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The Rise of the Citizen Curator:

Participation as Curation on the Web

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by

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Quis curabit ipsos curatores?

(Who will curate the curators?)

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Abstract

From jazz clubs to cheese plates, the term curation has become a signifier of the growing need to organise and prioritise the seemingly endless possibilities of the digital sphere. The issue addressed here is in the associated meanings of the word curation and what it means to be a curator by examining the experience of the curatorial within a discrete context: the Irish curatorial landscape. The word *curation* comes from the Latin *curare*, to care for, and has long been associated with the professional duties of those selected as custodians for objects and knowledge deemed to be important to communities, nations, countries or even the world. However, as objects move from being purely physical to the digital, and knowledge changes from being transmitted through similarly physical media to digital formats that can be set free on the Web, what it means to curate has also changed. Curators are no longer necessarily identified as employed within museums or galleries; the word is now also applied to those who engage with and aid in the management and presentation of digital assets online. Curators have emerged in the online space much like their forerunners, bloggers or citizen journalists. We are now seeing the rise of citizen curators on the Web, which has not created these individually motivated curators, but has made their curatorial activities visible. Citizen journalists no longer need to have a printing press or publishing house to communicate with their audience; similarly, citizen curators do not need a private cabinet of curiosities or a job in a museum to allow them to curate or exhibit to an audience.

The aims of this research are threefold: to examine the current terminology related to curation by those who identify as curators or engage in curation in Ireland; to define what it means to be a curator or a citizen curator within the Irish context; and to investigate the changing nature of exhibition spaces contained in the Irish context in light of the Web and digital spaces. The study will take the form of an autoethnography, exploiting my unique position within the museum and open knowledge community in Ireland to examine current understandings of curation and the phenomenon of the citizen curator. The focus will be on my work within Wikimedia Community Ireland (WCI), a branch of the Wikimedia Foundation which promotes the use of Wikipedia in Ireland in education, culture, and open knowledge. As an autoethnographer, I can act as an intermediary, part way between those working in cultural organisations and the public involved in knowledge building projects. The study will look at how those engaged in curation articulate the work they do by means of interviews and participant observation. These sources will allow for the development of a spectrum of curatorial practice.

The spectrum will arise from the participants' (both citizen curators and those working in Irish cultural institutions) own understanding and definitions of curation and what it means to curate. In placing these definitions of curation within a spectrum that takes in broader understandings of curatorial practice, the newer forms of digital curation, and a picture of how the citizen curator relates to these methods, will emerge. The disruptive effect which the digital, and in particular the concept of the Long Tail, has brought to bear upon understanding of the assembling, storing, and using of collections will be examined. It will answer many of the issues surrounding the discipline-specific definitions of curation and the curator while informing their relationship with each other. By drawing out curation into a spectrum, what unfolds is the movement of curation from a traditional and closed system of learnt practices, to one which is formed around more open and accessible conventions of curation. In identifying the citizen curator, their role in the larger curatorial debate can be acknowledged and better incorporated into the multitude of online curated projects. This hinges on the emergence of the *Do It With Others* ethos which pervades both online and offline creative communities, and it redefines curation from a solitary practice, to one which is demarcated by its participatory nature.

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Acronyms

CC – Creative Commons

GLAM – Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums

HWHO – A History of the World in 100 Objects

IMA – Irish Museums Association

NGI – National Gallery of Ireland

NIAH – National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

NLI – National Library of Ireland

NMI – National Museum of Ireland

NMS – National Monuments Service

RMP – Records of Monuments and Places

RPS – Records of Protected Structures

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine

WCI – Wikimedia Community Ireland

WLM – Wiki Loves Monuments

WMI – Women's Museum of Ireland

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research emerged from the confluence of two major personal interests: the contemporary discourse around curation with cultural institutions, and the potential for the collaboration between such institutions and the public through projects such as Wikipedia. I noticed that the tone of discussion around curation and the importance of curators within museums had become increasingly embattled, with curators beginning to perceive a need to justify their work and employment (Ewin). Concurrent with that, the language of curation appeared to be bleeding into areas where it had never been seen before (Balzer, 2014). Not only was it used to describe assembling clothing collections by designers, but by organisers of music festivals, and in the description of make-up collections. This meeting of two narratives around curation and the curator drew me to study what is meant by these terms, and why they had suddenly began to grow in popularity outside of the museum or art gallery.

At the same time, crowd-driven collection, both digital and physical, had always been of interest to me. In general a great amount of attention has been given to large-scale projects, such as *A History of the World in a Hundred Objects* or *Art UK* (formerly *Your Paintings*). Such projects looked to the public to nominate their own important objects, or to work on cataloguing a nation's collective artworks. These are backed by large, historically powerful institutions, like the British Museum and the BBC, and rely on the development, creation, and success of proprietary digital platforms. Such programmes are outside the ability of most cultural institutions, which posed the question of how do this majority approach doing projects of joint collecting, curating, and exhibiting, if they do so at all. As far as I could tell, no such project had been attempted in Ireland on any scale, and I wanted to know why. Thus it was this realisation, that curation was apparently happening everywhere, at all times, and by anyone who chose to do it (Rosenbaum, 2011a), while there appeared to be no engagement by Irish cultural institutions with this pervasive form of curation, that was the first spark for this work.

Very early on in the research the moniker of the *citizen curator* emerged, following in the footsteps of the *citizen journalist* and the *citizen scientist* before them. This was a formative moment in the course of the work, framing it around case studies as has been the chosen method employed with both citizen journalism and citizen science, which placed my immediate context within Ireland as central to the unfolding research. Having rooted the

work within the Irish geographic and cultural context in which I have worked, studied, and volunteered throughout my entire adult life, the application of the autoethnographic method to the work seemed natural. Particularly, the autoethnographic work of Teresa Senft on the early Web phenomena of "cam girls" (2008) was pivotal to the creation of a set of methods with which to conduct my enquiry into the manifestation, practices, and defining characteristics of the citizen curator. Autoethnographic methods call on the researcher to use their story, as well as the stories of others, in order to make meaningful and complex contributions to knowledge (Adams et al., 2015: 102). This is my story of the rise of the citizen curator.

1.2   Novel contributions of this research

The significant contributions of this research fall into four categories. The first speaks to the context in which the research emerged, namely what is understood by the terms curator and curation by those engaged in curatorial work in Ireland. In this way, curation and the curator are not being examined by virtue of the discipline in which they work (Graham and Cook, 2010), or by looking at curation as purely something which results in the production of an exhibition (O'Neill, 2012). This work seeks to move beyond definitions of curation which are situated in practice, in particular the predominant view of curation which is based within art exhibitionary practice. Instead the work encompasses broad definitions of curation, which come from across traditional and emerging curatorial disciplines, so that the locus of the curation is no longer the practice itself, but emerges around the communities of curatorial practice.

In doing so, the second novel contribution of the research emerges: the tracking of curation from a set of traditions to one of conventions. What unfolds here is the narrative of curation moving away from a set of practices that was closed and accessible only to those admitted into the process. This traditional system is one based on privilege and serendipity, in which there is no path to becoming a curator: one is selected to become a curator. Hence it is a closed system in which those in the positions of curatorial power pass on the tradition of curation to successors of their choosing. Now, curation has moved beyond this to an open system, in which the practices, codes, and methods of curation can be found and understood by those outside of traditional curatorial institutions. This conventionalising of curation is epitomised by the proliferation of curatorial degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and other professional qualifications. Curation's transformation to an accessible set of conventions is further cemented by the adoption of curatorial language by the public and those for whom traditional curation would never have been accessible. Seeing people use the

language of curation to describe their own work, or that of others, demonstrates that curation has a set of conventions which are understood by those firmly outside of the institutional curatorial setting.

Thirdly, this research begins to track how the Web and digital objects are disrupting the ways in which curators think about collections, storage, access, and usability. Specifically it is the breaking of the tyranny of the physical, in which collections of digital objects don't require the same level of physical demands as their non-digital counterparts. This challenges how collections are brought together, managed, curated, and displayed. As demonstrated by the application of the Long Tail (Anderson, 2006), when collections and their exhibition are no longer bound by physical constraints, the size, scope, and diversity of object and display means that they can grow and develop in ways that physical collections could not. It also allows for what can be termed as "frozen" objects, based on Shirky's "frozen sharing" (2010: 174), in which a digital object is stored with no concept or concern about how and when it may prove important. The consequences of this disruption of collection and subsequent curation is something that is only beginning to be thought about across curatorial disciplines.

Finally, and most significantly, a spectrum of curation is the major output of this study. This spectrum is initially built upon a continuum of curation using Arnstein's "ladder of participation" (1969). In using the ladder, the participatory nature of a discrete curatorial process can be assessed by plotting it along the ladder. Later in the work, and moving beyond a single plotting of a moment of curation, a more complex model of an individual curator is created. The curator in question is myself, taking into account all of the overlapping and intersecting areas of my personal, professional, and academic work to create a holistic view of a single curator moving from professional curation to citizen curation. It is this fluidity of the curator which informs the final spectrum of curation. Taking into account a curator working alone, but most importantly within the confines of this research, curation is a participatory act. It shows that curation can be and often is a *Do It With Others* (Garrett, 2012), creative, generative act.

1.3   Research aims

The aims of the research are threefold: to understand what curation has come to mean by studying a specific curatorial context (Ireland); to describe the phenomenon of the citizen curator and the current understanding of the curator within that context; and to investigate how the Web has changed the nature of the exhibition space with its participatory and "liquid" nature (Jemielniak and Raburski, 2014) in the same curatorial context. Each of these

areas are related and feed in to one another, not only through the methods used to interrogate the research questions but also because it is the transformative nature of the Web that has facilitated the posing of the questions.

Fundamentally this research explores how the Web has made the act of curation more visible and accessible to those outside of cultural institutions, and examines interaction between those institutions and their publics. In doing so it further questions the stance of the "post-museum" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2009 : 81), a more reflexive model in which the public is invited into the interpretive role alongside cultural professionals, and focuses on how reflexivity manifests in the real world. The reflexive post-museum sees a shift from the collecting phase of museums, to one focused on the interpretation of existing tangible material objects and the importance of intangible heritage (ibid). One of the key outcomes of this research is to frame curation as a potentially rich and meaningful participatory and collaborative act between the institution and the public. In mapping this potential for collaboration, the role, defining traits, and characteristics of the citizen curator are revealed. The research interrogates just how open the Irish cultural organisations in question have become, and how ready are the staff and structures for the new expectations of data and object sharing. By implementing an autoethnographic approach, the resulting research adds tangible and experience-focused evidence to the larger discourses on the future of museums (Black, 2012, Dewdney et al., 2013). In taking these incremental and human-centric steps to open up conversations with those working within these institutions, the study allowed not only for the capturing of data pertaining to the citizen curators' own understanding of their work, but also critically examined and reflected on some of the outreach models being used. The use of my position within WCI created an environment in which rich and deep qualitative data has been collected, and the relationship between staff in cultural institutions and citizen curators has been assessed. The study interrogated how cultural institutions are involving the public in a new environment in which they are expected to change from being "hierarchical, closed, secretive, and insular" to incorporating "openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally" (Tapscott and Williams, 2008 : 30). The positioning of the study and myself as researcher, inhabits a space to witness the possibility of institutions and the public collaborating, in a locus that is a "hybrid environment, where the physical and the virtual overlap and interact" (Ruhleder, 2000). In contrast to other studies, such as Liu (2012), this study is not located purely in the digital sphere, but in where that sphere becomes tangible in the physical world contained within Ireland as a geographic context. This physical space is anchored around my own work within WCI, and the events in which curators and the

public come together to collaborate and ultimately curate. The research also focuses on a physical, geographically bound space, that of the Irish community, rather than the more digitally based virtual ethnographies (Hine, 2000), and thus takes on a more physical aspect than other Web-centred investigations. In this difference, the research can address a gap in the literature on curation, social production and the place of cultural organisations in the Social Web.

The following work also examines the language used to describe online activities, by looking at how those engaged in curation articulate their activities. This is placed into the context of work such as Parikka (2013), Garde-Hansen et al. (2009) and Garrett (2012), examining similar behaviours but through the lens of remix, remediation and DIWO (Do It With Others). Rather than examining archiving and curation activities from a distance, in selecting a small number of citizen curators with whom I have met one-to-one at least once, this research is far more focused on the local, specific Irish experience. In this way the research seeks to contrast and complement that of Parikka and others, whilst borrowing from those such as Liu in identifying particular loci or modes of curation (2012 : 46). The research was framed to generate concrete examples of cultural organisations and interested citizen curators working collaboratively to elucidate the meaning and method of curation in the present and thus "develop[ing] media history from the point of view of such concepts as experience and event" (Parikka, 2013 : 20). The result of the work is a spectrum of curatorial practices which brings together the multitude of definitions, descriptions and narratives of curation so that it can be better understood in its various applications, focusing on the "process not product" (Meadows, 2013 : 55). Drawing on this spectrum the phenomenon of the citizen curator is illustrated, the composition of which will further allow for an understanding of online behaviour on the Web today. Just as the construct of the citizen journalist facilitated discussions about what it means to be a journalist in light of the Web, the citizen curator can do the same for the professional curator. Again, in framing these elements as being on a spectrum, where the institutional curator is not usurped by the citizen curator but exists on a continuum, in a fuller picture of curation, the curator and the challenges of the digital museum can materialise.

1.4   Research questions

This research focuses on two central questions: what are the current understandings of the term curation and curator given its widespread adoption outside of cultural institutions, and what are the defining features of the citizen curator? In order to understand why curatorial language is being applied to activities outside of traditional institutions of curation, such as

museums and galleries, there is a need to interrogate curatorial terminology. This will be done in two ways, firstly through the literature review which will take in texts from art theory (Graham and Cook, 2010, Martinon, 2013a, O'Neill, 2012), media studies (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009, Parikka, 2013, Shirky, 2010), and online business and social analysis (Anderson, 2006, Rosenbaum, 2011a, Weinberger, 2007), amongst others, to form a basis of what curation and the curator are understood to be and how they operate. Secondly, through collected data from autoethnographic methods, participant observation, interviews and other "naturally occurring materials" (Peräkylä, 2005 : 869) pertaining to those who work in museums, as well as the public, a picture of how these curators articulate their work and that of others has been captured. The interview data was brought together into a layered account, drawing on established autoethnographic methods of critical reflexive examination of the data. Then the corpus was subjected to further critical analysis, allowing it to then be brought together with the literature review to form a spectrum of curatorial practices that will encompass all forms of curation from all pertinent fields.

In establishing this spectrum of how curation and curatorial practices have operated and are now understood by its practitioners, the characteristics and traits of the citizen curator can be defined. In building on the work done on that of the citizen journalist (Bentley et al., 2007) and the citizen scientist (Socientize Project, 2013) a greater understanding of curation online has been developed. This has been achieved by drawing on the relevant literature and data generated by those working within the selected case studies. By focusing on the WCI as an interface between those working in museums and the motivated public, those actively engaged in curation can aid in forming this new construct of the citizen curator. By allowing those actively curating to articulate how they perceive their own work, that of others, and how it relates to larger projects such as Wikipedia, the socially constructed view can be contrasted, compared and integrated with the existing literature. In taking this approach, a more rounded view of curation and the activities of the citizen curator will emerge.

1.4.1   What has the act of curating come to mean?

The terms *curating*, *curation* and *curator* are being used more and more frequently, with some concluding that *the curatorial* has become an "embattled term" (Martinon, 2013b : 4). As the terms are applied to diverse activities, primarily online, the understanding of curation is also shifting. Many of the professional discussions around the usage of the terms are centred on the advent of content curators and similar digitally based professions. The application of these terms to jobs as well as more individually motivated activities is changing how the words are understood and how people view their own engagement with the terms. The

multifaceted understanding of curation is reflected in how it is identified as residing outside of any particular discipline and positions, "the curatorial at the crossroads of disciplines" (Dasgupta, 2013 : 174).

As information available online proliferates at a seemingly exponential rate, there is an increasing need to search, retrieve and filter content efficiently and with a greater degree of relevance. As the Web evolves and technology develops, a gap has been recognised between the current Web and the predicted Web 3.0 or Semantic Web. The Semantic Web is envisioned as computers being able to think, search and understand context in a human-like manner. However it has yet to be realised (Chun, 2011 : 185). In the meantime this has led to the proposition that the immediate future should be one of a human-filtered Web. This concept centres on the fact that search algorithms do not reflect how people search the Web and thus there is a need for a human intervention (Rosenbaum, 2011a : 254). This model views curation as a mixture of aggregation, collation, filtering and presentation that delivers a comprehensive and reliable content source. Some have suggested that this collectively mediated Web, filtered and organised through cooperation and group collaboration, is the beginning of Web 3.0 (Barassi and Trere, 2012 : 1272). This ambiguity surrounding the descriptive language of the Web in its current state will be a concern in this discussion. The fact that the current Web can be viewed as containing elements of all identified forms (1.0, 2.0 and 3.0) (Barassi and Trere, 2012) does not detract from the concept that it is the current trajectory of the Web generating a demand for curation. The "Web 2.0 has enabled new media companies and entrepreneurs to assume the curatorial role" (Gehl, 2011 : 1240) and as will be investigated the Web now allows for interested individuals to also fill that role.

An adjunct to this construct of the human-curated or -filtered Web is that of social searching. It tracks the phenomenon of people looking to their peers rather than online search engines when looking for particular forms of knowledge. It mirrors the need for users to have context when searching, and that humans think in verbs or actions rather than the algorithmically driven syntax of computers and databases (Rosenbaum, 2011b). On social platforms the peers that users look to can be institutions such as museums and galleries where, rather than searching through engines or even the relevant institutional website, queries are posed on Facebook or Twitter to elicit a more human or individual response. In this way the actions of an extended social network create a curated volume of knowledge in which all participants are adding to a combined body of information whether knowingly or otherwise. The "users who are viewing, rating, commenting on or flagging" content are creating a state where the generated "archive is constantly shifting" (Pietrobruno, 2013 : 1263). These contributors can

be individuals, corporate bodies or cultural institutions interacting, generating and curating information, leading to the "curatorial skilling of everyday life" (Tchen, 2013 : 5). This skilling sees not only the vocabulary of curation being increasingly used but the actions of individuals being correlated with tasks or jobs in museums or galleries, as Liu demonstrates by linking different online activities with particular positions within museums such as docents or archivists (2012 : 33).

Curation in the digital realm, generally seen as a form of collective remembrance through the accumulation of metadata, can be viewed in a more indirect form, "memory where it is implied rather than said" (Confino, 1997 : 1395). The human intervention is viewed by some as the manifestation of digital memories (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009) leading to a symbiosis between human and computer to reform these curated, remixed or remediated memories. This *social curation* as seen by Liu (2012) allows for community-driven memorialisation in a manner outside of nations, governments or institutions. The shift in authority has manifested itself not only in this memorialising but also in the organising of knowledge, information or digital objects. This links in with the social searching and sorting seen above where the current Web has a "produced archival structure or 'probability archive'" (Pietrobruno, 2013 : 1264) where the likelihood of finding a current item on the Internet is driven by others' interaction with it through liking, linking or commenting. In this schema the Internet as a storehouse or archive "is about findability rather than preservation" (Pietrobruno, 2013 : 1264).

Wikimedia is a marrying of these forms of curation. It brings together the elements of individual, self-selected experts or hobbyists, with a larger collective, socially managed knowledge project. The most iconic of the Wikimedia projects is that of Wikipedia, a digital encyclopaedia that is continuously updated and revised by any interested party with an Internet connection across the world. Rather than the unchanging and totemic printed or static versions of encyclopaedias, Wikipedia is not only editable by anyone but all previous versions of any entry are stored and can be consulted at any time. There is no one arbitrator of knowledge but many users slowly building, recreating and reforming all relevant information in a neutral voice for the greater good of Web users at large. As a form of collective endeavour it is not now alone, with projects such as the BBC's *Your Paintings* and the British Museum's *A History of the World in 100 Objects* actively seeking input, opinion, time and effort, their cognitive surplus (Shirky, 2010), from users to improve the overall understanding of cultural collections. In this way curation is no longer dependent on those employed within museums and galleries, it has been opened up to the public at large, to

anyone who wishes to participate. It has gone from the select few to the self-selecting multitude and in doing so changing its meaning in that metamorphosis.

1.4.2   How does the citizen curator relate to the larger spectrum of curation?

The individual actors within these acts of curation outlined here will be identified as *citizen curators*. The Web 2.0 generated the concept of the *citizen journalist* – a self-motivated, self-selecting individual who created their own specialised journalistic content in parallel with traditional media outlets (Sambrook, 2005). In some cases these citizen journalists were recognised and incorporated into the established media, where by virtue of the standard and volume of content created they were accepted by their professionally trained peers (Nikkanen, 2012). Highly local or specialised citizen journalism was not created by Web 2.0 and the advent of blogs, rather it was the ability to search and find such specialised knowledge on the Web that allowed them to be seen on a more democratised platform than traditional publishing and distribution methods allowed. In this way niche knowledge becomes part of the larger, more mainstream method of consumption or can contribute to a body of knowledge reliant on observational work like that seen with citizen scientists interested in biology through projects like the *Encyclopaedia of Life* (Rotman et al., 2012).

In a similar manner the current online landscape has created an environment in which the citizen curator can be recognised. Citizen curators, like their journalistic and scientific counterparts, are part of the "active audience" that has been established as existing before the digital era but it is the "new interactive technological platforms" that have "made these practices visible and vital" (Meyers, 2012 : 1023). Certain individuals have always had the drive to collect objects, information or knowledge and then curate these based on their own interests or narratives (Muensterberger, 1993). Just as the collections that make up many national institutions were once private, the Internet has allowed these once hidden acts of curation to become public on the Web. Carpenter presents us with a useful characterisation of the citizen journalist: "an individual who intends to publish information meant to benefit a community" (2010 : 1064). It is this element of community that defines their activities. Curation, before the advent of affordable high-speed Internet connections, may have been shared with a small circle of similarly motivated individuals but now social media and more multimedia-based publishing platforms have changed the relationship of the dissemination of highly specialised knowledge with larger bodies of information: "previously unseen, and often marginal, cultural activity can now be easily found" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 194). Citizen curators can now not only publish their own online bodies of knowledge and artefacts but can contribute to larger projects such as Wikimedia.

