the space and bled into the other room.

Figure 15. Exhibition detail. Transcribed audiocassette recording made by Joe Bruchet, Vancouver, 19 October 1974. Duration: 6 min 4s. Photo: Martin John Callanan

I sought Martin's input on the selection of his works, on the exhibition layout, and on the colour of the walls. He had clear ideas of how his work should be presented and provided the caption for each piece. He sourced the apparatus for their display including a plinth, a pallet, and an old slide-viewing machine, and documented them *in situ*. I wrote the press release and sought his feedback before publication. In many ways, we were co-curating the exhibition. Or perhaps we were curating our own but through tacit terms of collaboration.

We mulled over the title of the exhibition. A title needed to reflect both component parts of the exhibition as well as the thematic threads that wove them together. In the end, we settled on the title, "Along Some Sympathetic Lines", with the following subtitle: "An exhibition of artwork by Martin John Callanan and an archive project by Liz Bruchet". The artist pointed out that use of the word 'line' suggested an exhibition of drawings. I was thinking of its other metaphoric associations: pathways, demarcations, parallels and linkages to narrative threads and flows of information and data across time and space. Where the exhibition title introduces ambiguity and ambivalence, the subtitle sought to clarify and delineate two component projects related to two distinct discursive constructs: that of the artwork and that of the archive.

Accounting for a Breach in Curation

Over a meal after the exhibition opening, a friend of the artist leveled a critique. He said that he had liked the exhibition until he realised that I was a curator. He thought I had become confused; what I had done by selecting and arranging these objects in a gallery in this way, whether consciously or not, was make a work of art. I was authoring a display of archives in the art gallery and by association, I was curating as an artistic practice. Attempting to clarify, I began to describe my intentions. The exhibition presented the archive not *as artwork*, but as *authored records and artefacts*. The exhibition pursued the presentation of 'the archive' as material charged by the exhibition context in ways that engender curatorial care, particularly as it is through such representations, that the entanglement of the individual and the social, the public and the private, and power and disempowerment are brought into relief. In this way, I sought to consider the curatorial workings and implications of

the public display of archives, whether this is led by an artist, a curator or indeed, by the archive creator, or its guardian.

In principle at least, the theme of 'the archive' could accommodate different overlaps of practice. I was aware that artists often display archive material as works of art using curatorial conventions, exhibition apparatus, methods and techniques. Conversely, I had in mind examples of curators using the exhibition as a creative medium in ways that shared approaches with artists. I was also aware of the potential blur between contemporary art and curatorial practices. It was for this reason that the exhibition subtitle, text, spatial arrangement and publicity material worked to distinguish two categories of material subject to curation, and two arenas of practice: artworks created by and cared for by the artist and by the curator, and fragments from a family archive cared for and presented by the curator.

In hindsight, I see how these signposts could be missed or overridden. An introductory leaflet to the exhibition could be picked up upon entering the gallery, but like the subtitle, it was also easy to pass by or ignore. For this viewer, working with archives creatively in an exhibition space inherently implied the work of an artist, not a curator. The opaqueness of the curator's position constituted an unacknowledged trespass across boundaries of practice that misled his interpretation. Even when taking into account these intentions, according to his reception, the exhibition breached curatorial practice.

Curating Authorship

However, in this instance, curatorial and artistic subject positions were not the only ones in the curatorial mix. The exhibition also pertained to archival subject and authors. Joe Bruchet selected and worked with objects, documents and recording devices as *aide-mémoires*, as conversation pieces, as records of personal and family life, as emotional touchstones and as future memorials. His accounts, recordings and annotations are purposeful. They form part of an autobiographical record. One of the items included in the display was a bank deposit booklet that he had annotated to mark out the purchase of the family home. Another item was a framed painting of a Canadian landscape scene, circa 1970. On the back of the frame he had noted a

number of social occasion that the painting had been viewed as part of a social gathering, insisting those in attendance also sign the back of the canvas (fig. 17).

Figure 16. Verso of a painting detailing the purchase, and subsequent occasions on which the painting was viewed with friends

The act of publicly presenting these documents invokes a duty of care to the archive author in terms parallel to those ascribed to the artist and their artwork. I was interested in showcasing records of Joe Bruchet's life and the poetics they held, and questioning the value of his archival traces. And yet by virtue of our relationship, *and* my creative handling of these fragments, they also came to represent my own authorship. This exhibition space functioned for the display of artworks, not archives; the effect of exhibiting these fragments in this site of practice was to transform any 'archive' into an authored artwork, an effect reinforced by the presentation of artworks in the adjacent gallery. Put another way, the specific discursive conditions of the contemporary art display override the classification and intention put forward by the curator.