The citizen curator has begun to change the ways in which traditional institutions view and develop curatorship. The term has already been employed by some museum-based projects and has been equated with crowdsourcing to improve the understanding of a collection (Cama, 2013) as well as engaging with local communities to generate new exhibitions (Edinburgh Museums and Galleries, 2013). These projects are however still very much controlled and executed by museum staff, and will inevitably have a layer of institutional mediation which will limit the actions of the citizen curators. They are also limiting participation to the local area, which whilst attempting to tap into their local community for inspiration and collaboration will impact on how and why people can engage. Projects that draw on the public differently such as *A History of the World in a 100 Objects* or *Your Paintings* (now *Art UK*) acknowledge that curation is not inherent or exclusive to cultural institutions but can be a collective endeavour (Caspari, 2011). It allows "a relationship to emerge between official heritage and non-official archiving" (Pietrobruno, 2013 : 1259) or curating activities. *A History of the World in a 100 Objects,* a project from the British Museum (BM), sought to open up conversations regarding museums and story-making by highlighting how narratives are not linear but multifaceted and often debatable. By soliciting feedback and submissions from the wider public, nominating and submitting their own objects into a larger history of the world (Bunz, 2010), the BM inverted the traditional curatorial role. They placed the audience in the role of curator, selecting objects, adding context and placing it within a larger body of knowledge and narrative. It created a space into which all those participating were curating by inserting their "selves, things or stories in order to activate" (Szylak, 2013 : 220) the larger history of the world. In contrast, the *Your Paintings Tagger* project ranks users by their input, creating a leader board which not only incentivises people to engage but also acknowledges the input of the contributors. In this way the somewhat mundane or repetitive task of tagging paintings for content, historical or other details has been made into a measurable and slightly gamified endeavour (Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011 : xiv). As curators, their place in the larger project has been noted in a similar manner to the rankings employed by Wikipedia. Not only is the overarching project acknowledging their involvement but also other users can then make judgements on each other, using it as a way of assessing expertise or experience (Nottamkandath, 2014). They draw on what has been termed an "encyclopaedic urge" (Loveland and Reagle, 2013 : 1297) that is tracked through rankings online but could also extend to personal offline projects. It demonstrates that "hoarding knowledge diminishes your power because it diminishes your presence" (Weinberger, 2007 : 230). By maximising their interaction and therefore their presence, these museums and galleries are highlighting their importance. On a more individual level some

museums and galleries have created online spaces in which people can generate their own online curated collections within the institutions' collections. With the Rijksmuseum for example, people can not only save artefacts to their own curated boards but they can also download high-quality versions of the artwork and buy objects with the artwork from the museum (Art Daily, 2013). These levels of participation will be interpreted using Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969), which gives a grading system to the types of participation that institutions and their communities are engaged in. In using this ladder, more definite language and ranking can be employed to further articulate the curatorial and power relationships between the cultural institutions and the public. By focusing on the level of citizen agency that exists within a project, rather than solely the type of activity, the individual curators are involved as articulated by Liu (2012).

Citizen or individual curators are not only curating data at large on the Internet but they are increasingly generating their own content and their own narrative(s). Just as the citizen is now seen as an active participant in the generation and interpretation of news media, the same can be said for wider cultural experiences. It is an extension of the "'wraparound presence' of the media" (Jones, 2006 : 370) creating "a more inclusive production process through a 'cultural convergence'" (Deuze, 2006 : 67). Citizen journalism has been perceived to be a realisation of the principle of freedom of speech (Riaz and Pasha, 2011 : 93), thus citizen curation could be the democratisation of cultural collections, knowledge, and resources as above. By digitising previously enclaved objects (Appadurai, 1988), the need to own the physical object in order to interact with it is mediated in the digital space. One does not need to own a Fabergé egg to look at it in 3D, appreciate its fine detail or place it within a digital exhibition space within a curatorial narrative. If indeed "a good curator grows out of specialist knowledge" (Kholeif, 2013 : 12) then there is a specialist or indigenous curator for all of the information on the Internet. The indigenous citizen curators we are witnessing now are self-selecting experts, or highly motivated non-experts, that wish to improve information available online. Just as the book was transformed through industrial processes from an expensive and rare object to a more readily available cheap one, the digitisation of artefacts and collections has created similar "democratic multiples" (Drucker, 2004 : 69). These multiples are now free to be curated not only by the institution but also by anyone who chooses to do so. Citizen curation reflects on the "deconstructing, also reconstructing (alternative) histories and promoting new ways of thinking through the practice of building things" (Parikka, 2013 : 144) both digital and physical.

By opening up the concept of the citizen curator to both the physical and the digital, it poses the question: "might every person be a curator?" (Tchen, 2013 : 9). Just as with social curating above, there is the notion that everyone who has an online presence is a curator, knowingly or not. The urge to mediate increasing amounts of information on a personal level is not new; as Good shows, "early twentieth-century scrapbooks showed signs of people attempting to manage the massive flows of media in their lives" (2012 : 565). This behaviour of filtering, sorting and curating is a continuation of behaviour that has existed long before the digital era. In this way it views the "curator not as a profession … but as a sociocultural process" (Tchen, 2013 : 9) that incorporates physical and digital materiality with storytelling.

1.5   Research areas

As mentioned in the introduction, the overall project can be divided into three distinct but interrelated research areas: deconstructing the contemporary meaning of the terms around curation; an examination of the construct of the curator as it relates to current understandings of curatorial practice; and the reframing of the exhibition space in light of online and digital platforms. In the first section, the overall aim is to generate a spectrum of curation. This is to bring the term out from discipline-specific language and discourses into a more overarching interpretation of the modes and practices of contemporary curation. By examining the term in this way, some relevant older understandings of the term as well as the newer applications of digital and social curation (Liu, 2012) will be examined. The interpretation of curation will be broadened to include the newer forms that are present in current writing on the subject (Rosenbaum, 2011a, Weinberger, 2007). Whilst the interest of the research question lies with the novel idea of the citizen curator, to establish that, the larger construct of the curator at it stands today needs to be understood. Particularly the research focuses on this juxtaposition of the singular expert curator working in an institution, akin to Appadurai's expert (1988), against the socially driven networked collective working to common curatorial or knowledge building goals, such as those studied by Shirky (2010). The examination of the curator will be guided by the work of Liu (2012), Graham and Cook (2010), and O'Neill (2012), in which the curator has no one definition. Instead the curator can inhabit many roles, in tandem or at different times. For the purposes of this research it is the idea of the curator as mediator and curator as collaborator that may be the most illuminating. Further to these the final area will study how exhibitionary spaces have been reformed, challenged and redefined in the digital and online realm. The section will look at how the nature of exhibition has changed, from the didactic nature of older forms in museums and galleries (Bennett, 2004), to collectively generated exhibitions on the Web

(Appadurai, 2003). The assumptions of the exhibitionary space will be examined, in particular the shift in dynamic from knowledge being disseminated through exhibition, from the expert to the audience, to knowledge being collectively constructed both by those working in cultural institutions and by the public.

All three of these areas will be examined through both the literature review and then by collecting relevant data through case studies. In gathering information from participants through observation, interviews and supplementary documentation, the goal is to discern how they interpret contemporary curation, the current role of the curator, and how exhibition has changed over time. This will be achieved through layered accounts and discourse analysis of the gathered materials and examining them through the lens of social constructivism. Whilst this is explained in greater depth in the methodology section, the reasoning behind this choice is that it is how participants interpret and articulate their work and the work of others that is of interest to the study. As the use and proliferation of the language of curation was the catalyst for this research project, investigating whether or not these citizen curators identify or are described as curators is of interest to the overall research. This is also informed by the autoethnographic methods employed, in which the focus lies on the experience of the participants and their own interpretation of that experience and actions. In placing the socially constructed notions of curation, the curator and exhibitionary spaces next to those from texts on the subject, a more rounded and pragmatically based interpretation of these three research areas will be discerned.

1.5.1   Deconstructing contemporary curation

This area encompasses that of the historical and contemporary usage of the concept of curation in its more traditional form i.e., in a museum, gallery or cultural organisation. How these institutions conceptualise curation informs and feeds off of the extended definitions of curation that shape part of the main research question above. An outcome of this work is a visual representation of a spectrum of curatorial practices, demonstrating that it is a larger concept which takes in this position but then also incorporates the shared term of the curatorial, i.e., the acts or duties of a curator. In constructing this spectrum, the uses of the terms are more pragmatically framed in curatorial practices rather than the more philosophical construct that some have proposed (Martinon, 2013a). Thus the spectrum is rooted in the identifiable or visible consequences of curation as a mode of knowledge organisation, interpretation and transfer.

The proposal of this spectrum attempts to mitigate the confusion that surrounds many of the terms used relative to curation. Even when the term is employed within a highly specific form, in this case archaeology, it is seen as a deeply problematic (if useful) term: "curation is a contentious subject whose treatment brings to mind aphorisms about folly and wisdom" (Shott, 1996 : 259). The shifting nature of the term curation can be viewed as either deeply problematic or simply a consequence of its reflexive nature (Charlesworth, 2006 : 3). It is the inherent reflexivity of curation that appears to have allowed its application to other professions or activities outside of the museum or gallery. These applications fall loosely under one definition: curation as an activity concerned with data, knowledge or information organisation. From library management to biocuration (Salimi and Vita, 2006), the term is being used as a descriptor for organisational strategies that encompass volumes of physical and digital information and a need to make such information more readily available. This can take the form of curated databases for scientific data or the user-curated content of aggregators such as Digg or Reddit, where the collective endeavours of many users allows interesting or popular information to rise to the 'top' (the front page of the respective website).

A new and prevalent use of the term curation is that of *digital curation*. Stemming from discourses in information science surrounding the archiving of digital data and format redundancy, the act of digital curation is one that has been articulated in such a way that makes it more akin to the archivist than the curator (Cothey, 2010 : 211). Digital curation is concerned with accessibility as well as "maintaining, preserving and adding value" (Digital Curation Centre, 2014) to data sets. It is for this reason that it sits in the centre of the spectrum, as the activities of digital curation bridge the gap between the professional and the personal in archival activities. Just as an institution will look to preserve its extended archive of photographs, news clippings or sound recordings, the individual can be moved to do the same. The individual may do this with material concerning themselves, their family or friends (Cox, 2009), or they may become involved with institutional digital archiving in relation to their job, hobby or membership of a society.

In this way digital curation, as understood by archivists, institutional curators or information managers, would be extracted from the other curating that manifests itself on the Web. The common language used between the formalised archival pursuit of digital curation with the social and interactive acts of the casual, individual curator needs to be better distinguished. The use of terms such as artefacts to include any object that exists first in a digital format or is "born digital" (Little, 2011 : 352) - an image, sound file, blog post or even a hyperlink -

leads only to confusion as to how the language is best applied and to whom. The thorough examination of the current use of the term, incorporating its pertinent divergent form(s) through the literature review outlined above, will result in the emergence of a more nuanced understanding. The rate at which the term has been adopted and sculpted to fit the social Web has been the subject of much comment (Schlatter, 2010). However its persistence as an apparently relevant term is anathema to the accusation of being simply a "buzzword" (Scime, 2009) for digital filtering or sifting. In the same way the institutional curator could be characterised by many different forms or species (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 150-152), the forms of new emergent digital, online, cultural, social or citizen curator could equally be described with more accuracy.

To better understand and elaborate on this spectrum of curation the relationship between the older relevant understandings of curation will be juxtaposed with the newer usages, largely with regard to new media. The main issue with how curation has been examined in recent years has been the inability to extricate the action from subject. The term has become so encumbered in art circles that its own reflexivity is viewed as self-defeating: "art exhibitions curated by curators curating curators, curating artists, curating art-works, curating exhibitions" (O'Neill, 2005 : 9). It is a progression of concept of "museum as method" (Thomas, 2010), in which it is the curation of data that is the most pertinent and expedient form of organisation in the twenty-first century. Just as "the museum was an essential technology of investigation" (Gere, 2013 : 207) historically, the need to organise and rank relevant data online has allowed the language and methodology of the museum to persist in the digital present.

The large institutions such as museums that were seen as deciding on "what knowledge is" (Lyotard, 1984), acting as "monopolies of knowledge" (Levinson, 1998 : 12), are now competing in the digital realm against collective knowledge initiatives such as Wikimedia. These projects are subverting the articulation of power through the democratisation of knowledge organisation and dissemination. Curators are no longer the 'mysterious' figures classifying knowledge in museums and galleries, they are a myriad of different people across the globe using their own time to generate, curate and improve available information. This democratisation has been fuelled by the increasing amount of digitised and born digital information and artefacts that exist to be curated on the Web. By examining the need to curate we can understand the driving force behind the social Web and knowledge-saturated structures we have today. These acts of curation are so independent of older forms of knowledge ratification that the process can even be computer generated, something which

the art world has been attempting to contend with for longer than other exhibitionary academia (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 270).

It is the change from curation taking place in the academic 'silo' of the museum or gallery to the online world where curation is inherently social. This is reflected in Liu's social curation as well as in assertion that "your network is your filter" (Tapscott and Williams, 2008 : 41) which implies that it is the fact that the Web is now by default a social space that precipitates networked and collaborative curatorial (or filtering) acts. Such online filtering activities can take on two forms as described by Wilson: collaborative filtering, as seen on Reddit or Amazon "which identifies or reveals information on the basis of user or peer recommendations, shared tastes, assumptions" or as social network filtering on Digg or Facebook where "the habits and tastes of your social network are used to locate, suggest and filter information to you, the user" (2013 : 3). These forms of social or collaborative curation are bringing together not only people acting as curators and filters, but incorporate elements of the computer as curator which reflects the idea of computer as a place of memory and memorialisation (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009). It is this social curation, that is seen as "typical of online audiences" (Macek, 2013 : 300) now that will form a central area of enquiry for this study to contrast against the older or more formal understandings of curation outlined above.

1.5.2   The construct of the curator

The overall focus is to fully comprehend the role of the citizen curator; in doing so however, the larger understanding of what is means to be a curator must be explored. Rather than an exhaustive chronological examination of the term curator, this will take the form of conceptualising the contemporary curator. In particular, this will focus on the commonalities within the different understandings of the curator, peeling back the concept in such a way that the core elements of what is means to be a curator will be revealed. The first and most familiar idea of the curator is that of the museum or gallery professional. In and of itself this is a rather broad way of defining a curator in a profession that "operates in a variety of guises" (Jackson et al., 2008). This inability to concisely state the role or duties of all or indeed the majority of curators is acknowledged in many discussions on the subject. There is even a degree of playfulness surrounding the inexact nature of being a curator, leading to the proposal that a curator is a "theoretical being" (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 156) defying definition by moving in "quiet and mysterious ways" (Robins, 2005 : 150). This other-worldliness of the curator as something that is a "vocation" implies that being one is not a decision but something pre-ordained (Milevska, 2013 : 65) or even as an "accidental career" (O'Neill, 2012 : 45).

In the cultural institution the curator is often regarded as an expert in a particular discipline or area. With regards to collections curators, given dominion over a discrete part of a larger collection, they are viewed as something akin to a "subject emperor" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2003 :168). That notion of subject expertise creating a curator is echoed in Milevska's work which suggests that developing into a curator is a consequence of prolonged engagement with a subject (2013 : 68). It also brings in ideas of the curator that is akin to Appadurai's (1988) expert or Graham and Cooke's legitimator (2010 : 254), where a curator has the ability to discern value within objects. In tracing how the establishment of large-scale national institutions precipitated the professionalisation of the curator in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Shelton, 2000), a more unified and constructive profile of the curator will be developed. This will be set against how those currently employed as curators describe their own work. It is of particular interest if they perceive a change in the role of the curator, and in how their understanding of their own profession has changed or remained static over time.

There appears to be a space between acts of curation and the idea of a curator. Over the past 30 years the "post museum" has striven to bring the audience into the curatorial dialogue, placing audience interpretation and representation at the centre of museological activity (Vergo, 1989). This interaction and joint endeavour has generated terms such as *indigenous curation* (McGeough, 2012), which highlights the concept that the audience can bring a level of expertise or knowledge that the curator cannot. These acts of joint curation, the inversion of the museum process to invite the audience in, has opened up an avenue for the vocabulary of curation to be understood and subsequently adopted by more people. It is this act of joint curation that defines this research, to understand and map the interaction that allows for the citizen curator to be identified or observed. Notions of the *artist curator* (Charlesworth, 2006), *independent curators* (O'Neill, 2005) and the impact of new media (Graham and Cook, 2010) have informed discussions around how to define the role of a curator. The word becomes more contested as there are now assertions that "we are all curators" (Fondazione Prada and Qatar Museums Authority, 2013). By looking at all "humans as curators" (Rosenbaum, 2011a : 4) this study looks to examine the construction and interpretation of the curator, by those described as such or who engage in curation.

1.5.3   The remaking of the exhibition 'space'

A key element in this research is how the exhibitionary space has been reformed in the digital era. Not only are the curators within cultural institutions finding themselves within a new landscape of curatorial collaboration and community, the institutions themselves and their methods of exhibition are equally changed in the online world. In this way museums, galleries

and archives find themselves in the same situation as all other industries now, what Tapscott and Williams refer to as *wikinomics*: "where collaboration on a mass scale is set to change every institution in society" (2008 : 10). As we have seen this change is primarily related to how the curator works, but it also affects how a museum or gallery interact with its audience, where the online space is an equally important space for exhibition.

The Web now can be viewed as the ultimate "museum without walls" (Krauss, 1996), a digital manifestation of Malraux's imaginary museum bringing together not only all the artwork, but all possible types of material culture together. It is a freeing of objects from the "tyranny" of the physical world (Anderson, 2006 : 163), allowing them to exist in multiple places at once, to be reinterpreted repeatedly and to be utilised in new and unanticipated ways. The grand projects to digitise all the holdings of the world's museums open up the collections to the public on an unprecedented scale. This inversion of the museum, in particular regarding objects in storage which have never been displayed, can trace its trajectory back to the founding of public museums (Bennett, 2004 : 414). From the moment that private collections were acquired to be displayed to the public at large, the seed to make all collections public was planted. It is the ultimate democratisation of knowledge and objects, a "democratic turn" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 45), in which all that was once behind institutional doors can be made publicly accessible online. It is a continuation of the museum as panopticon: a site from which all can be seen including the self (Bennett, 2004 : 436). Just as the large national museums strove to be encyclopaedic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, now their online knowledge-building counterparts, such as Wikipedia and *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, are doing the same. The central theme is knowledge transfer (Appadurai, 1988 : 41), where the aim is to share information through exhibition. Even archives are being reinterpreted to "suddenly not only [be] about storing and preserving, but about transmitting" (Parikka, 2013 : 123). The difference in the online manifestations is the relationship between the institution and those "formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2012). The manner in which knowledge is imparted is no longer a top down, didactic model but has changed to one of collaboration: where knowledge is built rather than conveyed. It is a shift from the "one-to-many approach" of communicating to a "history from below" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 8). Where the traditional exhibition within a cultural organisation is "pre-filtering" conveying objects' worth by their very display, their digital counterparts allow for "post-filtering" where access is thrown open to everything and individuals decide on their worth (Anderson, 2006 : 223). A critical aspect of the online exhibition space is that it can be constructed with or without the involvement of any relevant cultural institutions. A

motivated individual can write a relevant Wikipedia article, or upload images of national monuments to Wikicommons without the cooperation of the institution, whilst also providing a space for official lists to be reinterpreted or even subverted by the public. The online space "allows everyone in the system – not only professional experts and competitive elites – to contribute to the generation of new meanings, new systems and ideas" (Hartley, 2010 : 240). However, this research is interested in observing the initial steps that are being taken by some organisations to foster not only a relationship with these motivated individuals, but also trust and sustained collaboration. It will track how these cultural institutions are being challenged to "give up control" to what Weinberger refers to "the third order, [where] everything is connected and therefore everything is metadata" (2007 : 105).

The exhibition space is no longer concerned only with national or international cultural narratives; much of the collecting, curating and exhibiting behaviour online is related to very personal artefacts and stories. These exist on a large "long tail" (Anderson, 2006) of online exhibition possibilities, with the grand global stories reaching the largest audience and more niche interests, right down to personal history, at the end of the tail. This long tail allows for a multitude of histories, stories and narratives that can be built to represent, interpret and speak to as many people as possible (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 130). This ability to exhibit and archive an ever-widening and diversifying set of narratives and objects creates spaces in which the larger, more traditional exhibitionary stories can be told alongside more personal or niche alternatives. It broadens the archive from culturally significant objects to the most ephemeral objects that previously eluded any form of traditional archiving or collecting. Tweets, updates and comments can be used alongside digitised museum objects and those born digital to create new forms of exhibition and display: "This media ecosystem now includes social media, which adds a new curatorial dimension to the multimedia mix by expanding the range of people who make those combinations" (Meikle and Young, 2012: 91). It creates an environment in which these objects of curation, products of social media, become new objects to be curated (Liu, 2012 : 52), becoming a perpetuating "living archive" (Appadurai, 2003 : 20). In this way, the online exhibition space becomes a site of memory, in which the array of objects at the curator's disposal is nearly infinite, or as Parikka suggests "One (wo)man's trash is another's retweet" (2013 : 114). New forms of curation as remix and remediation (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 190) have remade and reformatted the exhibition space in which temporality and physicality can be subverted. These online exhibitions do not replace the physical museum, gallery or archive, the "social production is

not a panacea; it is just an alternative" (Shirky, 2010 : 129). The imaginary museum, once a radical thought experiment, is now a possible reality.

2   Defining the citizen curator

2.1   Introduction

The following chapter will set out an initial examination of the emerging definitions for the terms *citizen curation* and the *citizen curator* which are central to this body of research. Within this chapter the terms and contexts in which citizen curation emerges and are related to are framed in a general sense, in contrast to later chapters which will deal with the specific local context of Ireland. The reasoning behind this is to take into account these broad trends and their frameworks so that they can then be applied to the local and bounded system within the particular Irish geographic space.

The terms citizen curator and citizen curation take their forms from the extant terminology of citizen science and citizen journalism, both of which have been the focus of study over the past 20 years. As crowdsourced, participation-based projects proliferate on the Web, the casual use of the terms citizen curation and citizen curator has begun to be employed (Buick and King, 2012, Frank, 2014, Schulbaum, 2015). Taking its cue primarily from citizen science, it is being used to describe the projects in which institutions attempt to garner some of what Shirky refers to as the public's "cognitive surplus" (2010) for the benefit of their collections, projects, or organisation. Although the term citizen curation has been used, there is yet to be an exposition on what it means, both in its own right, and in relation to the related terms in science and journalism. The initial argument for citizen curation as a more apt descriptor of certain forms of contemporary online activity will be expanded: "Dear reader, the biography of the curator, the curated, the curatorial and curation – a story for our time" (Balzer, 2014 : 12).

2.2   Citizen curation, citizen science, and citizen journalism

The convention of adding the term *citizen* to any activity, here curation, science, and journalism, has one simple goal: to differentiate the activities of the general public from those that are deemed to be professionals in each of these fields. For those within the professions, it can be a distancing tool, to allow them to place a boundary between their professional work and that of hobbyists, amateurs, or others. Within areas in which the work of the two groupings may overlap, most notably when scientists may engage or work with the public, it recognises the input of the public whilst also acknowledging that there is a difference between the two groups at play, and perhaps a sense of hierarchy. Both citizen science and citizen journalism have been recognised and utilised terms since the mid-to-late 1990s, and for the purposes of this work and for clarity two definitions have been selected out of the

many that have been proposed in that time. For citizen science, the definition as laid out in the *Green Paper on Citizen Science* has been selected, as it best reflects the current digital and technological aspects of the area:

> Citizen Science refers to the general public engagement in scientific research activities when citizens actively contribute to science either with their intellectual effort or surrounding knowledge or with their tools and resources. (Socientize Project, 2013 : 6)

For citizen journalism, which can also be referred to as grassroots, public, participatory, civic or guerrilla journalism (Bentley et al., 2007, Ripatti-Torniainen and Hujanen, 2011), the simplest and most expedient definition comes from Rosen:

> When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that's citizen journalism. (2008)

The main element that these citizen-isms have in common is the availability of a number of tools of science and journalism to allow for production of information or objects relevant to these areas by those outside of the particular professional contexts. They are examples of the "productive" online citizenry who are "prosumer(s)" and "produser(s)" (Hartley, 2010 : 239) rather than purely static consumers. Inherent in that availability is the Web, as not only does it provide some of the platforms and tools that these citizens use, but it allows citizens to find each other as well as interested institutions. The ready availability of both these tools and fellow citizens is something that is also key to citizen curation, as will be expounded later in this research. The primary difference between citizen science and citizen journalism is therefore not in its production, but in the methods of dissemination and consumption. The citizen scientist generally feeds into or collaborates on a larger project, hosted by an institution or other organisation. That input can vary in size, but can be quite small, and is ultimately consumed as part of a larger whole, as for example a research output. Citizen journalists, however, can operate on a much more independent level. They can not only create and publish all their own content online, but they can also drive the scope, purpose and all editorial actions of the work at hand. Whilst some citizen journalists band together, this is not necessary for their work. Here their work is seen as more like "culture" in its products, and echoes Rosen's invocation of his older idea of those "formerly known as the audience" (2012), a system in which "citizens not only consume culture, they create it" (Miller, 2008 : 30).

In its most basic form citizen curation can be identified by its defining characteristic of participation, which can take the form of a project initiated by an institution in the Galleries,

Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) sector, or can be instigated by a group of citizen curators. In this way it is unlike many citizen science projects, as citizen curation does not necessitate an institutional expert such as a scientist to formulate a project. Quite often a citizen science project is envisioned and implemented with a large amount of oversight, as can be seen in Bonney et al.'s proposed formula for such projects:

> "Model for developing a citizen science projects:

1. Choose a scientific question.

2. Form a scientist/educator/technologist/evaluator team.

3. Develop, test, and refine protocols, data forms, and educational support materials.

4. Recruit participants.

5. Train participants.

6. Accept, edit, and display data.

7. Analyze and interpret data.

8. Disseminate results.

9. Measure outcomes." (2009 : 979)

From this framework, it appears more difficult to formulate, create or engage in citizen science without the backing of a scientist or scientific organisation. A citizen curation project can share many of the elements of some citizen science projects, incorporating small tasks like tagging, or adding data points such as observation of certain plants or animals. However, citizen curation is just as likely to be conducted outside of the institution or to be instigated by the citizenry without prompting from a professional within the field. It is projects such as Wikipedia that exhibit these traits, where a motivated group of people write about a multitude of topics without an arbitrating overseer to guide the overall project.

Both citizen journalism and citizen curation exhibit many of the traits outlined by Fuchs and take on attributes of what he terms "alternative media":

- "participation of members of a community in content production and media organisation

- as an alternative to mainstream media

- counter-hegemonic media … form a third voice between state media and commercial media

- rhizomatic media … connect the local and the global" (2010 : 176-177)

Not only do these citizen activities operate outside of, parallel to, or in opposition to their professional counterparts, they will often cover, emphasise, or give voice to opinions, topics or content that is not covered by "mainstream" media. In the case of citizen curation, this could be narratives, topics or cultural content that is seen to be neglected or overlooked by established cultural institutions.

2.3   Wikipedia as citizen curation

A more citizen science version of Wikipedia can be found in its first iteration, Nupedia, which existed from 2000 to 2003 (Sanger, 2005). Nupedia differed from Wikipedia, in that it mimicked established encyclopaedic writing by gathering together subject specialists to write articles in their area of speciality. There were writers and a peer-review process to assess their submitted content, which led to the process being stymied by the layers and processes. It ultimately resulted in a very low level of articles being published and a large amount of work backlogged within the system awaiting publication. The form that Wikipedia has now, in which theoretically anyone with an Internet connection and the inclination can edit or create articles, began as an experiment to see if a freer method of content generation could alleviate the difficulties that Nupedia was encountering. Although there are administrators, bureaucrats, and other methods of governance on Wikipedia, ultimately it is casual citizen curators that are generating, maintaining, editing, and improving the content on Wikipedia. In this way, this form of citizen curation has more in common with citizen journalism, as it is a self-motivated task that is not reliant on institutional support for its realisation (Bentley et al., 2007 : 241). Interacting with Wikipedia can function on a less involved level than citizen journalism, in which people can make small, incremental, or micro edits, which are not as demanding on time or other resources. This ability to contribute on a micro level is exemplified by the fact that the term 'wiki' comes from the Hawaiian word for 'quick' (Shirky, 2009 : 111). Wikipedia itself is a realisation of the *Do It Yourself* or the *Do It With Others* ethic of internally motivated groups of people congregating around a common goal (Garrett, 2012, Gauntlett, 2013). As a citizen-powered project Wikimedia is "arguably the largest collaborative initiative in the history of humankind" (Jemielniak, 2014 : 4) and represents a full realisation of the potential of harnessing a large population's cognitive surplus around a common but diverse goal. It is ultimately this diversity of contributor and contribution, and the ability for those who are non-specialists, non-professionals or "non-experts" to engage with their area of interest that is one of the defining and distinctive attributes of Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects (ibid : 29).

Other citizen curation projects mimic citizen science in that very specific elements, data points, objects, or knowledge may be requested by an institution from the public. An example would be the BBC's *Art UK* (previously known as *Your Paintings*), a project where members of the public were requested to tag images of oil paintings in the UK's national collection with relevant metadata (Art UK, 2016a). This process was housed within a definitive set of steps that the user completes. The number of images tagged by a user was tallied and relayed back to them in a ranking system, reflecting firstly the level of experience they have in tagging, and secondly in a ranking of users by number of images tagged. In effect the institutions involved, which are spread all over the UK, have outsourced cataloguing to the willing public. It is a basic but vital form of curation, which makes the artworks at hand more searchable, findable, and sortable. There is an obvious benefit for the institutions, as they have their metadata improved with little or no staff time or financial resources being used, but for the public the resulting images can now be sorted in galleries by artist, collection, genre, subject matter, style and so forth. There was also the facility for users to create an area populated by paintings of their own choosing in *My Paintings*, in essence creating a personal exhibition of favourite or interesting artworks. While the project was limited by the type of painting that comes under its remit, primarily flat artworks executed in oil paint, it is a significant step in opening up a part of the UK's national collection for public viewing and interaction. In particular, it is the fact that about 80% of the paintings featured are not on public display at any given time that gives this project value to the citizen curators involved (Art UK, 2016b). It inducts them into one of the fundamental traits of the traditional museum curator, the ability to see behind the scenes, into the collections not habitually seen by the public.

Others initiatives are closer to a freer model of citizen curation, in which a given institution provides an umbrella project in which citizen curation occurs. An example of this would be the *History of the World in 100 Objects* (HWHO), a project by the British Museum which centred on the idea of telling a history of the world through the collections in the Museum. Accompanying this was a platform to which users could upload objects into a timeline that they believed had some historical value (Bunz, 2010). These objects were then placed on common ground with the 100 objects selected by the British Museum's staff, and discussed in the accompanying exhibition and radio series (MacGregor, 2010). It was an open-ended project that ran during 2010, which allowed the user to interpret and respond to the brief at hand, to illustrate the history of mankind through material culture. However the boundaries and remits of the project remain the property of the institution, and there was no input from the community on the end goals. In this case, it resulted in the removal of the hosting

platform and interactive timeline once the project had reached its conclusion, and it was replaced with a static list of all the objects uploaded. In doing so a dynamic space for exploration and participation has been reduced to a flat list similar to a collection catalogue. In this way the institution, and its mandate to curate cultural objects, is dictated by the institution itself, and ultimately the citizen curation is supplementary and not fundamental to the curation at hand. Their curation has been invited and hosted, but ultimately remains subservient and not equal to the work of the professional curators.

2.4   Arnstein's ladder of participation and the spectrum of curation

The proposed spectrum of curation which is outlined in this thesis incorporates the fluidity of the terminology associated with curation and the curator as they stand today (addressed in the literature review in the next chapter), as well as the shifting relationship of the professional versus the public. Shirky looks to stock photography sites like iStockphoto as examples of how the divide between professional and amateur producers is more of a gradient or spectrum rather than a binary division (2009 : 75). It reinforces the idea that even if someone is not a professional within a field, they can have the ability to produce quality content. Whilst Shirky employs the language of the amateur versus the professional, this dichotomy can prove problematic. Shirky uses amateur in its classical understanding, to denote someone who has a love or a passion for something: "When people care enough, they can come together and accomplish things of a scope and longevity that were previously impossible; they can do big things for love" (ibid : 142). This is a trait that is not unique to the non-professional however, as professionals can be driven by a similar passion rather than purely by their career or monetary incentives. The use of the term amateur also strips away any professionalism from the citizen curator, where they may occupy both roles, being a professional in one aspect of their lives and a citizen curator in others. In fact, professional curators may also use their spare time to engage with citizen curation. Jemielniak refers to Wikipedians and similar citizen curators as non-experts (2014 : 6). Whilst this term is also not without its inherent problems, it may be more descriptive of the large proportion of Wikipedians, but definitely not all of them.

The spectrum developed here can be better explored through the lens of Arnstein's ladder of participation (Fig. 2-1) (1969 : 217) also employed by Jemielniak in his study of Wikipedia. The ladder's utility lies in its reinforcement of the concept that curation as a form of participation is a spectrum, scale, or gradient rather than a binary of participation versus non-participation. Both those employed within museums and the public at large, and the relationship between the groups can be seen as lying on some point along the ladder.

Silverman (2005) extends the idea of the ladder into that of a continuum in relation to community consultation (Fig. 2-2), and it is this continuum that further demonstrates the utility of this theory when looking at the activities of citizen curators. Silverman brings together the concept of gradating the level of citizen involvement with assessing the kinds of bodies and organisations which can facilitate differing levels of participation. Using this schema, an initial broad concept of a continuum of citizen curation can be proposed here. This concept then can be later applied to the Irish context, and subsequently refined and adapted.

Wikipedia is a form of eighth-level participation, as it is a form of "citizen control" with no institutional oversight; rather, there are members of the community elected to positions of power by the community. It is what Silverman defines as grassroots participation, where the activities and goals are driven by the citizenry (2005 : 36). GLAM-sector institutions can occupy a number of different rungs on the ladder at differing times or simultaneously depending on the outreach or other projects they are hosting. Most modern GLAM will conduct projects, exhibitions, and outreach events that can be framed within the sixth to third rungs: "informing, consultation, placation, partnership" (Arnstein, 1969 : 217). According to Silverman, these forms of participation are more instrumental in nature, where the participation is deemed "to be task-orientated, with a focus on the completion of specific projects or programs" (2005 : 36). In framing the activity in this way, the tasks that the public are solicited to engage in with GLAMs and through citizen science are more instrumental in nature, fulfilling a pre-determined task or set of tasks rather than being involved in the formulation or determination of the tasks or the overall project. Within instrumental participation the citizen does not have any role in dictating the scope, goals, or direction of the project, with the staff remaining in the dominant role over the project.

For both ends of the institutional spectrum of the ladder, from didactic, un-reflexive GLAM environments to citizen projects such as Wikipedia, there are barriers to participation which should be noted. If the continuum were to be presented without taking into account these barriers, it would be providing a rather utopian or uncritical form of the reality of the boundaries and restrictions that are inherent in all participation. From the GLAM-sector institution there is a potential for "racism, paternalism, and resistance to power redistribution" (Arnstein, 1969 : 217) which can manifest in exclusionary exhibition content, dominance of the majority narrative within collection interpretation, and the inability or unwillingness to open the collections up to interpretation by the public. Although there are citizens who are engaged with projects such as Wikipedia, many have barriers to involvement:

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"the poor community's political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge base, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizen's groups in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust" (ibid). As Shirky outlines, many of these barriers and costs of organisation have collapsed as the Web and social media have become more ubiquitous (2009 : 63), however within this one must be aware of differing levels of digital literacy and access. There is an element of digital privilege in accounts like Shirky's which discount those who are not online for many of the reasons that Arnstein's work alludes to, such as socioeconomic status, geographical location, accessibility to sufficient Internet speeds, and perhaps one of the most potent of barriers, the spare time in which to accomplish this work. This final reason has been seen as the primary reason that non-white, women, and non-Western topics have been traditionally poorly represented on Wikipedia, in particular the English language Wikipedia. These groups are viewed as not having the same level of leisure time and cognitive surplus which allows for engagement with such a project. This has resulted in white, Anglo-Saxon, university-educated men between the ages of 20 to 30 dominating the content of English language Wikipedia as well as other languages (Buchem et al., 2014). Much like GLAM have been critiqued for not being inclusive of such narratives, Wikipedia has also received the same criticism and has attempted to ameliorate the situation.
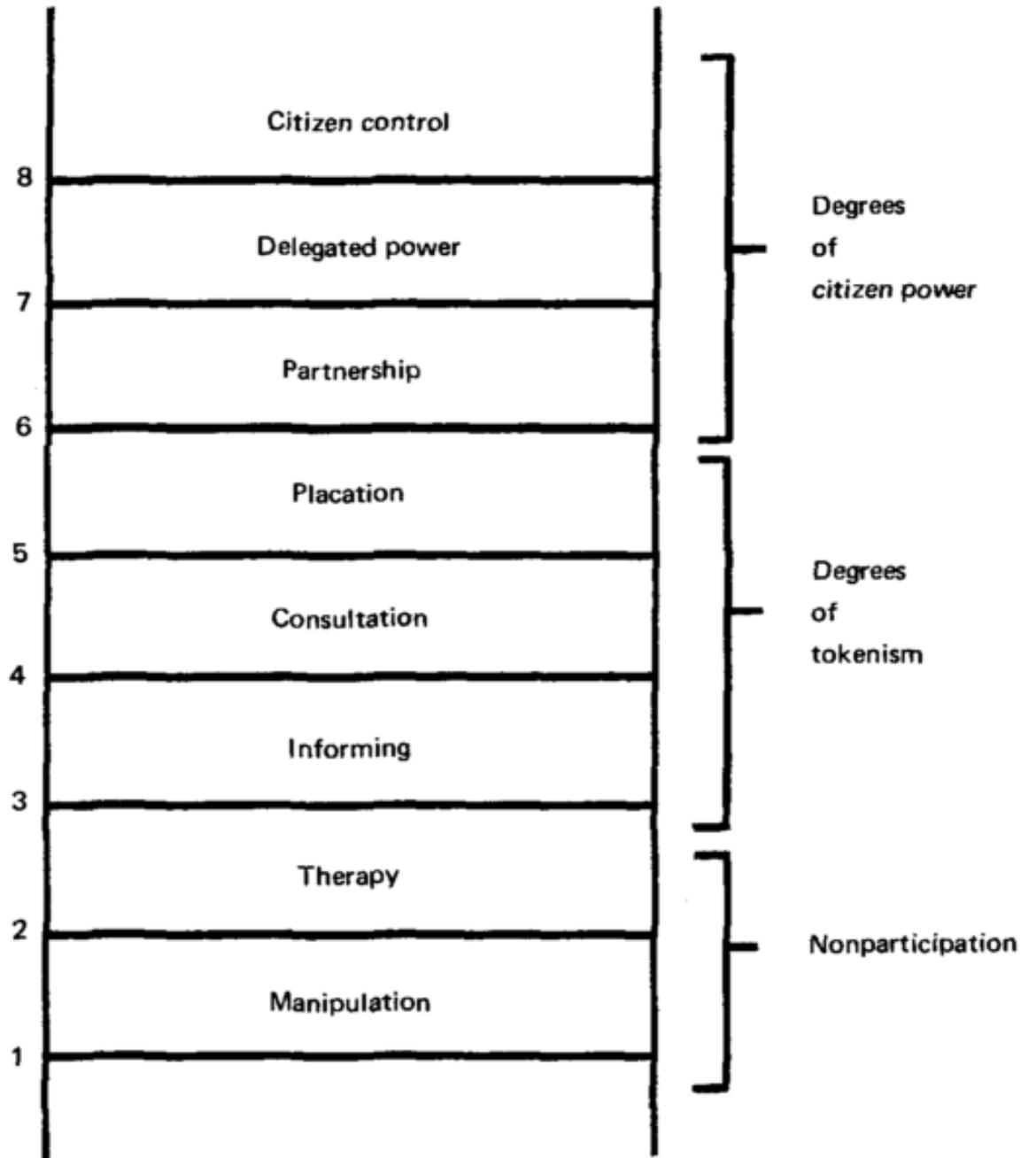
Figure 2-1 Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969)

Grassroots
Participation

Groups Driving Participation   **Forms of Participation**

Informal Neighborhood Groups
& Networks of Residents   Direct Resident Control

                                                           Community Referendums

Issue-Based & Single
Purpose Groups   Protests, Pickets,
                                                           Demonstrations & Boycotts
Block Clubs, Neighborhood
Organizations & Homeowners
Associations   Petition Drives & Letter
                                                           Writing Campaigns
Recreational, Cultural, Ethnic
& Other Civic Organizations   Special Community Meetings

Churches, Synagogues &
Mosques
                                                           Block Parties &
                                                           Community Dinners
CDCs, Faith-Based & Other
Nonprofits Organizations
                                                           Regular Community Meetings

Foundations & Intermediaries
                                                           Focus Groups & Charettes

Colleges & Universities
                                                           Community Surveys

Government Agencies

Private Corporations

Instrumental
Participation

Figure 2-2 Silverman's continuum of citizen participation (2005)

In looking at Arnstein's ladder (Fig. 2-1) and Silverman's extension of this construct (Fig. 2-2), a continuum of citizen curation can begin to emerge (Fig. 2-3). It allows for the plotting of projects along the continuum, while identifying the level of participation that any of the collaborative projects between the public and institutions allows. As outlined above,

Wikipedia exists at the top level of the continuum, as an exemplar of grassroots participation in which the community sets the boundaries of the project, its goals, tasks, utility, and in which the citizens can chose what tasks they wish to engage in. Traditional or didactic GLAM are placed at the opposite end as they can, in extreme examples, exemplify the articulation of only dominant narratives, the suppression of public debate or inclusion, with no elements of participation or engagement with the public. Within this preliminary, broad examination of the citizen curator, some of the projects that have been mentioned thus far have been plotted along the continuum between these two poles. In using some of the language and activities explored by Silverman, similarities in the citizen/institution relationship can be identified. For example, the difference in solicited behaviour between *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (HWHO) and *Your Paintings* can be understood better within the spectrum. The essential power dynamic that is articulated between the act of classification, as seen in *Your Paintings*, and the ability to add to the database of important objects in HWHO, shows how the contributions from the public can be controlled on different levels. Even projects such as Nupedia can be understood on this continuum, where the reviewers act as the gatekeepers who ultimately control whether content is included or not. This behaviour can be similar to GLAM soliciting feedback from their public; if the process is not entirely transparent, then the feedback or contributions can be ultimately ignored. This proposed continuum will be used to examine the types of projects and behaviours that are encountered within the course of the following research. It presents a framework within which activities, organisations, and projects that can appear disparate or unrelated can be drawn into a coherent schema of contrast and comparison.

Grassroots participation

8	Citizen control		Direct citizen control
7	Delegated power	degrees of citizen power	Community referendums *eg.* A History of the World in 100 Objects
6	Partnership		

(Direct citizen control *eg.* Wikipedia — level 8)

5	Placation		Drives and campaigns *eg.* BBC's Your Paintings
4	Consultation	degrees of placation	Community meetings *eg.* Citizen Curator Project
3	Informing		Focus groups *eg.* Nupedia
2	Therapy	non-participation	
1	Manipulation		Curator as "auteur" *eg.* traditional GLAMs

Instrumental participation

Figure 2-3 Continuum of citizen curation as participatory activity

2.5   Defining the citizen curator

It is my contention that the citizen curator is not a new phenomenon, in fact the proclivity to curate goes back through time and has been expressed in more personal formats such as scrapbooks, photo albums, cabinets of curiosity, libraries, and herbariums to name but a few. Collectors, subject specialists, and enthusiasts have long drawn together material relating to their area of interest and have curated these collections in a variety of ways. The existence of specialised historical, research, and interest groups speaks to how these citizen curators will form communities in which they can work together, pool resources or information, and work to common goals relating to their area of interest. As Meyers' states:

> The advent of new interactive technological platforms like the internet did not create the active audience, but has made these practices visible and vital in ways that reconfigure audiences' role in media culture. (2012 : 1023)

These groups, and activities such as scrapbooking, demonstrate that much like the information we find on the Web, people "were attempting to manage the massive flows of media into their lives" (Good, 2012 : 565). Just as low-cost printing and heightened levels of literacy had opened up the world to more information than it had ever had access to in previous centuries, the Web has had a similar effect in the twenty-first century. The difference now is the ability for these people to create such communities without the need to meet or work together physically or synchronically. In this sense, groups of citizen curators represent communities of practice, in which the practice is inspired by the work of GLAM-sector institutions or is wholly constructed by the community at work. As Bowker and Star expound in their exploration of communities of practice, any one curator can be a member of numerous communities of practice, and may dedicate as little or as much time and effort to them as they wish or are able to (1999 : 283). As Shirky explains, the inherent costs of creating groups has all but disappeared: the costs of finding a physical space, travel for the individual members, cost of hard-copy publication and other physical boundaries have been all but eradicated by the digital (2009 : 18). Along with these costs, the need for supervision, or as he terms it "managerial oversight" (ibid : 22), is also diminished as the amount of work that can be achieved within self-managed and organised groups is increasing all the time. However within these self-assembling groups online, we can once again see the strata of participation at work as well as the limitations of what Freeman referred to as the tyranny of structurelessness (1972). From Shirky's perspective on online communities, this can be seen through the increased difficulty of collaborative production versus simple aggregation (2009 : 51). It is the increased work and time commitment that can been found between a Wikipedia article, something that potentially requires debate or negotiation in its production, and the creation of a Flickr image pool, where there is potentially minimal interaction beyond uploading and commenting. "As exhibit curator, you are a creator of narratives, shaper of the five-dimensional space-time of history and visitor motion" (Lubar, 2014 : 75); however, as a citizen curator, you can transcend any of the physical, temporal, or institutional constraints of the exhibit curator. Removed from the locus of the museum, the focus of curatorial activity can be shaped by each individual curator, whether working inside a large project such as Wikipedia or within their own self-directed project.

Whilst the activities of citizen curators can overlap and interact with those of the citizen scientist and citizen journalist, there is one thing that separates their activities: the citizen

curator is more likely to curate the work of their scientist and journalistic counterparts. In particular, the citizen journalist is primarily defined by content creation using democratised tools of publication, often focused on subjects and areas that are outside of or not covered by professional journalism. Just as citizen journalism has eliminated the "newsroom 'no'" (Bentley et al., 2007 : 258), opening up the scope of what is covered journalistically, citizen curation can then address the same issues. Thus their cultural products, text, images and other documentary evidence provides the citizen curator with material with which to create, remix, re-present, and exhibit. Citizen curation is an extension of "open source" reality, in which everything - news, shopping, even cultural consumption - can be "modded" to fit the individual's needs, interests or desires, and they can then display these curatorial productions to others (Deuze, 2006 : 66).

2.6   Conclusion

This initial exploration of the construct of the citizen curator and citizen curation acts to set the tone for the study. In the following chapters, there will be a full literature review and setting out of the research's methodology and methods, as they are informed by and inform this preliminary and general exegesis on the topic. The intent is to develop this continuum of citizen curation, so that the model can be explored and refined to provide a robust framework within which the participation of citizen curators can be better understood. This broad and generalised initial wireframe of the citizen curator will be later applied to the specific cultural and geographical context of Ireland, allowing for the particular experiences of Ireland to be related to a potentially more universal definition of citizen curation constructed here. This macro examination of the citizen curator will be applied to the microcosm of Ireland, to bring depth of understanding and more nuance to the framework.

What we have seen here is that the language of "citizen" activity since the advent of Web 2.0 or the participatory Web is a long established one. As the landscape of the Web continues to change and evolve, the nature of people's online activity will change with it. The following study of such curation in Ireland, both institutional or professional and citizen, will establish citizen curation as the most apt and reflexive way of understanding and expounding these new forms of participation, reinterpretation, remix, re-distribution as well as all of the "unintended consequences" (Levinson, 1998 : 9) of media we see on the Web today.