The records, such as they are, were subject to being further altered by curatorial practices. Through my curation, I was adding layers of intervention, authorship and signification. The audiocassette warranted the most explicit intervention. Spoken words were transcribed, and then projected as subtitles against a black screen positioned on the floor in a corner of the gallery. Because the speaker was elliptical and confused, this strategy made the audio legible as well as audible. By isolating the recording from competing visual stimulus and expanding its spatial reach, I also hoped to carve out a dedicated space to facilitate attentive listening. Yet by reconfiguring the recording this way, I was also appropriating contemporary art practices, giving the otherwise humble artefact and tool of remembrance the aura of an art installation.[10]

Through curating I transformed their documentary qualities into different visual, aesthetic and metaphoric ones. Yet archives are not without their own inherent aesthetic qualities. Historical documentation has its own aura and historical agency, representing authenticity and a functional link to the past. Archives also function through different access pathways than artworks. In a conventional encounter with archives, records can be touched, picked up and read. The curation of the archive therefore also to relates to an aesthetic of access, of tactile proximity to material evidence from the past. To place all this signification onto curatorial practices or the discursive sphere of the exhibition misconstrues the chemistry of the elements in play.

Curating Subjectivities

In Callanan's work, the texture of individual subjectivity within these documents has been purposefully muted, stripped or circumvented. The human stories behind his documents are rendered observable through the detailing in his work, but are always situated at some remove. His strategy mimics the effect of the systems that formulate and tabulate human lives as abstracted subjects and economic, technological and political data. Furthermore, whereas Callanan's artwork is created for public

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[10] On reflection, I see that in formulating the presentation of my grandfather's tape I was influenced by an artwork by Susan Hiller. The work, entitled *The Last Silent Movie* (2007/2008), is a compilation of audio excerpts of extinct and endangered languages recovered from ethnographic archives, edited together and screened as a subtitled film in an intimate theatre-like enclave.

presentation, this is not the case with archival records. What was made in one context, for one purpose is through curating, displaced to another. Through curating, private inscriptions are made public and subject to new scrutiny and speculation. Curating archives concerns the ethical terrain of transmitting between private and public states, and negotiating both accidental and intentional points of authorship.

My personal connection to my grandfather enabled me to situate a handful of documents as part of the larger narrative of his life. I know of his character, of his pleasure in storytelling, and in gathering, recording and creating informal archives with an eye on the long view. Although I can only speculate on how such an exhibition would have befuddled him, I am certain of his intention to be on the record. In the frame of the exhibition, he was given presence, voice, visibility; he was offered a platform. In the case of the selected audiotape however, the rationale for his recording is not entirely clear. On the one hand, it reflects his aspiration to be a radio presenter; it is a practice session for a fantasy that will never come to pass. On the other hand, his account is highly personal. His recording does not point us to hidden talent, but instead reveals his precarious mental health. Given this, the document carries with it the potential to engender shame and stigmatisation. Exhibiting this fragment gives presence to the uncertain line between intentional and unintentional authorship that can be activated through curating.

The covert 'archive' of Slade letters encapsulates a similar tension; they simultaneously warrant attention and suppression. The presence of the letters troubles the appearance of institutional rationality; they testify to what is marginalised, denied and excluded from the institution. The act of ascribing quasi-archival status was itself covert and awkward, unresolved. Even if the letters were anonymised, exhibiting them would implicate the administrator and the institution in disquieting ways. However, it is precisely their peripheral place that gives these documents their social currency and makes them worthy of curatorial attention. They capture something that falls through the cracks of art institutions and their bureaucratic systems. The public presentation of these alternative archives could, I thought, facilitate critical inquiry into the affective and poetic – as well as the ambivalent – facets of records; these were qualities of archives that I wanted to explore through curation?

On reflection, this led to two questions: What were the professional, academic and creative discourses – tacit or otherwise – that informed this instance of practice and made these curatorial strategies feasible, plausible, but also problematic? What are the presuppositions underpinning this exhibition and how can they point to a more detailed understanding of the relationships between exhibition making and archives.