3   Literature review

3.1   Introduction

The aim of this research is to understand how the contemporary interpretation and application of the term curation has changed in relation to the citizen curator. As this study is autoethnographic in nature, and my own positionality is embedded within museum and art theory, the review draws heavily on these areas of research. It examines the role of cultural institutions in the understanding of curation and exhibition. To draw these texts into context with online practices, concepts such as Appadurai's (1996) social imaginary, knowledge management and media archaeology will serve to orientate this study on the current understanding of the Internet and the Web.

The following review aims to outline and examine what curation currently means, with the intention of further defining the relationship of the citizen curator to both interpretations of the curator and of exhibitionary spaces. It is structured into three parts: the outlining of the current understanding of curation in relation to citizen curation; the definitions of the curator pertinent to the citizen curator; and finally the reframing of what constitutes an exhibition 'space' in light of the digital. The focus lies on how curation and the curator are subject to many interpretations and specifically those definitions that are germane to this study. In particular, it will examine how the role of the curator lacks a conclusive definition, being seen instead as a "multifaceted construct" (Liu, 2012 : 34), as an editor, filter, authenticator or author. The first two sections look at some of the overarching characteristics of curation and the curator by focusing on the relevant practices and behaviours exhibited, both by professional and citizen curators. By centring on the more recent texts, the emergence of the citizen curator is charted by using "genealogies of contemporary media" as Parikka suggests (2013 : 28). This is to articulate that it is not the media that precipitates the curatorial behaviour, rather the medium of the Web makes it more visible, accessible and even mainstream. Thus curation works as an "umbrella model" (Tremayne, 2007 : 244), pertaining to a range of associated processes that may be expressed in differing media, locations and communities. The democratisation of knowledge, objects and information online, what Appadurai termed broadly as the archive (2003), is a key element in the reframing of the exhibition 'space'. His theories of social objects (1988) in conjunction with Bennett's orientation of the exhibition as a site to be seen by others (2004 : 436) allow online projects, such as Wikipedia, to be examined as a space for collective knowledge curation. In viewing

the archive as living (Appadurai, 2003 : 20), a product of not only human cooperation but of computers as well, the themes of remix, remediation and curation come to the fore.

3.2   Outlining contemporary curation

Of the texts selected that use the term curation, few have provided a concrete definition. Liu's synthesis of curation is an exception and is both pragmatic and seemingly inter-disciplinary:

> Curation is the active and intentional process of making choices about what is most meaningful to preserve and pass on to future generations. (2012 : 31)

It is not an entirely unproblematic definition, as it requires intention that others such as Rosenbaum (2011a) contend is not an essential element for curation, but it provides a useful starting point to articulate what curation has meant and how its meaning may have changed in light of the Web. Liu places curation as an activity that can exist outside of the traditional curatorial institutions of museums, galleries or archives and can be interpreted as more of a "sociocultural process" (Tchen, 2013 : 9) in which anyone can take part. This element of process is recognised in other works (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 5) as in the case with the new challenges of curating New Media Art, and also by Meikle and Young (2012: 166) in tracking the converging forms of media that now make up the online world.

The concept of curation as a filtering activity is one that is referenced frequently (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 45). Curation as filtering has a slightly different connotation than a singular curator as filter, in particular in reference to the ongoing and collective nature of many of the filtering activities (Rosenbaum, 2011a : 136). There is also the element of collaboration that is traced between humans and computers in filtering or sorting the ever-increasing amount of information that is available online. It is the dominant notion of volume that recurs in the texts, and that this volume cannot be dealt with by either computers or humans alone. There is a common idea that this morass of information needs both forms of filtering and collaboration: computers are required to store and implement search algorithms but humans are required to place more nuanced forms of sifting in place (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 16). Chun synthesises this further, that "A machine alone, however, cannot turn an *information explosion* into a *knowledge explosion*" (2011 : 192 original emphasis). Often this filtering is not only to aid other human users to find useful or pertinent information but also to allow the computers to refine and adjust their searching and storing abilities, what Rosenbaum terms as the "humanizing" of large amounts of information or data (2014 : 333).

Many of the texts, in particular pertaining to studies of online behaviour and media such as Parikka (2013) and Garde-Hansen et al. (2009), don't use the words curation or curator but many of the actions they discuss and analyse can be viewed through that lens. Often these texts evoke the language and imagery of the archive, in Parikka's case that of archaeology, that speaks to preservation and accessibility. In a similar vein to Rosenbaum, Garde-Hansen et al. examine the volume of information that is being generated and thus requires not only adequate storage but also methods of retrieval in order to allow "recording, stockpiling, archiving, backing-up and saving" (2009 : 4). Expanding on the use of filtering language, Garde-Hansen et al. are concerned with the human/computer collaboration, in particular with regard to memory storage, retrieval and remaking. The fact that digital media itself is couched in terms of memory is crucial as the museum or the archive is often viewed in similar terms (Kavanagh, 2000): "The major characteristic of digital media is memory. Their ontology is defined by memory" (Chun, 2011 : 188). Drawing on the work of Manovich, Garde-Hansen et al. regard the future of online memory-making as more of "a blend of human and computer meanings" (2009 : 16) which allows for a more integrative understanding of online curatorial behaviour than simply focusing on human behaviour. This convergence of the location of memory with both technological and human elements to create a new "prosthetic memory" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 11) results in an environment where humans can collaborate with technology to help them remember both individually and collectively. It is a state referred to by Appadurai as "para-human" (2003 : 14).

This shifting of memory from an intangible concept within the population into a digital landscape in which memory can operate separately from the immediate human component adds depth to the issue of how these memories are stored and understood: "We save our past only as something else: something different, something less than, something more than" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 19). These memory objects, similar in behaviour to the traces Rosenbaum identified that citizen curators leave on the digital landscape through interactions (2011a : 255), become artefacts in their own right to which meaning and narrative can be applied, reshaped or lost entirely. It reinforces the theory that while computers can store memory objects that are altered, reinterpreted and remade by human actors, "memory does not equal storage" (Chun, 2011 : 195). Rinehart and Ippolito place an emphasis on the impermanence of the digital as akin to their material objects: "Audiotapes demagnetize. CDs delaminate. Internet art links websites that no longer exist. Film spontaneously combusts in its canister" (2014 : 4). By acknowledging prosthetic memory, the "impermanence and volatility of computer memory" (ibid : 195) can be embraced. It is the fallible nature of both

human and computer memory that requires stories or narratives to be constructed and reconstructed (Parikka, 2013 : 119-120), something which Rinehart and Ippolito see as central to the survival of digital artefacts as "fixity equals death" (2014 : 7) and can be mitigated through "emulation, migration and interpretation" (ibid : 9). The digital archive can both strengthen the links between archives and "popular memory and its practices" while it "denaturalizes the relationship of memory and the archive" (Appadurai, 2003 : 18). The archive becomes a place to create new memories rather than to preserve them, or as Weinburger states, "memory becomes less what we have assembled and locked away and more what we *can* assemble and share" (2007 : 15 original emphasis). By thinking of objects in terms of memory rather than storage, they can be viewed as akin to "human memory [which] is constantly rewritten, hence transformative" rather than attempting to maintain an "artefact as unchanged as possible" (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014 : 86).

The phenomenon of curating generating its own objects of curation feeds into the notion of "socially distributed curation" as identified by Liu (2012: 43). This curation is the product of people engaging in "tagging, commenting and ad hoc group formation" (ibid : 43) around a topic of mutual interest, in Liu's case that of the Bophal disaster. Liu's area of study would be framed as that of a diaspora or migrant community as understood by Appadurai: "characterised by the presence of voice, agency and debate, rather than mere reading, reception and interpellation" (2003 : 22). In a conclusion that reverberates with Derrida's view of the archive (1996), Liu states that "the very products of curation become new artefacts to curate" (2012 : 52). It speaks to the continuous craft of curation which takes similar connotations of remix in which the process never ends (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 190). Curation becomes not only a layer associated with a set of objects but its manifestation becomes an object to be further remixed or reinterpreted. "Most places contain the debris and cradle the memory of innumerable past events" (Lowenthal, 1985 : 238); in light of the ideas of digital memories as Garde-Hansen et al. develop, these places would be extended from the physically curated spaces of the museum or gallery to digitally curated spaces on the Web. As a community, those engaged in curation will create and leave an "imprint" (Misztal, 2003 : 16) upon the collections, structures and data they work with. Material culture has been viewed as a "social production" (Tilley, 2006 : 70), the creation and manipulation of digital objects can be regarded in the same way. Through this line of enquiry, curated objects can be looked upon as a body of material and communicative memory (Olick and Robbins, 1998 : 111-112) and thus imbued with a layer of "documentary trace" (Ricoeur, 2006 : 415) from those who curated them, as well as the time, place and impetus for that

curation. This reverberates with the reformed ideas of memory, remembrance and memory-making seen above in Garde-Hansen et al.'s work.

A common theme of texts discussing online archives and activities associated with them is that of remix and remediation, which draws on how media is formed and reformed as technology progresses. The concept that media is "continuously remediated, resurfacing, finding new uses, contexts, adaptations" (Parikka, 2013 : 3) speaks to a curated landscape in which the human actors are remaking and reinterpreting technology to allow them to better understand and interact with the larger digital and physical world. The language of the archive used by Garde-Hansen et al. when conceiving of a store for memory online (2009 : 188) is echoed here, drawing in the concept of remixing memory and media in the social manner (Parikka, 2013 : 15) that continually evolves and changes as "memory is an active process, not static" (Chun, 2011 : 195). Liu marries together many of the practices and manifestations that both Garde-Hansen et al. and Parikka encounter by addressing the nature of social media and how people operate within them to attain their own goals:

> Emerging ICTs [information and communication technologies] like social media are transforming 'digital memories' into artefacts that can be copied, remixed, (re)presented and ultimately curated online in a distributed fashion. (2012 : 31)

The availability of digital versions of previously "enclaved" (only available to a select few) or "diverted" (monetised, previously enclaved) objects has opened up a new trade in what would be seen in Appadurai's view as "complex blends of plunder, sale, and inheritance" (1988 : 26). In the digital realm objects can be made, remade, remixed and curated, with the potential to be monetised in a manner never seen before (Rosenbaum, 2011a). The consumption of online and digitally accessed objects and the social nature of this action reinforces Appadurai's contention that consumption is "eminently social, relational, and active rather than private, atomic, or passive" (1988 : 31). Sharing of links, reblogging, pinning and retweeting all generate a form of social, digital consumption. It further extends the concept that this consumption is "not only for sending social messages … but for receiving them as well" (ibid), echoing Bennett's concept of the exhibition being "the site for a sight" (2004 : 436). Appadurai's construct of enclaved and diverted objects can be seen anew when considered alongside Anderson's exposition of the Long Tail (2006). Just as the economics of niche products (ibid : 52) can drive whole markets on eBay or Etsy, special-interest curated content can fulfil similar knowledge markets. As people seek information, news, gossip or cultural content outside of the mainstream purveyors, they will find smaller collective or individual outlets online to feed these esoteric interests (ibid : 53). This is in

contrast to the older media market where "20 percent of media content would be responsible for 80 percent of sales" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 111). Smaller audiences are no less meaningful when the content is fulfilling a niche demand: "a blog can be worthwhile, meaningful and important to a readership of only a half a dozen people" (ibid : 112).

The perceived value of objects as outlined by Appadurai (1988) is a theory that has been bound to the museological stance on objects since the advent of the new museology (Vergo, 1989). In recent times it is curation that has been termed as adding a layer of value to the museum commodity, namely objects (Keene, 2005 : 167), even if this value is purely subjective (Balzer, 2014 : 32). In particular, digitised objects are ranked in their value by the levels and range of curation that has taken place, which further asserts the definition of value as drawn out by Appadurai: "value, for Simmel, is never an inherent property of objects, but is a value judgement made about them as subjects" (1988 : 3). Commodities, as seen in the digital world in particular, emphasise the concept of a commodity as "any thing intended for exchange" (ibid : 9). This idea (ibid : 15), when applied to the digital, arrives at constructs of monetisation, firstly in Rosenbaum (2011a) where he lays out a possible business plan to create a curated project that could generate income. Secondly, in Graham and Cook (2010: 202) and Rinehart and Ippolito (2014: 50-53) with regards to New Media Art, there is an attempt to redraw the definitions of ownership regarding digital or Net art that is sharable or freely available online.

The addition of a curated layer of information or the placement of an object into a curated structure echoes the concept of the object biography (Appadurai, 1988 : 17). Often curatorial work, whether professionally motivated or otherwise, is identifying and adding to objects a narrative, or in other words its biographical detail. The importance of biographical information can be likened to discussions surrounding the need to preserve and maintain data so that digital objects are not only accessible but also understood. Digital curation at institutional and individual levels adds both the "cultural biography" and the "social history" of objects (ibid : 34). Appadurai separates out these terms by framing cultural biography as the specific history relating directly to a given object; in his example, a holy relic. Regarding social history, it is how these specific details relate to a larger narrative or story of relics that can be reinterpreted and reshaped repeatedly. Establishing that the "short-term, specific, and intimate trajectories" of cultural biography leads to "shifts in the social history of things" (ibid : 36) informs this work on the importance of the current proliferation of curatorial acts. As objects are better documented, understood and then placed within larger and larger narratives, the rate and range to which the social history of things can develop, shift and be

remade increases also. It highlights the difference between what Rinehart and Ippolito describe as "formal" and "informal social memory" (2014 : 15). Formal social memory is more institutional and places the primary emphasis on the preservation of objects along with the maintenance of "its historical accuracy and authorial integrity" (ibid). In contrast to this, informal social memory is about keeping an object alive through "migration, emulation, and reinterpretation" (ibid) which echoes the role of remix in keeping objects accessible. Weinburger expresses a similar sentiment through the language of metadata: "Everything is metadata and everything can be a label" (2007 : 104), hence these layers of information build up more ways of organising, filtering and ultimately presentation. To embrace Anderson's model, which centres around "post-filtering" in which any attempt to anticipate the interests of the audience are abandoned and the model responds instead of predicting demand (2006 : 223), in a cultural institution will take a level of acceptance from staff and structures. It will require cultural institutions to both confront and then display how much of their collections may not have received much attention over the years by curators, documenters or conservators. Placing these digital objects in such an un-curated and unmediated state is anathema to the traditional operation of a museum or gallery, but as we will encounter further along in this chapter projects such as BBC's *Your Paintings* are beginning to embrace this new mode of practice.

3.3   The curator as… filter, editor, collaborator?

A recurring motif is that of the "curator as…", which is most explicitly utilised in Graham and Cook drawing on the work of the CRUMB group over a long period of time (2010 : 156). This concept of the curator as no one thing, but as a shifting, malleable construct, is both useful and problematic. Graham and Cook's discussion on the definition of the curator borders on the philosophical, with the curator taking on metaphysical or non-corporeal aspects, paralleling similar theses such as from Martinon (2013a), O'Neill (2012) and Smith and Fowle (2012), by setting out from the beginning that they utilise the term "loosely" (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 10). The construct of the curator is viewed as "prominent, yet vague" (Balzer, 2014 : 60) and that discussions on "what a curator is 'supposed to be' often leads to more interrogations than assertions" (ibid : 120). It is useful in that it allows the curator as a non-specific entity to be continually reformed and challenged by a changing cultural and technological landscape. However, problems arise when there is any attempt to place boundaries on the work of a curator as their practice bleeds into areas of creation as seen in the case of the artist curator (O'Neill, 2012). This reluctance to place limits on the construct of the curator and their work illustrates how the term can be readily adopted by

those defining themselves or acting as curators online and offline, while this same usage can threaten or confuse those more traditionally referred to as curators in galleries and museums (Ewin), or lead to claims that the word has been "stolen" (Rosenbaum, 2014 : 331). The word appears to have been emancipated, as "the curator is no longer just an art-world figure" (Balzer, 2014 : 16).

One defining trait of the curator that is reiterated a number of times, is that of the curator as editor, with Balzer asserting editing as an essential aspect in the understanding of the curator, "curating, as it has become popularly known: any arrangement or editing of things, usually cultural" (2014 : 29). Rosenbaum expounds the need for a human-filtered Web where the masses can work as "citizen editors" (2011a : 80) to enhance the online experience while adding value and structure to online content. He later separates these editors from the traditional understanding of a text editor, and states that curators are a "new and essential" filtering editor unique to the online world (2014 : 72). These editors would be self-selecting experts or enthusiasts that want to aggregate, collate, display or distribute information gathered from online sources on a particular subject or range of subjects, that Miekle and Young more tentatively acknowledge "can also be seen as curation" (2012 : 123). It is a schema similar to that of the *bricoleur*, invoked by Balzer, as "anyone attempting to plan, solve or create" (2014 : 29). These three behaviours of planning, solving, and creating could be employed to functionally describe all activity on the Web. Illustrated with examples from *Readers Digest* via *Time Magazine* to a Susan Boyle fan site, Rosenbaum views curation as a natural and continuing trait of humans interested in selecting, refining and ultimately presenting information to an audience – for him this is the essence of curation: "finding, filtering and recommending, curating content" (2011a : 136). Just as Rosenbaum used examples such as *Engadget* and the *Huffington Post* to illustrate the concept of the curator acting as a host or platform, with these terms having both real world and digital connotations, Graham and Cook explore this idea of curator as intermediary: "One of the possible roles of a curator is to act as gracious host between the artwork and the audience – to provide a 'platform.'" (2010 : 124). The common language between the texts becomes clearer as is settles on the notion of the curator as editor, filter, or as it is here: "artist as sender, curator as mediator, viewer as receiver" (O'Neill, 2012 : 25). The role narrative plays in O'Neill's text is brought into focus by his use of the author motif: "a personal narrative proffered by a single author-curator" (ibid : 30). This identification of the single curator creating through a highly personal process directly mirrors many of the citizen curators now operating online with digital objects through platforms such as Tumblr or Pinterest. They create, just like the

'professional' curators, "displays … mainly predicated on the curator's taste, style" (ibid : 30). It is in Liu's social curation that the highly "personally meaningful" (2012 : 30) nature of the objects curated and the drive to do so, reflects the concept of curator as author.

An important aspect identified within O'Neill's work that is not touched upon in the other texts, other than Balzer who cites this work, is the moment when use of the noun *curator* moved to use of the verb *curate*, which he contends "implies a practice of constructing narratives" (2012 : 32). The suggestion is that previous to this point, which O'Neill pinpoints as beginning in the 1980s, curation existed in a form of compliance to a larger narrative outside of itself, perhaps institutional, national or political based on its locus. It is in the transformation of the word curator into a verb, curate, that O'Neill places the curator in a process of "artistic production" (ibid : 32). Balzer extends this by proffering that the individual curator emerged in the twentieth century, with the curator having occupied the role of caretaker or carer up until that point (2014 : 33). The curator moves away from O'Neill's compliance to the independent curator's "display of taste or expertise that lends stylized independence to the act of caring for or assembly" (ibid : 33). However this rather individualistic or personally motivated, passionate curator is at odds with a construct of the curator O'Neill puts forth further later in the text:

> At the core of such curatorial activity remains the ability to situate any given work of art within a social, historical, and cultural context, and to write about it factually, informatively, and critically. (2012 : 71)

Whilst they are not entirely incompatible, the later framing of the curator reads as less individualistic and more didactic in form than the curator driven by a creative or artistic process. It sounds more akin to the expert in Appadurai (1988), extolling the value of the exhibited object in more traditional terms. It does set the stage for what O'Neill terms as the perceived "end of the curator's grand narrative" or the conclusion of the "golden age of the grand curator" that exists within an unchallenged or seemingly self-indulgent environment (2012 : 80). Drawing on this further, Balzer contends that since "the mid-1990s, we have been living in the curationist moment" (2014 : 8-9) due to social influences such as those of the curator O'Neill explores, and technological advances such as the Web. While the manifestation of the citizen curator shows that the personally driven narrative still has a place within the curatorial lexicon, the ability to question, collaborate and modify curatorial product is the key here. Once again the idea of remix appears relevant, in creating a distinction between the large-scale celebrity curators of the blockbuster variety from the passion-driven, self-motivated individual curator where "exhibition is now a form of self-

portrait, a curator's courting of the gaze" (O'Neill, 2012 : 99). It leads Balzer to conclude that the institutional curator is no longer essential in the value-giving process of curation (2014 : 91-92). There is no grand arbitrator of taste or overarching narrative online, only varying degrees of collective, institutional and individual curatorial acts.

In opposition to some museological stances around the role and operation of the curator as a subject specialist, here the contention is that the curator is a specialist in the act of exhibition itself (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 148). The implication is that the professional curator working within a cultural institution operates as a specialist in exhibitionary communication and the online "niche" (Rosenbaum, 2011a) curator is more akin to the "subject emperor" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2003 : 168), analogous with how the museum curator was identified in the past. Balzer sees the development of the curator as moving from one of a custodian to that of object connoisseur: "custodianship *becomes* connoisseurship" (2014 : 46, original emphasis). Seeing as Graham and Cook remain without a definitive definition of a curator, the ability to exhibit material (physical, digital or otherwise) with a degree of success or competence may be one of the overarching characteristics of a curator across disciplines and media in their analysis. Some curators have gone on to overtly "claim the exhibition as their medium" (Balzer, 2014 : 67). However, Rosenbaum suggests that the online citizen curator's strength is "selecting the most important elements, organizing the content and sharing it with others in a concise and easy-to-consume manner" (Rosenbaum, 2014 : 28), which is the act of exhibition. This inherent difficulty that is acknowledged in defining what it means to be a curator is brought to light in the list of possibilities put forward by Graham and Cook. Here the construct of the curator once again becomes almost entirely philosophical with the idea that the curator may only exist as a "theoretical being" (2010 : 156) which has a similar irreverence to O'Neill when he suggests the "curator as fairy-godmother, and even god" (2012 : 49). Balzer extends this religious imagery by likening the appropriation of the term curation as having elements of religious fervour, called it "curationism – a play on creationism, with its cultish fervour" (2014 : 8). Some even suggest that the curatorial act is a "magician's act, comprises an act of 'conjuring'" (Kaniari, 2014 : 447). Graham and Cook parallel the development of the new museology with the examination of the curator:

> …the pressures on the modern museum have moved from traditional
> gatekeeping connoisseurship, exhaustive collecting, and linear historical displays
> to responsiveness and inclusiveness. (2010 : 191)

Following the transformation of the museum since the 1980s mentioned above, alongside a progression in the technology used to create art, objects and exhibitions, the curator is

presumed to have changed with it. That change, unsurprising for a work dealing with New Media Art, implicates the media itself in this development: "the curator's role has expanded to producer as well as selector" (ibid : 216). The concept of the exhibition being more like a theatrical performance requiring this 'production' also ties in the focus Graham and Cook place on the documentation of artwork that is constrained by its form in some sense, such as temporally or technologically (ibid : 70-73) by interpreting the media as an "experience or event" (Parikka, 2013 : 20) rather than by its physical nature.

Within the online world, the curator can be seen as a social actor, interacting and engaging with social media to create an environment in which all users can be curators even if they are not aware of it. This concept of the accidental or coincidental curator draws in Rosenbaum's wide interpretation of curation and his emphasis on the social aspects of online interaction. In particular he cites how people will act on the recommendations of friends or their "implicit endorsement" of products, places, services etc. through 'likes', links and postings on social media (2011a : 205). This has been described as a form of outsourcing "the editorial function of gatekeeping to a trusted self-selected network" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 54). However, the act of friending or following others on Facebook and Twitter can be viewed as curation in itself; with the organisation of those others into lists or groups, or by filtering their content, the curation is extended further. Curating unknowingly in a social sphere can be offset against the more playful notions of the curator from the art world: as a theoretical being or even a god. This unknowing curation, or curation without an overt curator, is a signifier of Balzer's "curationist moment" that is currently happening (2014 : 89). These online curators can be anonymous or untraceable but still their impact could be wide-ranging and long-lasting, as seen through Amazon or eBay's rating systems. Rosenbaum uses these social or casual curators as the largest group in his proposed hierarchy of online curation. These curators are described by him as the "citizens" (2011a : 255) of the Web, underpinning his idea that they curate without realising it just by virtue of having an online presence of some form and that curatorial acts are seen as built into online interaction. Miekle and Young assert that it is the "media ecosystem" of social media that has added this "new curatorial dimension … by expanding the range of people" (2012 : 91) who can engage with online content and thus curate it.