Appendix iii. Project C: The Slade Archive Project

Introduction

The Slade School of Fine Art, based at University College London (UCL), has a rich and extensive institutional archive relating to its former students and staff, their artistic and teaching practices, and their experiences at the Slade. In 2012, the Slade Archive Project was launched under the directorship of Susan Collins.[11] It was conceived of as an umbrella project, a flexible initiative through which various archive-oriented projects could be developed. These subprojects could be driven by the research interests of those working at the Slade and across UCL, or more broadly through collaborations with external partners.

The pilot project, a collaboration with UCL Centre for Digital Humanities, focused on how digital tools and methods could be brought to bear on the archive in ways that could simultaneously benefit art historians, involve alumni in the writing of Slade histories, and increase engagement with the archive in the digital environment. Ironically, at the outset, those of us working on the project had little understanding of what the archive contained.[12] The bulk of the records are in the care of other departments at UCL, and knowledge about the archive within the Slade has, to date, been skeletal and anecdotal. As a result, we approached the project as both a scoping exercise and a pilot research project. This dual focus, scoping and research, combined with the reliance on discreet funding opportunities, led to an initial emphasis on small scale projects. Activities over the three-year pilot period included establishing a digital presence for the overall project; developing a crowdsourcing website that sought to identify sitters in a number of annual class photographs; digitising and publishing archived oral history interviews on SoundCloud; and

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[11] The development of this project has run over the period of this research. However, the questions and observations above were set out in two work-in-progress papers presented in the autumn of 2014, the Archives 2.0 conference at the Science and Media Museum, Bradford (24-26 November 2014), and the British Art Network Seminar 'Basic Design and the Hatton Gallery: Researching, Displaying and Sharing Archival Resources' (21 November 2014).

[12] The initial principal investigators were Susan Collins and Melissa Terras; and on Transnational Slade, Amna Malik, Melissa Terras, Alejandro Giacometti, Liz Bruchet. The project's Advisory Committee during this pilot phase was: Emma Chambers, Alexandra Eveleigh, Andrea Fredericksen, Gill Furlong, Colin Penman, Gemma Romain, Frederic J. Schwartz, Alan Taylor and Jo Volley.

researching the transnational influences of a number of Slade alumni in the post-war decades.[13]

My involvement in the project has been multifaceted. I was employed to work as Research Assistant on the project's scoping phase, and subsequently on the *Transnational Slade: Mapping the Diaspora of an Art School* subproject, led by art historian Amna Malik and digital humanities scholar Melissa Terras (2013-2014). In the intervening years I have continued to work on a freelance basis to support the ongoing stewardship of the project. This has involved overseeing the various initiatives already underway, as well as helping to steward proposed cataloguing, conservation, digitisation and publication projects. (The latter activities have been dependent on successful funding bids.) Continuing to work at the Slade in this capacity has meant my responsibilities are not only project-based, but also pertain to the ongoing care of the archive, including collections management, facilitating access to the archive, responding to research requests and fielding the practical and intellectual questions relating to its acquisition, use and dissemination. This work intersects with that of colleagues in UCL Records Office, Library Special Collections and Archives, and UCL Art Museum, who also share a responsibility for the Slade archive.

The Slade

The different but interacting components of the project – the Slade, its archive and the archive project – have engendered a series of issues, and illuminated multiple tacit, and at times conflicting, imperatives. The Slade School of Fine Art was established in 1871 and led by a vision by its foundational donor Felix Slade for a school where fine art could be studied within a liberal arts university. The Slade continues to occupy this position; it is an art college centrally located within the academic landscape of the University College London. The Slade's archive both belongs to and concerns not only the art school, but also the wider university. In turn, the Slade Archive Project has evolved through this combined art school and university framing. The project is a result of various professional, pedagogical and

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[13] See www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/sladearchive.

research cultures in different departments, and to the agendas and bureaucratic structures of the university itself, with its emphasis on access to knowledge, measurable research outcomes and, more recently, public engagement activities.

The Slade Archive

For the uninitiated, the use of the term 'archive' in an institution like UCL evokes a vision of a cohesive centralised collection of documentary evidence. However, the Slade's archive is more accurately described as a number of different archive collections and collection types which are housed in various locations across the college, including the Slade, UCL Art Museum and UCL Library Special Collections, Archives and Records Office. The archive is multifaceted and uneven, its records are heterogeneous and constituted by various media. It includes correspondence, memoirs, photographs and slides, audio recordings, films, prospectuses, death masks, financial ledgers, art publications and ephemera that relate both directly, and at times quite indirectly, to the Slade. It is comprised of both official and unofficial records and includes 'orphan' materials stored in the art school itself – records and objects with uncertain origins and provenance. The archive is also interdisciplinary by nature. In its substance, its archive has been shaped by the influence and input of artists and administrators, archivists and records managers, librarians, museum curators and art historians. Over time, it has been preserved and managed according to different priorities, aims and practices. At various stages, and through different subprojects, participants have brought their own priorities, expectations, ambitions, expertise and technological know-how to the table. The deployment of digital tools has also brought particular competencies, methods and modes of thinking, together in new – and for some of us participating in the project, disorienting – configurations.

Figure 17. Unofficial, uncatalogued archive material in the darkened storerooms at the Slade School of Fine Art

The archive collections are in various states of cataloguing, and the collections management systems across the college are not interoperable. Even if the archive were fully catalogued and collated, the implementation of new technologies, and the contributions obtained through crowdsourcing and research projects continues to add layers to the archive. Indeed, the original impetus for the project came from the school Director who learned, soon after taking her post in 2010, that the administrative staff would regularly receive unsolicited contributions to the archive in the form of letters, photographs, memoirs, audio recordings and so on. There was a level of informal archival work taking place in parallel to the more official management of administrative records. The distributed and generative qualities of this archive rendered its parameters hard to grasp.

The Slade Archive Project: Crowdsourcing the Slade Class Photos

One of the most visible activities of the project's pilot phase was the Slade class photos crowdsourcing project. Alumni, scholars and members of the public were invited to identify the sitters featured in historic class photos and input this information on a dedicated website that combined face recognition and crowdsourcing software. The social media facet of the website enabled contributors

to add comments and 'flesh out' the photographs by adding their recollections or by illuminating connections between different sitters, tutors and their historical context.
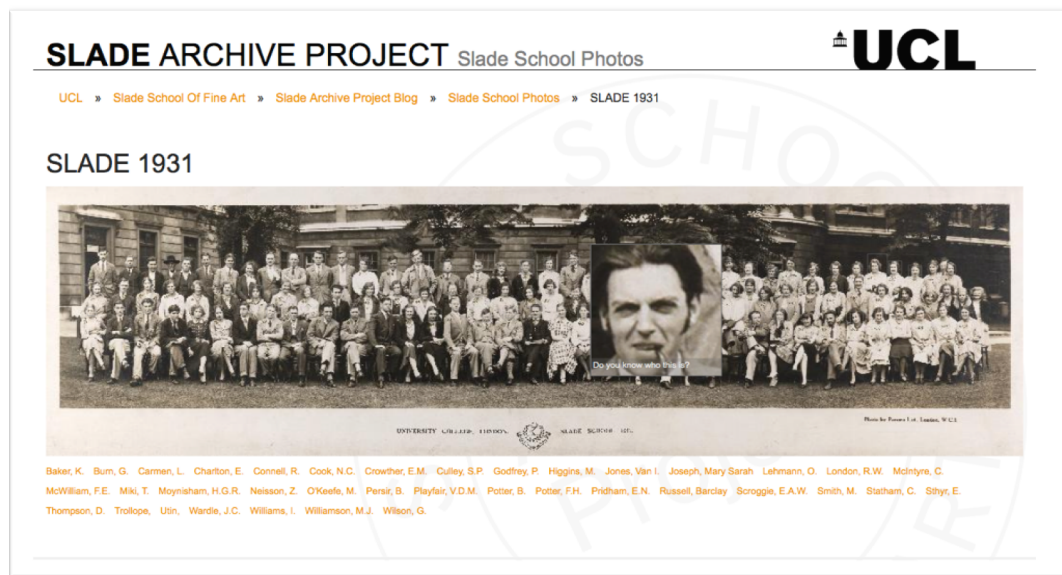

Figure 18. Screen shot of Crowdsourcing the Slade School Photos website, www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/sladearchive

It was envisioned that the crowdsourcing platform would also be a useful tool for the related Transnational Slade research project. This subproject was concerned with identifying international students and tracing transnational pathways of influence, focusing initially on the presence of Asian and African artists at the Slade in the 1950s. This art historical inquiry was paired with an interest in how computing technologies could be applied to shed light on these trajectories.