Rosenbaum calls the next stratum he outlines "shopkeepers" (2011a : 255-256), which implies that they are selling a service of some form. He is referring to those who devote a reasonable amount of time to their own website, professional or otherwise. Rosenbaum defines them as providing some form of trusted content and this idea feeds into Appadurai's

emphasis on authenticity (1988 : 45) or Balzer's contention that the curator is an "importer of value" (2014 : 9). Rather than these shopkeepers dealing in exclusive content they are guaranteeing a level of trustworthiness or excellence. The shopkeepers here occupy the role of curator as authenticator which places them within the familiar stratum of experts who work together to form the "economy of taste" (Appadurai, 1988 : 45). The final layer in Rosenbaum's hierarchy is that of the "civic leaders" (2011a : 256) which brings in again the connotation of an online nation of denizens and their leaders. These leaders are many of the people that Rosenbaum has drawn on for case studies or interviews such as Arianna Huffington, Esther Dyson and Brian Alvey. In general these people are online entrepreneurs, bloggers and technology analysts. Again there is an emphasis on the ability to generate capital or an income from online acts of curation and this has shaped Rosenbaum's choice for the inhabitants of the pinnacle of his schema. He sees people such as Arianna Huffington as early adopters of the curatorial strategy and based on this past performance that they can speak for the future of the online experience, and that this level of curation is about being a leader and creating a following (Rosenbaum, 2014 : 59). This hierarchical arrangement is echoed very strongly in O'Neill's examination of the celebrity curator (2012 : 53) and illustrated further in how art curators' personal practice and opinion can be given special privilege within the art world (Thea, 2009). It also reinforces Balzer's contention that the use of the term curator is bound up with the need to have a commanding "authorship and grand narratives" (2014 : 8).

Liu's theory of social curation incorporates a map of seven forms of online curator and likens them to professional roles that are recognisable to most (Fig. 3-1), further extending the construct of the curator: the archivist, the librarian, the preservationalist, the editor, the story maker, the exhibitor and the docent (2012 : 33). This mirrors the numerous definitions encountered by Graham and Cook (2010) and reflects how the curator is a "multifaceted construct" (Liu, 2012 : 34). Liu, however, has used this construct to identify the forms of curating rather than leaving the behaviour loosely defined and nebulous. She furthers this by mapping the behaviour of these forms of curators and how they interact with each other – a pictorial manifestation of social curation (2012 : 46). This helps to clarify the problem of the shifting definition of the curator as it allows differing types of curators to work in tandem. One form of curator that is left out of Liu's schema is that of the curator/creator or curator/artist. Rosenbaum highlights the role of the online curator as "maker", asserting that "curation is the act of creating something new, coherent and meaningful out of an abundance of related information and ideas" (2014 : 59). However, this implies more of the behaviours

of remix than creation, focusing on the action of synthesis rather than generation of content, which is a more traditional curatorial form of practice. It is O'Neill that is particularly concerned with the marrying of these in what he sees as another form of creative practice:

> …the curator has moved from being a caretaker of collections … and arbiter of taste – to an independently motivated practitioner. (2012 : 1)

Although O'Neill is stating this in reference to the development of the curator since the 1980s, specifically in the discipline of art curation, it could equally apply to the bifurcation of the term curator itself: diverging from a profession within a cultural institution to the advent of the citizen curator. In the art world O'Neill tracks the emergence of the curator from within the "collections out of sight" into the veritable spotlight (ibid : 9). The curator moves from being "seen as a wan librarian type, cataloguing objects in backrooms, becom[ing] a mouthpiece for institutions, artists and their ideas" (Balzer, 2014 : 60). This development of the figure of the curator and the practice of curating seems to have laid the foundations for an expanded view of the terms. The more demystified the curator and their work became, the more the public could understand and adopt the terminology.
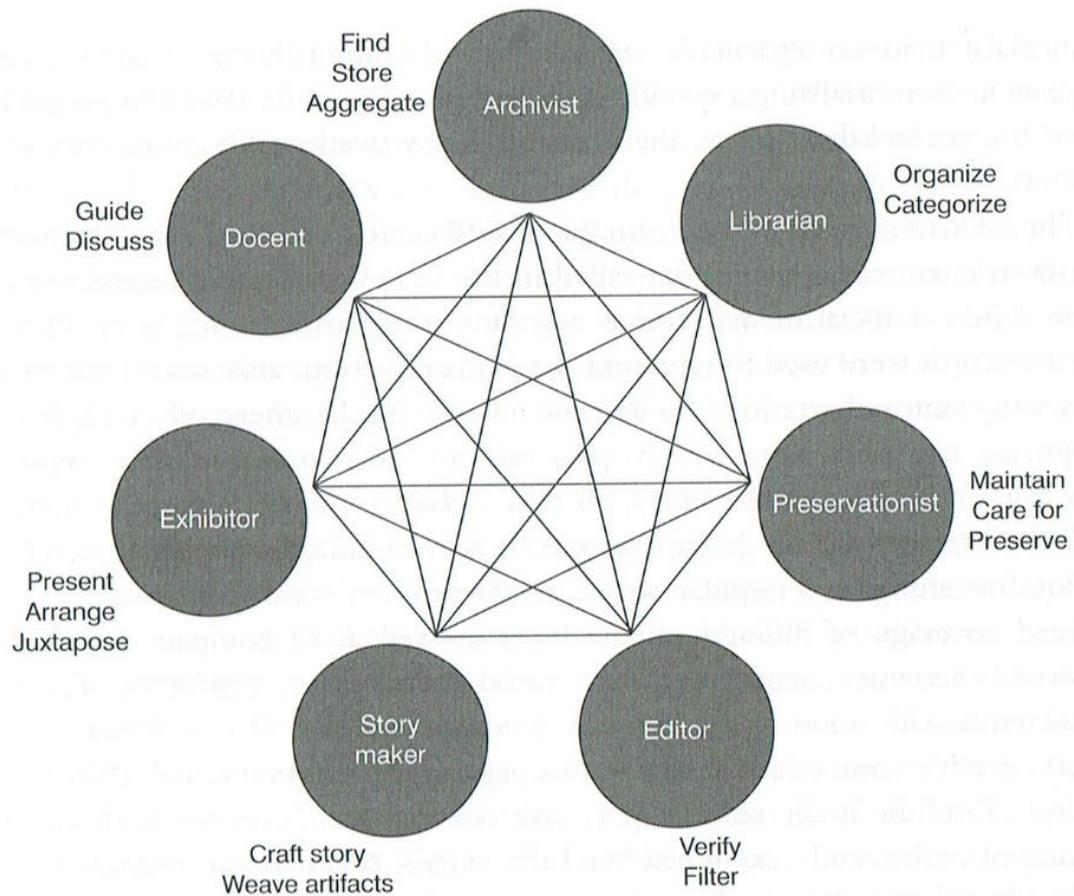
Figure 3-1 Liu's seven forms of social curation (2012 : 59)

Even if there has been a movement away from the museum as an arbitrator of good taste, the concept of "curators as legitimators of artistic practice" (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 254) is still present in the discussions surrounding curation. This is a sentiment echoed by Rinehart and Ippolito who see the need for curators to speak with "rigor, authority, and even linguistic specificity" (2014 : 233). In regard to the creator/curator divide with artists, online content creators and memory or history-making, a curator occupying the role of both creator and legitimator is a difficult one, particularly with regards to the democratic concept of online exploits and the self-promotion activities that may occur. The model of audience as curator (ibid : 269) could be viewed as a foil to this perceived conflict of interest. Whilst the implementation of this concept may be problematic when dealing with physical exhibition space, it is something that appears at the heart of many online curation projects. These projects can be all-encompassing such as Wikipedia, attempting to place all knowledge online in numerous languages, or it can focus on the resources within a country and its own cultural capital like the BBC *Your Paintings* initiative. *Your Paintings* is a manifestation of what Miekle and Young determine to be "a key characteristic of Web 2.0" (2012 : 112), the act of tagging

to aid in searching and filtering. Wikipedia embodies Pierre Lévy's statement that "No one knows everything, everyone knows something" (ibid : 123), drawing on many editors to combine their knowledge within the online encyclopaedia. Graham and Cook do place "automated and outsourced" (2010 : 269) curation as synonymous, which when framed alongside Rosenbaum and Garde-Hansen et al. is challenging, as in the former works these are seen as computational rather than human terms. Both of these works outline that the computer does not stand in for the human actor in these situations, but can be acknowledged as a collaborator. It highlights the upkeep required for both physical and digital objects, that these online repositories are "vulnerable to limited duration and decay, and in need of constant maintenance" (Parikka, 2013 : 121). There is an acceptance of the digital and online becoming a fundamental building block of curatorial practice, even if it is just in a research or development stage: "blogging, linking, and bookmarks are the raw starting materials of 'selection'" (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 271). This acceptance of the online as a shaper of curatorial practice has the suggestion that the multitudinous curatorial acts being generated at all times online have a tangential effect on the more traditional or physically manifested exhibitionary space. It gives a whole new meaning to the idea of Garde-Hansen's "democratic turn" (2009 : 45). As Parikka asserts, these activities on the Web mean cultural institutions must "acknowledge that a huge amount of cultural heritage work now takes place in amateur and other non-traditional platforms on the Internet" (2013 : 122).

Citizen curators collaborating online draw a distinction between what the curator has meant in the institutional sense and what it has come to mean now. The curator has moved from being a singular expert working alone in a collection or archive to one curator amongst an exponential number of peers working in tandem to curate a collection, body of information or even an event. Gane and Beer draw on Derrida's evocation of ancient Greece when "public (state) records were sited in privileged locations that were governed by a select few, today the reverse is increasingly true" (2008 : 73), in taking a previously enclaved object and placing it in the public domain. Parikka frames this in relation to technological advancements: "Modes of accessing and storing data have changed from centrally governed and walled spaces to distributed and software-based" (2013 : 114). As mentioned above in relation to O'Neill and Graham and Cook, it is the art world that has been most open and experimental in this collective approach. Some artist groups have placed the possible collaborative nature of curation at the centre of their approach: advocating for practitioners to not only "Do It With Others" as opposed to "Do It Yourself" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 120-121) but to also "Curate with Others" (Garrett, 2012). Miekle and Young draw on Shirky to position

tagging, as seen above in the BBC's *Your Paintings*, as a kind of "bottom-up collaborative organization" that is intrinsically social and "creates a connection between the users" (2012 : 113) as well as the digital objects involved. Rinehart and Ippolito embrace the issues surrounding the reliability of work carried out by the crowd during such projects, calling them "unreliable archivists" (2014 : 169). In a world in which the sheer amount of information and its maintenance seems beyond the capabilities of museums and other institutions, their belief is that amateur intervention is better than none at all or "a distorted mirror on the past [is] better than none at all" (ibid : 164), asserting that these unreliable archivists should form the "keystone species of the digital ecology" (ibid : 184). The move towards mass collaboration over great distances or even time plays into Fuchs' assertion that such collaboration is almost inevitable: "Humans are essentially social and societal beings. They need to collaborate in order to exist." (2013 : 265). This need to engage with each other and the world around them is now manifesting itself more on the Web, first through the read-write Web of blogs and now in the increasingly multimedia and social platforms of the current Web. A distinction between the Web dominated by blogs and the current Web has been identified by Tremayne as a shift in focus. While blogs or the life writing discussed by Garde-Hansen et al. is self-reflective and inward looking, the more social Web has made people's articulations online more "outwardly focused" (Tremayne, 2007 : x) towards engaging with others and creating conversational interactions. The citizen curator evokes Leary's ideas of the "cyberperson", "cybernetic person", "cybernaut" or "cyberpunk", referring to the "personalization (and thus the popularization) of knowledge-information technology, to innovative thinking on the part of the individual" (1994 : 67). It is "the active, interventionist and open-ended collective building of archives [that] is a growing reality" (Appadurai, 2003 : 17).

The concept of online users curating even if they are not aware of it expands the scope of the term further. Rosenbaum in particular views online curation as including all users of the Web, even those unaware of their own actions, engaging in "accidental curation" (2011a : 202). Drawing on Lasica's "random acts of journalism" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 55), these random acts of curation are no less valid than their more deliberate contemporaries and can still add to the depth of overall understanding of a subject, person or event collectively. This unknowing curation lies at odds with Liu's assertion that "curation is an active and intentional process" (2012 : 31) as curation expands to include the tacit and consequential actions of online users. As a collective effort this curation has manifested itself on sites such as Amazon, where "collaborative filtering" based on customers' browsing and purchasing patterns

generates a curated body of associations and links that helps other customers find new and interesting books or objects (Anderson, 2006 : 223). Facebook and Twitter, like Amazon, then act like "recommendation engines", combining users' own likes with those of their extended circle and creating a "combination of those curatorial roles with new multimedia possibilities" that "is emerging as a new type of media form" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 92). Gane and Beer highlight that the very act of being online leads to the generation of content and that it is the "dynamic space" (2008 :72) of the Web itself that not only facilitates but engenders content creation and sharing. It is the very nature of the network to be generative (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 31) thus never complete. The social nature of the Web means it is forever made and remade, added to, taken away from or remixed by the online citizenry, and that to participate online is to curate. In such a frenetic environment, there is the need for those operating within it to also remain open to change, and Rinehart and Ippolito view the ability for curators to change in this new landscape as critical to them remaining relevant, to become "futurists" and "experts at embracing and managing change in addition to fixity" (2014 : 233). In this way curators are called upon to hold two contradictory states, which from the previous definitions suggested is not novel, needing them to be both open to change but also fixed figures within the landscape. Such a vision requires them to be totemic in the cultural landscape, but not so rigid as to be unaccepting of change. It is this requirement that demands that different curators fulfil different roles, so that all of these demands can be met.

The concept of the "umbrella model" (Tremayne, 2007 : 244) used in journalism studies can be used as an aid to understand how these newer forms of collaborative curation can be used to complement the more traditional institution-based curation in museums and galleries. The umbrella model is used to describe occasions when journalists and citizen journalists have worked together to benefit from each other's unique perspective. Just as citizen journalism eliminated "the newsroom "no"" (Tremayne, 2007 : 258), opening up the parameters of what could be addressed journalistically, citizen curators can address similar issues within curation. As an example of "history from below" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 8) it allows for new, divergent or marginal narratives and interpretations to be examined and curated in the online space. This stance advocates against what has been termed in journalistic circles by Horrock as "fortress journalism" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 52), where there is an attempt to wall off the more traditional methods and products of journalism from citizen journalists. Similarly cultural institutions who do not engage with the online public and its citizen curators are engaging in 'fortress curation', trying to keep all knowledge or objects 'secure' but much like journalism may well be attempting to guard against the inevitable reorientation of curation

itself. This collaboration between the types of curator is one expounded by Rinehart and Ippolito, as they see the future of curation as a blend of institutional curation and preservation by the public as the "unreliable archivists" (2014 : 233). They view both groups as bringing unique skills and attributes which have a common goal, to preserve and maintain cultural objects into the future. Another aspect of online citizen curation is the ability to harness the power of the crowd. Akin to "open source journalism" (Tremayne, 2007 : 241) open source curation allows for institutions to work with citizen curators to get large amounts of work done that could never be achieved by the paid staff. The BBC's *Your Paintings* is a prime example of the public fulfilling a need, that while worthwhile and valuable, is too large a task to be taken on by the institution's staff unaided. It then serves a dual purpose, optimising the digital archive of paintings held in Britain, while also engendering a feeling of collective endeavour and ownership of that work: "To sample and remix, to annotate and combine – each of these is to actively intervene in the symbolic environment that we inhabit, even if in a tiny way" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 114).

3.4   Reframing the exhibition 'space'

The construct of the museum or gallery as the only place for exhibition has been challenged for a long time (Krauss, 1996). As technology allows for more and more detailed objects to be placed online, a space for display with no geographical or temporal limitation has become a reality: the Web has broken "the tyranny of physical space" (Anderson, 2006 : 163) for the visitor. This problematises many of the traditional notions of exhibition and commodity that have informed much of the discussions surrounding the value and place of museums and galleries in the world. It is informed by ideas, such as Appadurai's, in which culture is less linked to the physical spaces containing exhibitions or Bourdieu's concept of "habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions)" and more about embracing the multitude of physically disparate audiences looking for representation in these spaces (1996 : 44). The Long Tail does not only apply to cultural media such as music or film (2006 : 147) but also to the collections and archives that are housed (or hidden) in cultural repositories and in private hands all over the world. It is technology and connectivity that are allowing such collections and archives to "be gradually freed of the orbit of the state and its official networks" (Appadurai, 2003 : 17). This freedom also emancipates objects and records from the "socio historical 'lossy compression'" of the museum, in which museums can somewhat arbitrarily select what objects to display and the narratives to expound (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014 : 98). As Graham and Cook outline, not only are New Media artworks dictating their own curation but all the other elements involved in its creation, manifestation, locus and

interactivity. Even when it is termed "post media" (2010 : 5), echoing the concept of a prosthetic memory (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009), these new media artefacts are all interpreted through the lens of "old" or analogue media which is reflected in a larger landscape of media format studies (Parikka, 2013). This reflects how the older language around exhibition, display and interpretation is being used to describe activities which appear divorced from the original applications, an example of how "new media remediates old media" (Parikka, 2013 : 3). There is yet to be a separation defined or a new ontology developed for these digital manifestations and their curation without relying on the forms and methods of more traditional exhibition. Parikka frames the problem differently by focusing on the issues surrounding archiving as a blend of "processes" (ibid : 115) which can manifest as both technical and social. By reorienting the discussion to focus on the "behaviours" rather than on the physical (if any) manifestation of an artefact, it mirrors the emphasis placed upon "practices" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 18) as seen in the formation of digital media.

The idea that the exhibitionary space is one that is now inextricably linked with the larger acts of the curating citizenry appears to be the logical evolution of museums as they continue to become more publicly driven institutions as seen by Bennett: "transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains … into progressively more open and public ones" (2004 : 414). Bennett interprets this as a development in articulations of power but given the advancement of the digital realm towards increasingly public displays of once private acts and objects, this interpretation can be expanded further. Just as Foucault maps the development of prisons (1991) and Bennett the museum, in their panoramic and exhibitionary forms, the particular need to see and be seen is a continuing motif. This has specific implications for the online world elucidated by Rosenbaum in which the very act of being online creates acts and objects of curation and thus methods of viewing and collective surveillance (Bennett, 2004 : 418, Foucault, 1991 : 217). Like a digital Crystal Palace elements of online curation can be both viewed and are viewing.

The theory of the panopticon translates to the online landscape where there is the continuing need to have an encyclopaedic view of the world, which is manifested in the Wikipedia project. In this way Wikipedia mirrors Chun's view on Bush's memex as an "overarching archive of human knowledge – a summation of human knowledge" (2011 : 192). Just like the British Museum and the Smithsonian, it is an attempt to house all knowledge under one 'roof', no longer just textual information like a great library but through a multitude of media and objects. Much of the texts surrounding archives privilege text and now they must be "understood in light of new media technologies" (Gane and Beer, 2008 : 71) which can be

images, 3D environments, sound and at times tactile (haptic response). Parikka articulates this as "moving beyond the primacy of the eye and seeing" (2013 : 21). It is a rupture, though not as literal as Parikka intends, that is traceable here with the expanded view of the exhibition allowing it to encompass new forms of interactive behaviour with cultural objects. In the same way that Foucault (1991) and Bennett (2004 : 415) are also concerned with order, Rosenbaum (2011a : 136) and Garde-Hansen et al. (2009 : 7) echo this need. Making sense of data and creating narratives from the ever-increasing jungle of information is a common thread within these discussions of memory and history-making as well as its organisation and curation. Rinehart and Ippolito question the need for the institution to be separated from the world, like a "world in a bottle, separated from mundane worldly time" with its collections suspended in "a kind of frozen heterotopia" (2014 : 95).

The idea of surveillance also manifests in the Wikipedia project where users' interactions and contributions are logged and, even if they are erased from the current iteration of an article, can still be traced through the stored archives. Drawing on John MacArthur, Bennett's construct of the "society watching over itself" (2004 : 422) is borne out here. Miekle and Young place Foucault's construct of the panopticon under scrutiny, drawing on Deleuze who asserts that as "social organization no longer depends on enclosed institutions, but on dispersed electronic networks and databases, like Wikimedia: 'what is important is no longer a signature or a number but a code: the code is a password'" (2012 : 133). This is further added to by Grusin's concept that rather than for surveillance or control, the online panopticon is utilised most to gather data (ibid, 2012 : 133). Miekle and Young put forward Mattieson's antithesis to the panopticon, the synopticon, "in which the many watch the few (politicians and celebrities for example)" (2012 : 134). This, however, lies in direct opposition to their own concept that all those online have "chosen to make themselves visible to us – or people like us" (ibid, 2012 : 147), thus implying a place for individually crafted synopticons within a larger panopticon.

There is a resonance with Appadurai's viewpoint and a project such as Wikipedia, as he finds Foucault's "panoptical" view of the archive "too dark a vision" and instead sees "all documentation as intervention, and all archiving as part of some collective project" (2003 : 16). Wikipedia has a distinct goal in mind: "a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge" (Wikimedia Foundation, 2009), making the compiling of a large, multi-lingual encyclopaedia an understandable collective objective. Other manifestations of citizen curation that have been alluded to do not have such definitive or articulated goals; neither do they have the possibility of such a wide cultural reach. A

Twitter stream or an Amazon review operates in a demonstrably different way than Wikipedia articles or tagging activity on *Your Paintings*. However the common attribute is that of participation and sharing - an opinion, knowledge, photograph or a quote. They are all shared with the online community and that is not born of the Internet: "the sharing itself is a human characteristic, not a technological one" (Shirky, 2010 : 158). Shirky proposes that these sharing activities can be placed on a spectrum with "public and civic value" at one end and "personal and communal value" at the other (ibid : 175). The public and civic value is deemed to be not only more important but also more difficult to achieve, such as well-written articles on Wikipedia or an informative and unbiased review on Amazon. Personal and communal value requires less oversight to continue but will not address "hard public or civic problems" (ibid : 179). Whilst the manifestations of these curated acts differ wildly in context and application, it is their potential to be reused in an unexpected way that connects them. Put succinctly, "the digital world … has never met a piece of information it didn't like – and couldn't put to work" (Weinberger, 2007 : 119). This resonates with Garde-Hanson et al., Parikka and Appadurai's view of the archive, as something that is constantly remade, remixed or curated by each encounter with an individual, group or event: "Knowledge – its content and organisation – is becoming a social act" (Weinberger, 2007 : 133).

The limited view of the public expounded by Bennett in the early days of the museum reflects how the role of the online collective has been similarly restricted in the past. The "unruliness of the mob" (Bennett, 2004 : 423) was feared in the early days of the British Museum and is reflected in some attitudes towards the digitisation of cultural objects and documents regarding the idea of setting these artefacts 'free' on the Web (Cohen and Rosenzweig, 2005). Rinehart and Ippolito cite the predilection of institutions to become "hamstrung by their own history as centralized repositories" that leaves them incapable of accepting the "purpose of Internet technologies, which is not to hoard information but to share it" (2014 : 79). These concerns about attribution are echoed in Rosenbaum vis-à-vis intellectual property and the problems surrounding copyright and attribution (2011a : 225). The online curation of culturally significant objects and histories alongside other digital artefacts and information is a further development in the exhibitionary complex (Bennett, 2004 : 426). Rather than this complex only containing space for linear, power-driven narratives of superiority or dominance, the online exhibitionary complex allows for multiple dialogues (ibid : 432). It has changed the dynamic of the process in which the audience is no longer the object to be acted upon, either through incorporation into a narrative or as a receptacle of knowledge; they are now actors in their own right. Just as digital memory-making has inverted the process of

history-making and memorialisation (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 8), the democratisation of the exhibitionary complex has removed control from the traditional institutions of power and knowledge seen in Foucault and Bennett's nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Parikka also draws on Foucault in relation to media history and archaeology:

> Power is no longer circulated and reproduced solely through spatial places an institutions – such as the clinic or the prison as Foucault analysed – or practices of language, but takes place in the switches and relays, software and hardware, protocols and circuits of which our technical systems are made. (2013 : 70)

The Web has now replaced the Grand Exhibition, with all-encompassing knowledge gathering and disseminating projects, drawing on "the ambition to render the whole world … subordinate to the controlling vision of the spectator" (Bennett, 2004 : 436). Increasingly in this vision, it is not only the whole world of objects and information, but of the human actors themselves. Through the self-reflexive nature of biography, life writing and social networking the Web has become "the site for a sight: a place both to see and be seen from" (Bennett, 2004 : 436). This applies not only to individuals connecting, sorting and curating on the Web but also traditional institutions which themselves are now increasingly actors within this social curation milieu. Bennett links this to "the development of technologies of vision which rendered the multitude accessible to its own inspection" (ibid : 437).

This liberation of what Appadurai broadly calls the archive, also speaks to how online curators operate within the social imaginary (1996 : 31). They are operating across the five "scapes" which Appadurai identifies as ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes (ibid : 33). Appadurai applies these terms to migrant communities, diaspora or those who are recognised by their movement or that are spread around the world, but as more of the world goes online this delineation becomes less useful. Groups are no longer purely identified by their country of birth, ethnicity or other more traditional grouping, online they are just as likely to form imagined communities with others that are far less formal and are "loosely coordinated" (Shirky, 2010 : 129). These groups can then manifest on any number of social platforms and fora or as a concerted effort to improve knowledge about them on a platform such as Wikipedia. On Wikipedia an editor, through interaction with the larger community, can become part of an ethnoscape, a "landscape of people", in which their ties are based on common areas of interest (Appadurai, 1996 : 33). Their ability to form this ethnoscape is due to the technoscape which allows them to communicate, collaborate and share over "previously impervious boundaries" of geography or politics (ibid : 34). The mediascape is a direct product of their work on Wikipedia, in which there is access to the tools to "produce and disseminate information", with a particular

emphasis on the media which they deem most important or identifiable as belonging to them (ibid : 35). Wikipedia itself embodies the concept of the ideoscape (ibid : 36), with its drive for better representation of every aspect of the world and its emphasis on the democratisation of knowledge.

The traditional paradigm of the exhibition and its constituent objects to be methods of knowledge transfer is particularly useful to the idea of the online exhibitionary space. It plays into the perceived democratisation effect of the Web, allowing for the construction of narratives to be removed from museums and galleries into spaces that are governed by large, cooperating collectives such as Wikipedia (White, 2014 : 17). Appadurai's work speaks to one of the most important attributes of objects in the online digital sphere: the transfer of knowledge and information (1988 : 41). The two forms of knowledge that Appadurai deems to be inherent within an object inform how different curators operate online. One form of knowledge is that of production, which is just as important for digital objects as it is for physical ones. The knowledge to produce, manage and disseminate digital objects and monetise them is the newest production line of the twenty-first century. Appadurai's second form of knowledge, appropriate consumption, is an acquired skill of those operating online and pertains to how successfully an individual can understand or utilise an object. While there may be degrees to how 'well' or successfully people navigate and engage online, the access, utilisation and sharing of digitally consumed objects is a daily pursuit for many. These forms of knowledge consumption are deemed to be "evaluative or ideological" (ibid : 41). Through Wikimedia, and its most prominent project Wikipedia, it is apparent that even when cultural institutions do not place their knowledge or objects online, the public will do it for them. Much like the pirated music sharing explored by Anderson (2006 : 33), if there is a need it will be met with or without institutional sanction: Wikipedians creating articles about historical figures, art movements or objects while also providing their own images and curating their collective knowledge. They act in much the same way as Couldry's bloggers, as 'writer-gatherers' (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 49), drawing in knowledge and digital objects. They "are not waiting for permission to take control of finding and organizing information" (Weinberger, 2007 : 133). Miekle and Young even liken the act of torrenting content, often synonymous with pirated or copied material, as an avenue "for collaborative work and for curation and sharing" being driven by a "cultural" (ibid : 124) incentive rather than a monetary one. It reinforces that archives, taken here to mean all manner of collections, knowledge, objects or data, "are suddenly not only about storage and preserving, but about transmission" (Parikka, 2013 : 123). In this way the Long Tail encourages cultural institutions

to engage with Wikipedia and other online initiatives rather than resist or ignore them. The application of collaboration or the implementation of the Long Tail does not invalidate or usurp the traditional role of the museum or gallery. Just as people want mainstream products, media and knowledge (Anderson, 2006 : 182), they will also desire the more familiar institutional narratives, exhibition forms and curatorial practice. They will, however, now expect more of the special interest and niche knowledge and collections to be made available and accessible: in essence they wish to be enabled to "Help Me Find It" (Anderson, 2006 : 217). Rinehart and Ippolito follow the same logic, explaining that institutional collections should move from "a static, hidden archive into a public playlist remixed by curator and public alike" (2014 : 111).

As Rosenbaum tracks the roots of the online curator, understanding a curator as someone shaping a narrative or body of knowledge, as beginning with blogging (2011a : 133), Garde-Hansen et al. link online publishing of biography and life writing as a "democratic turn" (2009 : 45) in history-making. The personal, social or "self-centred" (ibid : 30) activity implied by the emphasis on the individual online brings the concept of the citizen curator to the fore. An individual is creating not only digital memories and a personal archive of online activity but is also curating and re-curating their own digital objects as well as incorporating others. Rather than use curatorial language, Garde-Hansen et al. frame the Internet in archival terminology: "we all become archivists" (2009 : 168), which Gane and Beer believe to be evidence of "a broader change to the underlying social or cultural structure of the archive, which is becoming increasingly individualized" (2008 : 74). This individualisation can be viewed in two mutually compatible ways: the care and curation of one's own personal archive or the generation of an archive pertaining to a hobby, area of interest or specialised knowledge. This use of archival language over that of object-orientated exhibitionary or museological language is mirrored across many texts and reflects the way in which the Web is often likened to a library or large rewritable book (Lovnik and Tkacz, 2011 : 19). It is these archival terms that often imply a need to preserve digital artefacts in a manner that precludes alteration, to create "the collective archive … an accessible storage chasm embedded in our immediate surroundings" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 188). The concept of all objects, both physical and digital, becoming part of an archive is extended further by all of society as an archive: "We do not live in a society that uses digital archives, we live in an information society that is a digital archive" (Brouwer and Mulder, 2003 : 6). Thus to assume that such an archive can remain unchanging whilst remaining accessible, relevant and readable ignores the perpetual forms of making and remaking that is termed "remix" (Garde-Hansen et al.,

2009 : 190) or in the DIY culture imbedded in media archaeology. By viewing the archive as all encompassing, the pervasive and powerful nature of it can be understood, or as Gane and Beer suggest "that life today is increasingly played out *through* the archive rather than simply stored within it" (2008 : 82, original emphasis).

The democratisation of the digital archive, this democratic turn, opens up avenues of distributed curation as a direct consequence of the addition of social, user-driven archives: "One (wo)man's trash is another's retweet, or a shared link on Facebook – less official, but no less formal" (Parikka, 2013 : 114). This apparent reframing of the archive to encompass social objects, that in the past may rarely have been captured due to their ephemeral nature, changes the nature of memory-making and historical dialogue as established in Garde-Hansen et al. (2009). However these forms of social archive, often dependant on an online platform or software, are remade due to inherent obsolescence and degradation, or as Parikka quotes Røssak, they are "archives in motion" (2013 : 120). This seemingly sporadic or chaotic nature of the online archive is no different from the materialistic one if we look to Appadurai:

> The archive is fundamentally built on the accidents that produce trace. All design, all agency and all intentionalities come from the uses we make of the archive, not the archive itself. (2003 : 15-16)

The application of media archaeology has elements of curation built into the decision process regarding the archive remix: should the old software be emulated, data simply exported or entirely remade in a new format? These sorts of curatorial decisions impact on preservation (viability and readability in the future), accessibility (proprietary software, hardware needs), interpretation (the possible appearance of an older format) and presentation (delivering on expectations) that can be applied to both online resources and physical objects within a cultural institution. Highlighting this again is the assertion that archives in this form are less about preservation and more about transmission (Parikka, 2013 : 123). The implication is that simply retaining the object, including digital ones in some form of solid state, is no longer perceived as fully archiving them. It highlights that in many cases museums and other collecting institutions have had an "overreliance on storage at the expense of access" (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014 : 77). Usability and accessibility and hence curatorial potential define a 'good' archive now. As with Appadurai, Parikka is breaking down the prestige of the physical archive, seeing "the archive itself as aspiration rather than recollection" (Appadurai, 2003 : 16) which shifts the focus from the object to the potential uses. The potential of digitisation is emphasised by Parikka by the assertion that "the world itself becomes a storage space – an archive, a database" (2013 : 159). This reflects Rosenbaum and Liu's sentiment in

which all online actions become both objects and subjects of curation, how the digital has the potential to transpose both the physical and the intangible into objects with curatorial potential. Both of these object constructs open up the discourse to include accidental and coincidental archives and reframe them as "archives of the future" (Parikka, 2013 : 167).

3.5   Conclusion

The aim of this review was to examine what the act of curation currently means, and to define the relationship of the citizen curator in relation to both interpretations of the curator and of exhibition spaces. To understand these questions a broad approach has been taken to the literature examined, from museum and art theory to texts on the organisation of information online. From this examination of the literature three broad themes emerge: the shifting nature of the interpretation, definition and application of the terms surrounding curation; the fundamentally social and participatory nature of curation as a form of online production; and finally the effect of the democratisation or liberation of archives, knowledge and information on the Web. As we have seen both the concept of curation and the curator have no absolute definitions. They are terms that are being appropriated and interpreted by many different groups of people, both professionally and socially online. The terms surrounding curation are seen to be less discipline-dependant and form more generalised forms of "practices" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 18), "behaviours" (Parikka, 2013 : 15), and interactions (Liu, 2012 : 46).

The liberation of the archive, the term that Appadurai uses for all forms of knowledge or information, is a focal point of interaction for citizen curators. It is the large amount of information made available on the Web that demands the input of these individuals. Whether it be through tagging on *Your Paintings* or writing an Amazon review, they are all acts of curation aimed at helping others gain the most from such online resources. This liberation is not only focused on the location of an archive on the Web, but also its ability to be remade, remixed and re-curated continuously. It is the emancipation of previously enclaved objects that has opened up new avenues of both consumption and transmission. The creation of a human-computer relationship that facilitates this has been articulated through these texts. This is born out in the social nature of these remediations and their products are new objects within the archive.

By focusing on the people of the Web, rather than the media they use, Rosenbaum echoes Parikka, who asserts that to understand media history it "means investigating the subject (the spectator, the viewer, the user, the gamer) of media in historical ways" (2013 : 20). In looking

at the role of the citizen curator now, this research places its current iteration into its history. It creates the possibility of accessing online repositories as "the living archive"; the democratisation of curation allows for the archive to no longer be just for "the privilege of elites, intellectuals", as its liberation in the digital world opens it up to everyone (Appadurai, 2003 : 20). Put simply, it is "the invention and spread of public media that enables ordinary citizens, previously locked out, to pool that free time in pursuit of activities they like or care about" (Shirky, 2010 : 27). The social nature of curation that has been outlined here emphasises the nature of the Web at present. The fact that individuals can curate unknowingly, adding layers of meaning or the third order of organisation without explicit awareness, demonstrates how curation is now a dominant force on the Web. The articulation of this social curator as the citizen curator draws on many of the texts here that speak of the development of the citizen journalist, the democratisation of knowledge and the place of the motivated citizen. Carr quotes from Robert Darnton most aptly: "the two main attributes of citizenship, [are] writing and reading" (2010 : 72) - activities that are readily identifiable as those of the citizen curator in their roles as filters, editors, authors, producers or disseminators.

This review has served to disambiguate the concept of curation, the role of the citizen curator and changing ideas around the exhibition space. It works as a guide in the study that follows of curators, both institutional and citizen, who are involved in a range of activities that can all be described as curatorial in light of the literature here.

4   Methodology

4.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods that have been used in this study. It begins by addressing the philosophical approach taken to answer the research questions as well as any issues arising from the methodological position. The methods are then discussed, based around an autoethnographic framework with proposed usage of participant observation, reflective field notes, and semi-structured interviews. An outline is then given for the analysis and self-reflexive study that was employed to interrogate the collected data. Finally, a synopsis of ethical concerns will be addressed, leading to a summation of the overall themes and challenges of the research project.

4.2   Philosophical considerations for research

The use of the term *curation* has proliferated with the advent of Web 2.0, especially in relation to the social aspects of sharing, linking, liking and pinning (Rosenbaum, 2011a). The need to filter and organise the deluge of information is now part of the everyday experience of the Web (Tremayne, 2007 : 261) and even by engaging with social media, individuals are seen as curating their own experiences and those of their friends, family and broader networks online (Liu, 2012). This is partly characterised as a move from *Do it Yourself* (DIY) to *Do it With Others* (DIWO) (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 120-121) or *Do it Together* (DIT) (Baker et al., 2013). This research looks to compare and contrast the institutions and organisations that typically employed the language of curation, such as within GLAM, against the newer manifestations of curation as utilised by individuals and groups online and by some describing their activities. These platforms range from blogs, to the use of sites such as Flickr, and engagement with knowledge aggregation projects as seen in Wikipedia. It is the loci of interaction between GLAM and other such institutions and the individuals that are be described as *citizen curators* that form the focus of this study. It focuses on the creation and development of the new Wikimedia Community Ireland (WCI) as a group of citizen curators, and my own place within that group. In particular, how this new group interacts with, and has established itself in, the institutional landscape in Ireland is of interest. The interactions, through face-to-face events, looking to foster relationships, improve or pool knowledge and to collaborate, have been used to draw out the defining characteristics of the citizen curator.

With this in mind, this study is formed around a social constructivist methodology as it places emphasis on "the active role of individuals in the social construction of reality" (Bryman, 2004 : 18). The work is qualitative in nature as an autoethnographic study. The foregrounding

of inductive qualitative methods here is reflecting the very nature of the practice being examined; as digital and cultural content is curated, remixed and remediated it demonstrates how reality is "in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction" (Bryman, 2004 : 17) by those involved in these acts. The emergent nature of this research and its central questions have guided the choice of social constructivism as the methodology. The rationale for this choice is based on that of Creswell (2013 : 9), outlining the three motifs of the qualitative nature of social constructivism. Firstly, the central question is open-ended - how does the citizen curator relate to the larger spectrum of curation? The nature of the question, placing myself at the centre of the research both as citizen curator and active WCI member, allows for myself and other participants to put forward their own views. Whilst also seeking to fully understand and interpret the context of those participants. It is not necessarily the nature of the work they are undertaking, its perceived value or pertinence, but why they partake in it, in part by engaging in the activities myself. The motivations of both the cultural institution and the individuals that engage as citizen curators are the area of interest to the research question. It is how they frame the work within the broader spectrum that is being examined. Finally, the inductive nature of the research, with the data collected generating the meaning. It takes an iterative form, with the continued work with the groups and my own reflective process continuously fed back into and informing the enquiry.

As outlined, it is the overlapping activity of the citizen curator with cultural institutions that forms the focus of this research. The literature review has demonstrated that such curatorial activity is occurring all over the Web, at all times, drawing on a huge number of source materials, communities and motivations. Thus, to facilitate the examination of the citizen curator this research focuses on my own unique position, as both former museum worker and WCI Deputy Chair, allowing the examination of a sub set of the potentially vast number of citizen curators and their work with cultural organisations. This sort of interaction is relatively new within the cultural sector (Kidd, 2011), with some institutions having varying degrees of engagement online (Kendall, 2013) and some that exist only online (Schweibenz, 2004). To address the developing range of online interaction a set of cases have been identified, each one defined in greater detail in the section below. The cultural ecosystem in which I find myself forms the "bounded system" (Creswell, 1998 : 249), in particular my interaction with citizen curators and cultural institutions physically and digitally. The bounding is defined by the interactions of myself as an active citizen curator and through my activities in WCI but also by its geographic context. As I am based in Ireland, specifically Dublin, the entirety of the research is set within the locality of Ireland, both physically and

culturally. The matrix identified here draws on three sources, taking in elements of the framework developed by Yin (2003: 83): autoethnographic study focused on self-reflexive and critical examination, participant-observation, and semi-structured long form interviews. Finally, through the drawing together of these sources through crystallisation (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 963) and analysed through the lens of the autoethnographic process and analysis, the identifying traits and characteristics of the citizen curator emerge. Thus, we attempt "to overcome the traditional distinction between what one *says* (discourse) and what one *does* (practice)" (Hall, 2001 : 72).

4.3   Methodological issues

My own immersion, as part of an autoethnographic study, happens on two levels within this research: as first-hand experience of citizen curator behaviour; and then through direct involvement in the Irish museum and cultural sector communities (Mason, 2013 : 84). To fully understand the behaviour and mechanisms behind acts of curation that will inform the emergent concept, I engaged with both those working within the cultural organisations I have access to, and with citizen curators personally. This included becoming an editor and active member of the WCI, participating in an article writing challenge on Wikipedia (100wikidays), and interacting with cultural institutions through my professional network of contacts. This engagement was chosen to reflect the DIY and DITWO ethic of the work being studied by engaging reflexively in the forms of curation being undertaken whilst also emphasising my role as an "active learner" rather than an "expert" (Creswell, 1998 : 18). In this way the research will encompass the "practitioner's eye-view" (Molloy, 2014 : 7), from both my own perspective, and that of others. As a method, it has also drawn on the work of Gauntlett (2015), who has tracked the shift in media studies from studying a phenomenon through observation to a more active and creative participation allowing for critical and informed analysis. In particular it is the move from the emphasis on the view of the expert, and to instead explore the "everyday meanings" of the public (ibid : 19). Gauntlett looks to William Morris for inspiration in this field of creative study, which shares much with autoethnographic techniques, as "Morris felt you had to make things to understand them fully" (ibid : 47). It is this immersion and application of myself to the work of the citizen curator that draws on this idea of experiential knowledge discovery, placing equal weight on the experience of making and writing about that creativity to craft "visionary accounts" (ibid).

These activities are complemented by my own experiences within the heritage sector in Ireland. Having worked in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) for five years and being an active member of the Irish Museums Association (IMA), the research practice relied on

my existing network of contacts within the community to create opportunities of engagement and interaction as I am an "institutional insider" (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014 : 76). In relation to the work I undertook to foster contributions to Wikipedia, having this network means that some of the reluctance or hesitancy that is sometimes encountered within studies is mediated to a degree. This form of interaction borrows from ethnographic methods that have informed many studies into online behaviours. It allows for some of these problems to be "foreshadowed" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 : 21) and accounted for at the beginning of the research, allowing for the fact that such research is often "replete with the unexpected" (ibid : 20). Knowledge of the existing projects and outreach interests of the wider cultural community in Ireland can allow the research to be better informed of its place in the larger landscape.

4.4   The autoethnographic study

Autoethnographic study is a method that can employ a number of facets as outlined by Adams et al. (2015 : 1):

- Uses a researcher's personal experiences to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.

- Acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others.

- Uses deep and careful self-reflection to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.

An autoethnography is "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis, 2004 : xix). In this way I am providing an account of the citizen curator from an "insider's perspective" which can detail the "practices, meanings, and interpretations" of this particular cultural phenomenon i.e., the citizen curator (Adams et al., 2015 : 31). As the methodological framework is social constructivism, the choice of an autoethnographic method is based on my own embedded position with the community of citizen curators at the centre of the study, and that "lived experience is socially constructed" (Denzin, 2014 : 41), including my own. In choosing an autoethnographic method I initiated a dialogue with a group whose behaviour is the focus of the study, and the most direct route is "to ask them what it is they think they're doing, and then listen when they respond" (Senft, 2008 : 12).

As the research questions focus on the current usage of the term curation and how the actions of those online can be interpreted through the language of citizen curation, the

methods used had to allow for the capturing of data that reflects that contemporaneous nature. The concept of the citizen curator draws on that of the citizen scientist as well as the citizen journalist, the development of which was built on the analysis of case studies (Bentley et al., 2007). It is this building of a profile of the citizen curator using an already established one, that informed the decision to utilise WCI as a loose form of case study, within the framework of an autoethnography, as a "strength of theory building from cases is its likelihood of generating a novel idea" (Eisenhardt, 1989 : 546). This is in large part due to how case studies allow for the generation, rather than construction, of data, much like ethnographic studies in general. It is this focus on the how and why of curation and citizen curation that led to the choice of an autoethnographic case study as an employed method (Rowley, 2002 : 17). Within autoethnography, the concept of the case study or "cross-case analysis" is inbuilt into the method and means "paying more attention to the process being studied than to the persons whose lives are embedded in the processes" (Denzin, 2014 : 31). As with all ethnographies, there is a locus or loci that form the field of study, which could also be described as being the case study as specific to the Irish context. The case studies and examples offered by me and the interviewees are all situated within the context of Ireland as both a physical and cultural space.

As suggested above, I continue to occupy a unique place with the interwoven Irish landscape of institutional and citizen curation. My work within one of the oldest cultural institutions in Ireland (the NMI) as a documentation assistant for five years, as well as my increased exposure to the international Wikimedia community through WCI, means that I draw on experiences that are not available to many. As I had a keen interest in museums, I volunteered within the Natural History Museum during the final year of my undergraduate degree. This was partly motivated by my chosen thesis topic, which studied the role of graphic design in the Irish museum context. The Natural History Museum is a part of the NMI, and as a volunteer I contributed to an Excel catalogue of the museum's dry mollusc collection. I took up a position within the NMI immediately after graduating from my undergraduate degree. I applied for a position as a documentation assistant within the decorative arts collection of the NMI, but as I had volunteered natural history collections, I was offered a position within the Natural History Museum. As the oldest part of the NMI, the Natural History Museum holds the earliest elements of the NMI's collections as well as occupying the oldest museum building on Merrion Square. At the time of my employment in 2008, it was intended that this building would be fully refurbished and extended to provide additional facilities such as a lift, a temporary exhibition space, a café, and an enlarged shop. A team of four documentation

assistants were employed to undertake the cataloguing of the entire contents of the Natural History Museum to facilitate the "decant" of the building. It was envisioned that all of the collections would be removed from the Museum to allow for the refurbishment and extension of the museum. The building was closed to the public at the time, as in 2007 a staircase had collapsed, which raised concerns about the condition of the Museum and further accelerated plans to refurbish it. However, in late 2008 the allocated €15 million for the work was withdrawn by the Irish government owing to the unfolding financial crisis.