Figure 19. Detail of the Slade 1956 class photo showing Sudanese Ibrahim El-Salahi (top row, 2nd from left), an artist featured in the Transnational Slade project.

Through this project framing, the archive has served as a source, but also a useful theme and shorthand by which a number of interwoven ideas and aims could be put forward, tacitly and explicitly. The project represented an innovative approach to institutional histories imbued with academic credibility (given its situation in the university); a research project testing new configurations of digital tools and art historical resources; a platform for public engagement and participation offering a chance for members of the public to contribute to the institutional record; a dynamic resource, disseminated through social media and thus carrying implicit potential marketing traction (complete with project logo); vehicle for relationship building between the institution, alumni and potential donors; and a highly visible research outcome.
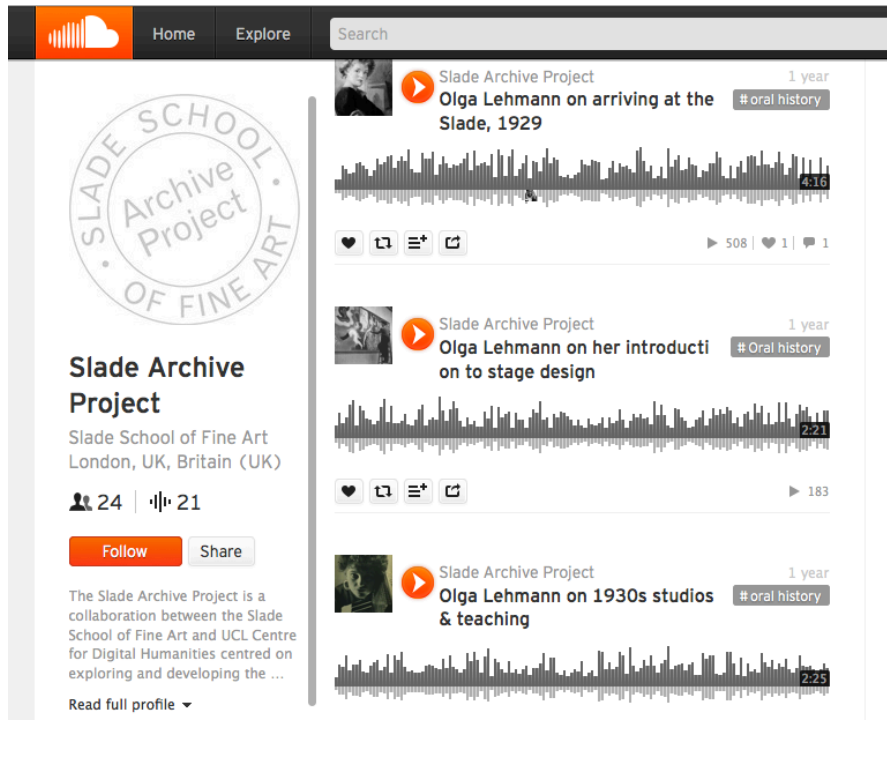
Figure 20. Screenshot of a selection of digitised archive oral history recordings shared on the social media site SoundCloud, showing project logo.

Questioning Archival Projects and Their Legacies

A number of intellectual and technological issues surfaced around the website that belied deeper ambiguities about the custodial responsibilities – front and back end – engendered by this type of archive project. The issues we encountered around the standardisation and accuracy of crowdsourced information were not unique; these were being discussed in related literature. Nor were they simply technological challenges, although these were present (fig. 21).

Figure 21. Troubleshooting issues with the face recognition software on the Slade's class photos crowdsourcing platform.

The collaborative and short-term nature of the pilot project and its archival framing in this dual art school/university context brought about a particular configuration of possibilities, but also expectations, that became hard to fulfil. The titling of the project as an *archival* project naturally connotes the intentional stewardship and preservation of historical records. However, the platform created for this project was not built for longevity and a permanent custodian was not assigned to the project. Instead, this was a short-term and modestly-funded research project, that would, in its essence, not function as an archival repository or record. The question of how the research outcomes would be managed (particularly the relationship between the digitally annotated photographs and their relationship to the original photos), was not accounted for given the small amount of resourcing attached to the project. This was a pilot project, and the intention was to fold these activities into a future iteration of the project and/or website. Yet this set-up was contingent on securing additional funding.