By early 2009, it was confirmed that the Natural History Museum was not going to undergo the full refurbishment originally planned, but other funding was made available to the NMI in relation to the documentation of its collections. The Comptroller and Auditor General of Ireland had identified the lack of a comprehensive catalogue of the material heritage of Ireland within the care of the NMI to be a failure on the Museum's behalf (Purcell, 2008). To remedy this, the NMI was given funding to employ ten documentation assistants over a period of five years to create the first complete, digital catalogue of the contents of three of the four sites of the NMI. I was successful to applying for one of the positions within the Natural History Museum, and stayed in that position until taking up this doctoral study in 2013. Over those five years, I worked initially within the exhibition and storage spaces of the Natural History Museum and then moved to the offsite collections store in a former barracks building located in Beggars Bush, Dublin. The job entailed working with objects and related documentation dating as far back as the 1790s. The objects themselves ranged from taxidermy to specimens in alcohol, from pinned insects to geological specimens. There were many parts of the collection which had not been worked on for a number of years. The cataloguing work was varied at times, and entailed continuous liaison and consultation with the curatorial staff. This was not only to navigate the objects, but also to better understand the makeup of the collections at hand, and the relevant documentation. Owing to the condition of some of the collections, the conservation staff as well as those engaged in pest management both held workshops for the documentation assistants and instructed us in how to care for the collections as we worked with them. I was also part of the team that prepared the Natural History Museum for its reopening in 2010 after a much more modest refurbishment.

During this time, I became an active member of the Irish Museum Association of Ireland (IMA). This is a professional body for museum professionals from across the island of Ireland. My involvement began with membership and attendance at events, and developed into presenting papers at annual conferences and participation in workshops. I then went on

to serve as the reviews editor for the IMA's journal, *Museum Ireland*, for four years from 2010 to 2014. I greatly enjoyed my membership of the IMA, and it was part of the motivation to undertake a part time Masters with the Department of Museum Studies in the University of Leicester from 2009 to 2011.

My experience is further expanded by my links to the activities of Wikimedia UK and the Wikimedia Foundation, both professionally and personally, as I have become more familiar with the community involved with these organisations. The purpose of choosing autoethnography over other research methods is to provide a "thick description" of what it means to be a citizen curator in Ireland (Ellis et al., 2011). In employing this method, I was able to draw on multiple sources, such as interviews and field notes, to generate a better and fuller understanding of the cultural experience at hand. The process involved looking inward to my own identity, thoughts, and experiences, whilst also looking outward to my network of communities and relationships (Adams et al., 2015 : 46).

WCI is a newly formed User Group, formally recognised by the Wikimedia Foundation. The formation of the group and my participation in it is a direct result of my research project. In April 2014, the first "editathon" was held in Ireland. An editathon is an event where new editors are guided through the process of beginning to edit and contribute to Wikipedia. This event was facilitated by Wikimedia UK and was held by 1014 Retold, a group marking a thousand years since the Battle of Clontarf (2014). At this meeting, a group emerged that had an interest in continuing to develop Wikimedia activities in Ireland, marking the beginning of WCI. This has led to other events being organised, Ireland's first participation in the international photograph competition *Wiki Loves Monuments*, and the group's growing participation in Ireland's Open Knowledge and Creative Commons licensing movement. As an active member within this small group since its beginning, I have been able to provide a unique perspective on this development within the Irish cultural landscape. In my capacity as researcher, editor, and WCI member, new and unexpected opportunities to engage with citizen curators have presented themselves in an unfolding manner over the course of my research. These include scholarships to attend and participate in international conferences and other events, such as the international conferences Wikimania and GLAM-WIKI, which were a direct result of my unique position both as a researcher and a Wikipedian. It is this proverbial rolling up the sleeves, and engaging directly with the people and communities in question, that allows me to draw out a rich autoethnography, informed by Gauntlett's creative media studies: "if you have hands-on experience of making things about, or

connected with, whatever it is that you are interested in then – for one thing – the discussing and writing is more grounded and of higher quality" (2015 : 65).

My experience within the NMI gives me the ability to reflect on the different aspects of what could be deemed to be the 'traditional' brick and mortar museum, which has very limited online engagement with the public. As the most commonly understood definition of curation generally derives from museological practice, a museum with a long history and tradition of physical, collections-based curation would represent the older uses of curatorial terms. Largely forming out of antiquarian or personal collections in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these institutions have long-established narratives and object discourses. Many of the larger encyclopaedic state institutions have only had these didactic narratives challenged in recent years with the continuing demands of the "reflexive museum", one that accounts for and responds to the interpretation of exhibitions by its publics (Barrett, 2011 : 170). That reflexivity is now heightened as the push for collections' digitisation continues. As a museum that is 150 years old, the NMI fits with the criteria of a traditional museum. It has collections spanning areas from natural history, archaeology and folklife to military history, spread over numerous sites. The NMI is currently a semi-state body, which means that it has a board of directors but is staffed by public servants. Its status as the primary holder of Ireland's material heritage is enshrined in legislation (National Museum of Ireland, 2014). As with many institutions of this type, the NMI has begun to engage with social media through Facebook and Twitter, although this would appear to be on an ad hoc basis as there is no mention of social media within its statement of strategy (National Museum of Ireland, 2008, 2010). The NMI has also been engaged in a project to catalogue the entirety of its collections (Purcell, 2008) with the ultimate goal of allowing fully digital, online access akin to similarly sized institutions such as the V&A in London (Johnson, 2013). The NMI is an exemplar of an older, collections- and site-based museum that is now facing the possibility of forging an equally developed online presence. To this end, the staff that are engaging with the digital iteration of the museum and how their work is characterised will be fundamental to how curation is interpreted within the NMI. Some of the staff of the Museum began to engage with WCI, in events and meetings initiated by me as a member of WCI, and through more informal contact I still maintain with former colleagues. Within the schema of an autoethnography, the NMI is central to my experience of institutional or professional curation. My own links with the Museum and the IMA aid in mitigating the issues surrounding access to the "field", in this case the GLAM community, which can often be a stumbling block in ethnographic research (Adams et al., 2015 : 50-51).

As an autoethnographer I have access to cases which represent a range of cultural institutions that will aid in broadening the utility and applicability of the identified spectrum of curation and individual citizen curators (Eisenhardt, 1989 : 537). The utility in having contact to such a range of cases is in the ability to study, find, and identify the broad similarities and differences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 : 33) between attitudes, interpretation and application of curation and towards citizen curators between the varying Irish institutions and groups. Thus it is not the collections or specific historical interests of the organisations that are of interest, or as Stake states "[t]he case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else" (1994 : 237). It has allowed for the generation of an overarching understanding of curation as it is being applied contemporaneously and facilitates an understanding of the relationship between cultural institutions and the public as citizen curators. This iterative process drew on aspects of grounded theory, inherent in autoethnographic study, in which the construct of the citizen curator has been discovered rather than verified (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000 : 15).

4.5   Data collection methods

4.5.1   Participant observation and field notes

As many of the studies that have looked into online behaviour have been informed by ethnographic practice (Hine, 2000, Kozinets, 2010, Miller and Slater, 2000), elements have been drawn in to better inform this methodology. In particular it is what Miller and Slater refer to as "our sense of ourselves in the production of this work" (2000 : 9) that is pertinent here. As outlined above, such awareness is required when assessing why or how choices are made (ibid : 21-23). Learning and working alongside the other participants at events and workshops, especially during the earlier stages as I became better acquainted with Wikipedia and other platforms, have allowed for a better understanding of some of the challenges and experiences of the members of the working group. In doing so it "provides a symmetry" (Hine, 2000 : 10), as there is a parity between my own learning experience and that of the fellow participants. Whilst my own experience is by definition unique, the self-reflexivity allowed by my own engagement created space for that dialectic between the observed group, through taking notes, and my own experience through field notes (Emerson et al., 2001 : 361). Drawing on Kawulich (2005), varying forms of data were collected both by me and other WCI volunteers at physical and virtual outreach events, in particular in relation to WLM, such as:

- Number of attendees, noting age range and gender ratio.

- Description of the activities, including those not directly associated with the objective of the event.

In my capacity as a member of the WCI I have served as both participant and facilitator of workshops, editathons and other events that we have been involved with since the group's inception. Being embedded within this context I have been afforded unique opportunities to witness and record these novel events within the Irish cultural landscape. Of particular interest is the language used by the members of the groups before, during, and after these events. How they describe their own interaction with Wikipedia and other platforms, as well as the concerns they raise or the priorities they identify, all inform the analysis of the groups work within the online manifestation of curation. It is this interest in "discursive constructions of the social or self" (Mason, 2013 : 63) that reiterates this study as social constructivist. Being a participant in the various settings will allow for unsolicited or "'naturally occurring' oral accounts" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 : 99) by virtue of engaging and working with groups through workshops, seminars etc. Their actions as individual citizen curators and the way in which they frame those actions have been central to the question at hand. In integrating self-study into the observational work, I can account for and have explored my own subjectivity. This subjectivity may include my own comfort at using new technologies or software platforms, my unfamiliarity with the discipline of the group I am working with, or how I am readily identifiable as an outsider to the relatively small group of participants involved. It is in these similarities and differences between me as researcher and "them" as the observed group that has informed part of the self-study and been pivotal in understanding my own reflections through notes and reflective work (Mason, 2013 : 92). This inclusion of my "own activities, circumstances, and emotional responses" (Emerson et al., 1995 : 11) has been central to fully elucidating and understanding the events that are being studied.

These events that I attended, organised, or facilitated as part of the WCI will be contrasted against those that I will attend as a more passive participant-observer. These include sessions and workshops at Wikimedia conferences, where I am positioned as an attendee and thus play a less prominent role within the group at hand. It is the novel nature of the research as its enfolding development means that the data required is "*not available in other forms* or in ways" (Mason, 2013 : 86, original emphasis). Whilst Mason places participant-observation quite firmly within the range of ethnographic method, Alvesson and Sköldberg highlight the post-structuralist and post-modernist slant as "observations in the so-called 'natural context' are powerfully affected by the indeterminate nature of language" (2000 : 193), including the

language of observation. This awareness of language, and its interpretation, must therefore be acknowledged through the researcher's self-reflexive method, striving to be forever aware and never discounting the subjective gaze they are employing.

Within autoethnography, the use of journals, note-taking, and use of a personal archive of writing or belongings has been a key method of generating material for study (Ellis, 2004), and is what Ragan Fox has referred to as "auto-archaeology" (Adams et al., 2015 : 49). These notes ran concurrent to the ones outlined above, and have been specific to the periods of participant observation, but to deepen the overall understanding of what it means to be a citizen curator I extended this to a form of journaling at times. To this end in May 2015 I decided to undertake a Wikipedia article writing challenge, known as 100wikidays. The object of the challenge is to write an article every day for 100 days, and was initiated by a user of Bulgarian Wikipedia, Vassia Atanassova (Ha and Grigas, 2015). The concept behind my taking on the challenge was to deepen my own engagement with very active Wikipedia editing, and to generate more opportunities to participate further with the Wikipedia community at large. This intensive engagement with editing on Wikipedia was to facilitate my own creative practice: "going through the thoughtful, physical process of making something … an individual is given the opportunity to reflect and to make their own thoughts, feelings or experiences manifest and tangible" (Gauntlett, 2013 : 4). Whilst taking part in the challenge, I wrote blog posts about the experience at appropriate intervals, to reflect on my own motivations, feelings, and challenges I faced completing the project, thus my writing can be used as "a method of inquiry" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 960). I deliberately chose to blog rather than exclusively keep private notes due to the open nature of all dialogue on Wikipedia. It is also to capitalise on the possibility of interaction with other Wikipedians or interested parties through this blogging, as it opens up the dialogue, presenting my writing and research "in-process and open to commentary from others" (Senft, 2008 : 22). Through the blog I explored the process of being an active citizen curator, by exploring the "aesthetic moments" of the habits and workflow of this writing endeavour (Adams et al., 2015 : 68). This idea of "open" field notes is a response to social media, and the ability to share photos, text, or other media, rather than maintaining notes as a reserved or closed off endeavour (Wang, 2012). In part the blog opened up my writing and reflective process, which served to "evoke new questions about the self and the subject" as well as "demystify the research/writing process" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 965). In addition to that, the blog provided a "view from ground level", which all autoethnographies strive to do (Adams et al., 2015 : 22). The blog has served primarily to host the field notes related to

the challenge, as the ethical implications of using it to write notes relating to others opens up ethical issues. For this reason, any reflections that I was not prepared to share publicly due to privacy issues have been recorded within the main body of my offline notes. Supplemental to my own notes and blogging, there is also the ability to reflect back on my relevant comments and interactions on Wikipedia talk pages, Facebook groups, and Twitter feed. All of these fed into both my self-reflective work and the corpus used in the document analysis in the study.

4.5.2   Interviews

As an emphasis of this study is how curators interpret their own work, the contribution and collaboration with others, as well as curation as defined and practiced in the organisations at hand, the choice to use interviews as a data collection method was organic. Twelve interviewees were selected, six who engage in curation as part of their professional work, and six citizen curators. The sampling has been contingent on having equal representation from those who work within cultural institutions and citizen curators. From the professional curators, there was a representative from one of each of the largest National institutions in Ireland - the NMI, National Gallery of Ireland (NGI), and National Library of Ireland (NLI) - as well as other curatorial organisations. With the citizen curators, they were selected to represent a diversity of curatorial participation so that not all voices would come from within the Wikipedia movement. Some of these projects were highly localised or self-directed, with an emphasis placed on the variety of citizen curation that takes place. Given my position within the professional network of Irish GLAM professionals, as the Deputy Chair of WCI, and from my place within the academic discourse around curation in Ireland, I was in a unique place to draw in a cohort of interviewees that could adequately represent contemporary curatorial activity in Ireland. As such, there were some instances when I was able to engage in a form of "opportunistic" (Bryman, 2004 : 333) sampling, where the interviewees presented themselves as the study unfolded. My ability to recruit interviewees was aided by the fact that the interviews have also served the participants allowing them "to engage in the unfolding story of identities, experiences and worlds" and to help in crafting the emerging narrative of the research (Adams et al., 2015 : 34).

The interviews were semi-structured, or as Fernback describes them "open-ended" (2007 : 57), so that relevant topics are covered but that "the emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events" (Bryman, 2004 : 321). By guiding the interview to cover a number of predetermined topics or relevant "areas" (Fernback, 2007 :

57), as well as allowing the interviewee freedom to expand spontaneously, it permitted more definitive comparison between the different interviews.

As the interviews were in long form, ranging in length from 30 to 90 minutes, the number of interviewees was limited to twelve. In narrowing the number to twelve, this allowed for depth rather than breadth in the material, as longer interviews gave space and time for the participants to engage with the subject matter in a deeper manner. As all coding of the resultant interviews was done by hand without any computer aid, the corpus had to remain a manageable size. Software-aided coding was not used in the analysis as the meanings and trends which have been drawn out required many iterative readings and coding of the text over a period of time.

Initial pilot interviews facilitated the development of the questions and informed the subject areas. It was a particular concern that the language of the initial questions should not be too vague or academic, resulting in the need to define terminology or elaborate on the research in such a way that could influence the subsequent answers. A secondary concern was that the questions stimulated a satisfactory amount of interest and response from the interviewees, and opened up conversations rather than inadvertently shutting them down. These initial questions were informed by the participant observation that has been conducted in the early stages of the research, by the "informal interviewing in the field" that occurs as a by-product of the observation (Fontana and Frey, 2005 : 705). As part of the semi-structured framework, the first interviews informed subsequent interviews through the interviewees' feedback, questions or comments that were requested at the interviews' conclusion. A number of preliminary questions were laid out for two different groups of interviewees (Appendix 1), firstly for those working within the cultural institutions and secondly for citizen curators. These were then refined after the first two interviews (Appendix 2), as my own technique evolved and some questions were identified as redundant, repetitive, or unhelpful, with others taking their place. As is the case with semi-structured interviews, these questions formed more of an interview guide rather than a strict outline (Adams, 2010 : 369). The questions were framed so that the interviewees' own opinion or interpretation is foregrounded. How they frame their work within GLAM-sector institutions as well as the personal definitions they may have developed of curation and the role of the curator were of paramount interest. The goal was to capture the interviewees' usage of the terms associated with curation, and how they discussed their relationship with those terms. By using interviews in conjunction with participant observation there was the

possibility to "check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews" (Kawulich, 2005) and then conversely to do these checks.

The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed, rather than relying on note-taking. The reason for that is I am not only interested in "what people say but also in the way that they say it" (Bryman, 2004 : 329). In recording the interviews, the conversations are given space and flow better, as no breaks will be needed to facilitate note-taking so that my own "live attention" could be given to "random elements" (Senft, 2008 : 57) that were generated through the interviews, such as movement, facial expressions or other cues. Due to geographic or scheduling problems, some interviews took place over Internet platforms such as Skype or Google Hangouts, the results of which could also be recorded. This mitigated any delays or scheduling conflicts that would have otherwise impacted on the progress of the data collection. All of the interviewees contacted to participate consented to have the conversations recorded. The resulting material formed the core corpus that is used to examine the meaning of contemporary curation in Chapter 5, and is then compared with the corpus resulting from participant observation and field notes for Chapters 6 and 7.

4.5.3 Data analysis

In light of the social constructivist methodology being practised within this research, and the impact of Foucault's theories on discourse and power upon the literature review (Foucault, 1991), discourse analysis will be used to analyse the materials collected from the various methods outlined above. In particular it is the focus on what Foucault describes as the "verbal" or "performative act" that is of interest here (2002 : 120), as the study is interested in the curatorial act and the act of describing that curation. As we are looking to understand how the citizen curator is understood by the participants, the analysis of the interview corpus was concerned with the representation of the citizen curator; "the emphasis is on the versions of reality propounded by members of the social setting being investigated and on the fashioning of that reality through their renditions of it" (Bryman, 2004 : 170). These specimens can be drawn into the study to "try to pin down their key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world" that is the locus of this study (Peräkylä, 2005 : 870). As Foucault asserts, knowledge is produced through discourse: "it defines and produces the objects of our knowledge" (Hall, 2001 : 72). In particular Foucault was concerned with the relationship between power and knowledge (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002 : 13), and how discourse and discursive practice can be used to articulate a "body of anonymous, historical rules" (Foucault, 2002 : 131), in this case pertaining to the discourses of curation. As we have seen in the literature review, the dialectic

between the production of knowledge and power is a continuing theme within curatorial discourse, where the curator's power comes from their unique position within the museum or gallery (Hooper-Greenhill, 2003 : 168). That position affords them the ability to shape an institution's narratives and those of the objects therein (O'Neill, 2012 : 32). The analysis here, of the terms surrounding curation and the mapping of the citizen curator, examines the changing discourse of democratised power as the term decouples from the institutional setting and is set free on the Web.

All of these elements allow for the development of a profile of the citizen curator, identifying the characteristics of those engaged in the curation, organisation and dissemination of information online. How the participants in the study identify and articulate their attitudes and experiences is of key importance as it will be directly compared with the more institutional communications that have been examined. Here it is the commonalities and differences between the institutional documentation and the personal perspective that will further inform the overall mapping of the citizen curator. It is this tracking of the "themes and patterns" as well as the identification of "coherent categories" (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003 : 2) that will add strength and robustness to the emergent profile of the citizen curator. Thus the citizen curator has appeared "across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of institutional sites within society" (Hall, 2001 : 73). To interrogate and analyse the interview corpus I undertook "open coding" allowing for these "ideas, themes or issues" relating to the study to be identified by close reading and rereading of the interview transcripts (Emerson et al., 1995 : 143). Once this was done more "focused coding" followed to deepen the analysis to the most pertinent elements to the study, allowing for the development of "integrative memos" that bring together "previously separate pieces of data and analytic points" (ibid). As these processes involve writing, and as I was blogging and presenting about the ongoing process, there was an element of CAP or creative analytic practices within the work (Ellis, 2004 :194), using writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 960). As Adams et al. point out, with autoethnography, it is practically "impossible to separate doing autoethnography from writing autoethnography" (2015 : 67). As a method of data gathering and analysis, there is no stark distinction between the two elements of the study, with both continuously informing one another. All of this forms a common output of autoethnographic research, the layered account, "which juxtapose fragments of experience, memories, introspection, research, theory, and other texts" (ibid : 85).

Thus the methods fed into each other in what Eisenhardt refers to as a "strikingly iterative" (1989 : 546) aspect of knowledge construction. It is a form of crystallisation rather than the "rigid, fixed, two dimensional object" of triangulation, "crystals grow, change, and are altered" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 963). In place of the "converging lines of evidence" (Yin, 2012) of triangulation as a form of verification, crystallisation of ethnographic studies "provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic" where "we know there is always more to know" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 963). It further highlights the reflexive nature of the work, where reflection and a conscious consideration of the self within it, can strengthen the end product.

4.5.4   Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations here can be separated into two distinct parts: firstly there is the data that was generated from participant observation, fieldwork and interviews, and secondly the online documentary sources generated concurrently with the events being examined. As this research involves people there is a need to take on board the need for informed consent, anonymity and an awareness of any potential harm. It is an important element in any research design, as many authors attest to (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000, Creswell, 2013, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

In line with the University of Hull's Ethical Guidelines, a standard, context-specific, consent form was developed and was presented to those participating in the interviews (Appendix 3). This ensured that the participants were aware of the ongoing research, my own role within the research, and how the resulting data was to be used. Following the University's guidelines, the participants in interviews were consulted during the analysis or presentation of the data to ensure that they were not being misrepresented and were comfortable with the use of the content. This also aided in ensuring there is no perceived damage to the participant's involvement. In particular those working within the heritage industry needed to be reassured that any contribution they have made will not cause any issues relating to their work. A supplemental "lay summary" (Appendix 4) of my research was provided with the form, which is common in autoethnographies, which outlined who I am, what I was doing, and what the role of the participant is (Adams et al., 2015 : 50). This consultation is also inbuilt into the autoethnographic method, in which those who are featured within the research must be given "space to talk back" and thus respond to the interpretation of their words (Denzin, 2014 : 75). In providing the space for the people involved to speak to interpretation and presentation of their words and actions, there is a greater chance of guarding against conflicts or misunderstandings (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005 : 966). With some of the members of

WCI, and other institutions featured within the research, there was a need to use a form of continuous or "process consent" (Adams et al., 2015 : 57). This means that the notion of consent is not viewed as static, and that it is more "dynamic and ongoing", as relationships develop, time passes, or situations change (ibid). The consequence of which was that a singular consent form may not cover the entire project, and that the idea and implications of consent may need to be revisited with a participant more than once over the course of the research. This did not arise however, and participants were given updates and opportunities to reflect and engage further with the research as it continued.

4.6   Study limitations

As discussed in the previous sections, the scope of this study has been defined both by the geography of Ireland but also in the employment of autoethnographic methods. Whilst the phenomenon of citizen curation can be argued to be a global or universal one to human experience of mediating the physical and digital world, this work is bound by the context in which it has been conducted, namely Ireland. Equally it has been deliberately formed by my own lived and professional experience within GLAM in Ireland and the Wikimedia community both locally and globally. The aim in utilising autoethnographic methods was to embrace that shaping by my hand of this work, but equally it must be acknowledged that it will have limited the study in ways that can be identified but in many ways that I cannot know fully. Whilst the reflexive method draws on the researcher's ability to think critically and deeply about their own place within their work, and the impact they have upon it, no researcher can hope to know themselves that deeply. This work examined curation and curators over a sustained period of time, with numerous sources, as suggested by Ellis to make this methodology as rigorous as possible, however one must acknowledge that "every story is partial and situated" (2004 : 116).