Furthermore, through this vehicle we were asking people to contribute their knowledge, memories and reflections about the history of the Slade and its

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communities of artists and educators. Tacitly, we were fostering a type of relationship through archival engagement in an exercise that was designed to solicit individual contributions and personal information. This inflected participants' expectations with a different type of project stewardship; it invites a dialogic relationship rather than a unidirectional one.

Other sensitivities emerged around the identification of subjects in the photos; the presentation of personal reputations; and the right to share information in this forum.[14] To be included or publicly featured in the archive of a prestigious art school carries weight. In this cultural milieu, archival documentation is a way of being authorised by an institution, and by extension, the art historical record. This currency carries value not only for former Slade students and staff, but also art historians, biographers and family historians who regularly approach the institution for information about, but also wanting to contribute to, the archive.

The project also demonstrated how an archive project framework can be used for multiple, sometimes discrepant, purposes simultaneously. In this instance, this includes being used to inform a critical history of the Slade's past, to foreground and elaborate art historical narratives, to generate research projects and funding, and to build internal and external relationships, and by extension, institutional profile and fundraising possibilities. In this context, there was an implicit tension between celebrating the Slade and reinforcing familiar cultural narratives, and bringing to the fore those voices and activities which posited a more critical reflection on the past and its lesser known histories.

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[14] These issue would later be foregrounded as a result of the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which ultimately led to the taking down of the crowdsourcing website in 2018.
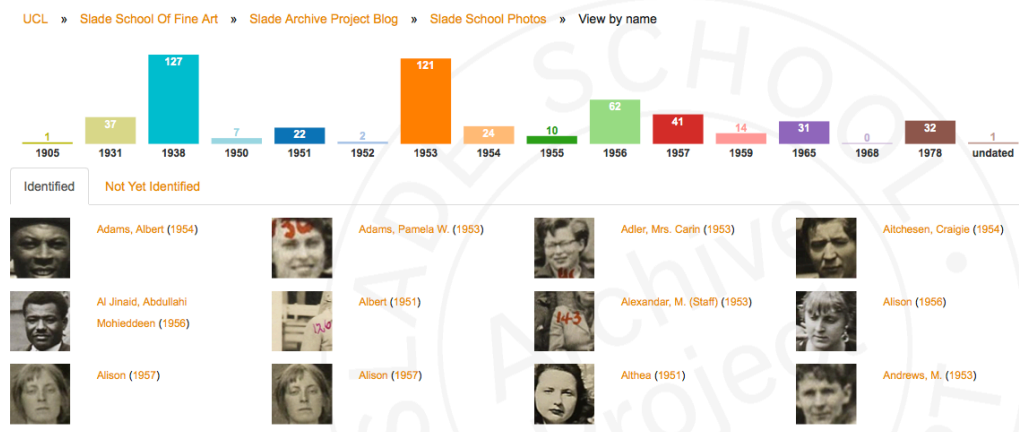
Figure 22. Screenshot, Slade class photo crowdsourcing website.

Questioning the Role of Curation

Given these factors, it seemed curatorial perspective could be usefully brought to bear on this project. There were questions of caretaking that wove through the terms of mediation, preservation, presentation and access, as well as the creation and maintenance of relationships (institutional, professional, personal and public) in this project. Yet there was no explicit curatorial role or presence embedded in the organisation or within the project itself. Would it be helpful or counterproductive to address this initiative though this curatorial lens? If so, what are the implications of using an overarching curatorial frame to devise and inform such a research project?

On the surface, it seemed curation would have a natural resonance. The archive is comprised of the records of an art school so any project deriving from it will be at least in part *art historical* in nature. Yet the records are also of interest to researchers in other disciplines, to administrators, to alumni, family historians and cultural producers who will read its contents with other perspectives towards different purposes. And because the project was not oriented towards an exhibition, it does not conform to the conventional definition of a curated entity. Could curation in relation to the archives be conceptualised *without* reference to art or art exhibitions? If there is no project curator, is curation still taking place? If so, how and where does this curation occur in this multifaceted terrain of practice? What is brought to the fore by

evoking the caretaking traditions of curation? And how, in this context, would it differ from that of archival practices?