Thus, this work is not only shaped by my choices, connections, and work, but also by all the choices, connections and work that either I did not recognise as pertinent to the research, or that were not available to me due to my positioning within the system being interrogated. This work is defined by its Irish geographical boundaries and cultural specificity, all of which I have attempted to account for and explicate as they arose within the work. Every effort has been made to act in a way that takes into account any positions of power, influence, self, or representation in the work (Sultana, 2007), allowing for the limitations and boundaries of the research to be recognised and sign posted.

4.7   Conclusion

This research is largely informed by autoethnographic methods, utilising crystallisation and iterative analysis to bring into focus overlapping themes and concepts. As detailed above, it was the novel, unfolding nature of the research that has been fundamental in this orientation of the study. It formed a piece of inductive and iterative research, which is not only informed by the experiences of those involved in the groups included in the study, but also by the self-study integral to the autoethnography. The awareness and recording of the self within the research takes on some of the characteristics of the larger research questions involving self-archiving behaviour (Gane and Beer, 2008 : 74) that will further inform the resultant theory. As a body of research that moves from data (autoethnographic sources), experience (participant-observation) and conceptualisation or articulation (interviews) it takes on the characteristics of abductive reasoning (Mason, 2013 : 180-181). In this way the institutions and groups involved in the autoethnographic study form the ontological elements whilst the observation and interviewing form the epistemological ones.

A common facet of the methods employed here is how they have an inherent flexibility when used in an autoethnographic framework. As the observation, interviews and self-study generate documentation, notes and also visual documentation that could feed back into the case studies, this allowed for the research to adapt and react to new opportunities (Eisenhardt, 1989 : 539). As new information came to light within any of the methods outlined above could inform the others, allowing for what Eisenhardt terms a "controlled opportunism" (ibid) which can allow for the very current nature of the topic at hand. In this sense, as a participant autoethnographer, I took on the qualities that have been associated with online curators or bloggers acting as a "writer-gatherer" (Meikle and Young, 2012 : 49). The objective of this methodology was to allow the subsequent study to occupy the space between the individual and the wider community, and which can draw forth that story through "knowing and showing" (Holman Jones, 2005 : 767).

5   Understanding curation now

5.1   Introduction

To fully understand what it means to both work or partake in curation right now, a series of twelve interviews were conducted as part of this research. The methodological reasons for these interviews are to capture the meaning of curation and what it means to be a curator for those currently practising curation within the geographical and cultural context of Ireland. The interviews act as a snapshot of what it meant to curate in Ireland in 2015, particularly focusing on five key areas: how curators define curation ideologically; how curatorial methods have changed and continue to adapt pragmatically; who is a curator; what are the experiences of the citizen curators; and what is the future of curation.

The structure of this chapter will follow these overarching themes. In Chapter 6, there will be an exploration of what these interviewees see as the future of curation, and what it means to exhibit objects in the digital world. The twelve interviewees consisted of six museum or curatorial professionals, and six citizen curators who curate in their spare time.   The participants were drawn from my own pool of professional contacts, as well as those whom I have worked with in relation to WCI. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, disciplines, and perspectives, with all of them coming to and experiencing curation in very different ways. The analysis of the interviews draws out the common themes that emerged from the interview conversations, as well as the differences in opinion between the participants on the areas of interest. To better understand the environment in which these interviewees work in Ireland, the following section introduces the island in a broad sense.

5.2   An overview of the Irish context

Ireland is an island on the outermost Western edges of Europe and the EU. The island of Ireland has a population of almost seven million people, and is the second-most populated island in Europe after the UK. Divided into the Republic of Ireland (known simply as Ireland) and Northern Ireland (NI), the island is a geographically contained area, while encompassing a complex and at times divisive history and cultural context. The official language of Ireland is Irish, but the dominant spoken language is English. However, given its official status, all governmental documentation as well as street signs, other public services and documentation are bilingual.

Much of Irish history is intertwined with its nearest neighbour, the UK, but also has deep, longstanding connections with Scandinavia and Continental Europe, through the Viking and

Norman periods in particular. The history of Ireland is most commonly framed within post-colonial discourses, being England's oldest colony. Gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, and later established as a republic in 1949, Ireland is a relatively young nation state. It has only recently celebrated the centenary of the Easter Rising of 1916, the armed rebellion in Dublin which was the catalyst for independence. These events also saw the division of the island of Ireland, and the creation of NI, the historically more Protestant part of the island with closer cultural ties to Britain. It was the treaty of 1921, brokered between Ireland and the United Kingdom, which created the Irish Free State and sparked a civil war in Ireland between those who supported the treaty and those who opposed it. From the late 1960s onwards, the history of the island has been marked by "the Troubles" in NI, with the sectarian groups on both sides waging a terrorist campaign which primarily manifested in NI, but spilled out into the Irish Republic and mainland UK. Much of the political narrative of Ireland is still informed by the politics of a century ago, with the main ruling parties tracing their roots back to the opposing sides of the civil war. Ireland became a member of the European Economic Community (later the European Union) in 1973. EU membership resulted in Ireland benefitting from funding, not only for trade, infrastructure and education, but also for its cultural institutions (Bourke, 2011 : xxxii). Many larger GLAM-sector institutions have benefitted from direct funding, as well as participating in EU partnerships and cultural initiatives.

All of the oldest national institutions can trace their roots back to pre-independence Ireland. What would become the National Museum, National Library, and National Gallery were all founded by or grew from Royal institutions or were directly founded from London. In the mid to late nineteenth century similar institutions were appearing in other large cities across Britain such as Manchester and Birmingham (Cullen, 2005 : 306). The physical space in which these three institutions still reside is a typical planned colonial cultural quarter in the capital city Dublin. Until 1922 they were all overseen and governed from London (Bourke, 2011 : xxviii). These institutions are also on or near to the original site of the Irish Great Exhibitions of 1853, which were crucial moments in the identification and collection of objects deemed to be of import to the unique aspects of Irish history and culture (Campbell, 2005: 292). These colonial connections are also evident in the oldest educational institutions, such as Trinity College Dublin, St Patrick's College Maynooth, and the National Universities of Dublin, Galway and Cork. While many of these have shed their Royal or colonial titles since independence - the Museum for Science and Art Dublin became the National Museum of Ireland, and Queen's College Galway became the National University of Ireland Galway -

they are still informed and shaped by the colonial context from which they arose. In particular with the NMI, many of the earliest collections are typical of a British museum of the time, housing ethnographic, military, and decorative arts collections which would be comparable to those of the National Museums of Scotland or Wales.

Since 1922, in the new circumstances of the Irish Free State, with very limited resources, staff, and a new national Irish remit, collecting practices within these organisations changed dramatically. Many of the non-native-Irish staff did not want to remain in Dublin after independence and retired as British civil servants, and those who replaced them placed a new emphasis on the collection of objects and materials that were deemed more in keeping with the new independent Ireland. Collections such as the Easter Week collection were formed, as well as projects such as the Irish Folklore Commission (Ó Giollain, 2005 : 237), which were explicitly tasked with collecting, documenting, and preserving Irish culture, built heritage, customs, and language (Crooke, 2000 : 141-147). The NMI has been viewed as a museum which has been through a number of reinventions, to reflect the changing circumstances of Ireland and the wider world beyond (Crooke, 2009 : 301).

In recent years, following on from the Good Friday Agreement which solidified the peace process in NI, and in light of recent centenaries in relation to both the Easter Rising and World War I, there has been an attempt to diversify the narratives that Irish GLAM-sector institutions use. There has been the active use of GLAM as places of dialogue and reconciliation between groups in NI, as well as negotiating the fraught stories of those who fought for Irish independence and those who served in the British forces in both World Wars and their commemoration (Benton and Curtis, 2010 : 45). One example is the *Soldiers and Chiefs* exhibition in the NMI, which looked to examine Ireland's role in warfare from the earliest recorded history, to the present day, encompassing all the diversity within that. The exhibition concluded with a roll of honour for Easter Week 1916, the first known instance of all of those who fought in Dublin and in the battlefields of Europe being named within the same act of commemoration. This was not without controversy however, and speaks to the difficult and fracturing nature of all history. The retelling and collective remembrance of the long and divisive history of Ireland, as well as its place within Europe and the world, is an ongoing journey within GLAM-sector institutions on the island.

The GLAM landscape is a varied and interesting one within the Irish context. With regards to museums and other cultural institutions, a great number of the representative bodies and associations are either all-Ireland in their scope or include both the UK and Ireland. Groups

such as the Irish Museums Association and the Royal Irish Academy are all-Ireland bodies, which strive to represent the entire island of Ireland by recognising the diversity within it. Other specialised associations such as the Geological Curators' Group and the Natural Sciences Collections Association are primarily based in the UK, but cover Ireland and NI within their groups' representational remit. Thus Ireland has some organisations which look to articulate and represent a unique Irish perspective on certain elements of culture and heritage. Simultaneously, in disciplines which have smaller numbers of professionals within Ireland, such as in the sciences, there is a need for that community to tie into the activities of their UK counterparts.

This study does not look to explicitly interrogate the peculiarities and nuances of Irish history and the evolution of cultural institutions in Ireland. This overview is intended to give context and background to some of the attitudes of those interviewed. All of these issues, as well as more localised and cultural specificity subtly inform and shape the work of both curators and their citizen counterparts, as we will now witness.

5.3   The interviewees

As outlined in Chapter 4, in order to gain a deep understanding of curation within a defined cultural and geographically contained space, a set of semi-structured long form interviews were undertaken. The selection of the interviewees was to provide a meaningful and representative snapshot of the differing forms and perspectives of curation as it was in Ireland in 2015. Six of the interviewees engage in curation as part of their professional careers. Represented within these are a number of staff from some of the largest cultural institutions in Ireland: National Museum of Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland, National Library of Ireland, as well as those who engage in curation from an academic standpoint. The six citizen curators were chosen to represent a diverse set of methods, applications, and approaches to curation. These include those engaged with Wikipedia and Wikimedia Community Ireland, but also other projects from Ireland as well as self-directed work.

Nigel Monaghan is the Keeper of Natural History in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), and has worked there as part of the curatorial staff since the early 1980s. I have known Nigel personally since I began my career in museums as a volunteer in 2007, and whilst I worked within the Natural History Museum from 2008 to 2013. We have also worked together as the editorial team for the journal of the IMA, *Museum Ireland*, and on the publication of the *Irish Naturalists' Journal*. The Natural History Museum on Merrion Street, Dublin is the oldest

part of the National Museum of Ireland and the first purpose-built building for that institution.

Pat Cooke was the Director of Kilmainham Gaol, and later the Pearse Museum in Dublin. Both of these institutions are inextricably linked with the Easter Rising of 1916, the subsequent War of Independence, Civil War and the establishment of the Irish State. Kilmainham Gaol was the site of detention and execution of many of the leaders of the Easter Rising, as well as later being used to detain participants in the War of Independence and Civil War. The Pearse Museum is based in the school founded by Patrick Pearse, one of the most famous of the executed leaders of the Easter Rising. Pat is now Director of the Masters in Cultural Policy and Arts Management in University College Dublin. I have known Pat for a number of years, primarily through the IMA, and through the larger museum community in Ireland.

Anne Hodge is the curator of prints and drawings in the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI), a position she has held for fourteen years. Anne has been an active curator of exhibitions wirhin the NGI, as well as working on touring exhibitions. She is also a board member of the IMA, and we have become acquainted over the years through various museum and gallery related events.

Lar Joye is the curator is military history at the NMI site at Collins Barracks. Lar has been involved in numerous exhibitions in recent years which have attempted to address some of the more difficult aspects of Irish military history such as *Soldiers and Chiefs*, and exhibitions on the Irish involvement in World War I. He has worked with WCI to hold two editathons in the Museum in 2014 and 2015, and is interested in working at a more in-depth level with Wikimedia in the future.

Carol Maddock is an exhibition assistant at the National Library of Ireland (NLI), and oversaw the integration of the NLI onto "the Commons" on Flickr. She acted as administrator for that account, as well as overseeing the selection, promotion, and integration of photographs and user-generated information into the Library's catalogue. Carol was also an administrator on the NLI's Twitter and Facebook accounts, generating content and responding to any public engagement.

Shaun O'Boyle is the research coordinator at the Science Gallery, Dublin, where he has worked since 2010. The Science Gallery is one of the newest exhibition institutions in Ireland, a purpose-built space owned by Trinity College Dublin. The Gallery's mandate is to

explore and present scientific research by engaging with artists and researchers. The Gallery has no permanent collection, and rather commissions work in response to exhibition themes. Shaun has experience from a number of roles that he has held in the Gallery, and works with scientists and artists to deliver the exhibition content for the exhibitions. I know Shaun personally through a number of science and other advocacy groups, as well as through the Wikipedia workshops that we have held in the Gallery.

Emma Clarke is a PhD student with the School of Computer Science in Trinity College Dublin. Emma joined WCI in 2014, which is how we met. She works on the digitisation project in Maynooth University, *Letters of 1916*, and has been involved in other digitisation projects. She has experience in the cataloguing, selection, and presentation of digital objects, as well as having a broader interest in applied digital humanities. Her work has brought her into contact with volunteers who work on *Letters of 1916*, both online and through organised events.

Philip Costello is a volunteer transcriber and uploader with the *Letters of 1916* project. The *Letters of 1916* is a digital collection of letters from Ireland, from the year of the Easter Rising. The letters can be digitally donated to the project by archives, collections, or individuals. The letters are scanned, uploaded, and then transcribed by volunteers to create a digital archive of cultural life in Ireland in 1916. As a retiree, Philip became involved in the project as a hobby, and has since dabbled in a number of similar projects such as *Your Paintings*. I was introduced to Philip by Emma as a potential interviewee.

Brenda Malone is a documentation assistant in the NMI, based in Collins Barracks. She has also held a curatorial position in the past, and often fulfils a curatorial role within the military history collections. However it is her personal blog, *The Cricket Bat that Died for Ireland*, which was the motivation for including her within the citizen curator cohort of these interviews. The blog, which she maintains in her spare time, is a presentation of un-exhibited objects held in store in the Museum.

Kate Cunningham was one of the founders of the online museum, the Women's Museum of Ireland (WMI), in 2012. The museum was established in response to the fact that Ireland has no such institution, and to remedy the lack of representation of women's history in Ireland. The voluntary group have had one physical exhibition in Trinity College Dublin, but most of their content is delivered through biographies on their website.

Oliver Moran is an administrator on Wikipedia, and is a member of WCI. Oliver has been part of a group of Irish editors that have been attempting to create an Irish Wikimedia group for a number of years. As an administrator, he holds extra editing privileges on Wikipedia, and is one the more experienced Wikipedians in WCI. He has also been involved in many other campaigns for openness and Creative Commons licencing, at local and national government level in Ireland.

Shannon Eichelberger is one of the founding members of the WCI, and we met at the first Wikipedia workshop that was held in Ireland, in April 2014. We work closely together on many of the WCI's projects, and she has since taken the title of Chairperson of the group. Along with myself and her husband, Eugene, we initiate and lead many of the group's events, workshops, and campaigns.

5.4   Curation now - ideologically

The initial questions were to determine how the participants interpreted or defined curation. The framing of the questions, at the beginning, spurred the interviewees to think about curation in a more ideological or abstract way, perhaps considering what the idea of curation is ideally rather than how it manifests in reality. What emerged from my conversations with these individuals is an inherent tension between the collections-based custodial role of the curator, and the newer audience-focused curatorial strategy, and the attempt to strike a balance between the two. Some, such as Nigel, think that is boils down to "it's the collections stupid", others like Lar are more cognisant that there is an issue with such a singular approach, worrying that a fixation on material objects renders museums obsolete within the modern digital landscape. However, those who would be described as citizen curators, identified the very presence of a physical collection as the main attribute of curation and what necessitates the presence of a curator. Nearly all of these interviewees referred to this as "traditional" or "classical" curation, which demonstrates that they are aware that there are and could be other forms of curation, but that for them curation happened in a cultural institution with material objects. Nigel, Pat, Emma, Kate and Carol all used the term "traditional curation" explicitly, with Carol further noting that this was centred around ideas of "guarding stuff … keeping it safe" which was "a very conservative element" within curation. Some, such as Anne, acknowledged that there was a change occurring in what it means to curate, that it is not simply the care and presentation of objects, but that curation could now mean more.

From what can be gleaned from this idea of "traditional" curation, the interviewees appear to be describing conventional curation. They are aware of professional curators and a professional model of curation, governed by institutions, organisations, educational or professional bodies. They speak to curation as a set of skills and conventions which centre primarily on the care and exhibition of material objects within cultural institutions. Lar sees this as "hugely inward looking, it's about the collections", with staff focused on the material content of the institution. They do acknowledge, like Kate, that "traditional curation is not simply a matter of hanging paintings, and putting things in, y'know, glass boxes", and she identifies the curator as having a level of training which means that she couldn't fully appreciate as she hadn't "studied" curation. This clearly points to curation becoming a set of conventions which one can learn, and whilst they are mysterious to the uninitiated outsider, they are not beyond the interested person's grasp. Anne further reinforces this by reflecting on her own background and becoming a curator, which she describes as not a "conventional route", having studied art rather than art history.

When describing this "traditional" curation many of the citizen curators overtly apologised for this interpretation of curation, as if having such a view was unimaginative or boring. It is perhaps in light of the digital work that they are engaged in through Wikipedia, digitisation initiatives and other projects, that they felt I would expect a more radical exposition on curation. However museum curators, like Nigel, also spoke of this "traditional" curation in the same terms, with the curator as custodian of collections and "physically looking after their welfare." Brenda invoked the root meaning of the word, in stating that fundamentally curation is "about caring for something." Nigel placed this object care as more central to curation than even exhibition or museum planning:

> …management of a museum, or the long-term planning of buildings, and empire and all sorts of other things, and exhibition strategy, and I don't see that so much as a straight curator task … If it's not about the collections, then it's almost extra layers of stuff added on.

This idea that tasks that take you away from collections, take you away from curation of material objects, again reinforces this perceived bond between a physical collection and the work of the curator. In this view of curation, the further away from a collection a curator gets, the more dilute or less curatorial their work becomes. For curators such as Nigel and Brenda, it is the intimate knowledge of a collection, or even just the possibility of engaging with a collection in a deep manner, that defines the central work of a curator. They are afforded the position in which they can become so familiar with a set of objects, so that they are the only people equipped to draw out the obscure, hidden, or latent stories that objects

hold, "I still think that curators have that role of knowing a big expanse of stuff that is largely not that visible, or accessible to other people, and then pulling it together" (Nigel). Carol shares this focus on presenting objects that would ordinarily be away from the public gaze, in her case this digital presentation of objects rarely seen by the public, as the element of curation from which she drew the most enjoyment. This reflects the idea that the curator's role is to make the inaccessible accessible to the public, to make what was once hidden visible (Kaniari, 2014 : 447), in Carol's case even breaking down the barriers of geography.

Shaun breaks down current curation into three different models which are institutionally led: "the museum model, the gallery model, and the science centre model." The museum model is seen here as one that is collections led, and the curatorial process is centred on drawing out exhibitions and programming which exploits the museum's primary source material, the permanent collections. In this schema, in-depth knowledge of a collection is a curatorial strength, as it allows for the collections to reach their full potential. The gallery model can draw on a permanent collection, but also uses outside or specialised curators who are not bound to the institution. Here curators are selected and perhaps brought into a curatorial process based on a theme, thus the collections do not lead the process but facilitate and supplement an exhibitionary goal. Finally, Shaun sees the science centre model as being focused entirely on education and outreach, at the expense of any curatorial process that would bear any resemblance to the museum or gallery models. In this science centre scenario there could be no collections, and exhibitions are more like stage sets created to fulfil an educational role, one that is quite often aimed at children and adolescents as is the case in the Science Gallery. Once again we are confronted with how the collection, present or not, defines curation, and that the lack of a collection is often interpreted as the lack of curation. Kate identified most strongly with the gallery model, as her interests lie in how women's history can be explored through the interpretation of material objects coupled with artistic intervention. She sees a division between what she referred to as "traditional" collections-led museums, and more "editorial" models as found in museums on women's history. She sees that this difference emerges when physical objects are not "literally representative of the story you're trying to tell" which changes the methods of curation. Here Shannon's interpretation of a curator having the skills to gather information and objects with the goal of "presenting them in a cohesive form" would fit in with these other ideas of curation. It is not only being the specialist in a certain area of knowledge, but also knowing how best to use curatorial tools to present the information to the public, in its very diverse forms.

Pat frames curation as mediation and negotiation, placing more emphasis on the development of exhibitions and visitor experiences than care of collections: "It's definitely an intermediary, it's a mediating role". In this sentiment he is strongly echoing that of O'Neill, "curator as mediator" (2012 : 25) as well as the motif of the multifaceted "curator as…" (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 156) which was one of the key reasons for posing the question to the interviewees. He frames curation as an unfolding process between the staff within a museum working on an exhibition, and that the curator acts as the leader. He imbues the role with a civic responsibility, as an intermediary between the exhibition as the "public offering" and the hidden back rooms of an institution through their deep knowledge of the material collections. Within this understanding of curation, the focus is on transfer, the transferring of knowledge through material culture reiterating the work of Appadurai (1988 : 41). Importantly, this transfer can work in both directions, the curator imparting knowledge but also receiving, "the really important bit is that the professional realises that they can learn too." As Nigel frames it, the curator gains knowledge on a collection by virtue of their work and exposure to a body of material, but Shannon reflects that the audience's fresh eyes are needed to ensure that the curator's interpretation of the material is understandable and interesting to the public. She sees providing context as one of the key roles of curation, placing objects and their histories into wider contexts to improve or enhance public understanding. Here she echoes the idea of the curator speaking with "rigour, authority" as stated by Rinehart and Ippolito (2014: 233). Anne takes the concept of context further, being cognisant that there are limits on how much information a person can take in, as well as being aware of where the information will be accessed: "labels, text beside artworks, but also, of course we provide information for the online catalogue." Pat sees curators as "the holders of knowledge, more than they are the bearers of authority." This subtlety is one that lies at odds with how some of the other interviewees view curation as the articulation of authority and the curator as a subject authority, eschewing the idea of a curator holding "an Oz-like authority that speaks in a single voice with unshakeable confidence" (Weinberger, 2007 : 153). He further elaborates on this point, stating that the so-called "traditional" view of curation and the curator saw that authority as derived from specific subject knowledge, especially where curatorship is bound up in more academic forms of authority. Here he is calling for curators to move beyond this "minimalist, conservative stance" to become the "mediators of meaning, or the projection of knowledge." Pat believes that by working on the elements of communication with the public, in strengthening and validating that relationship, that the curator and the institution become more powerful and more authoritative.

For many of the interviewees, such as Philip, this authority is bound up in responsibility. These curators are charged with caring for a collection, so that if anything goes wrong, they are answerable for that too. Quite literally, the authority of the curator means that the "buck stops with them", and while there is much power in the position, they remain accountable to the public. Brenda is quite succinct in drawing together this idea of a crucial sense of responsibility whilst inhabiting the role of the curator:

> …being responsible and accountable, and making sure that your information is straight, and that when you do something it's genuinely for the best for the object, and keeping in mind what previous decisions were made, and what future consequences will be.

Both Carol and Brenda frame this accountability as extending far into the future, both aware that they are charged with caring for a collection for a relatively short period of time in comparison to the age of the objects. Brenda in particular was aware of the impact her work can have on the long-term health and welfare of a collection, focusing on the fact that there is an obligation to future staff as well: "Understanding that … people were in this job before you, and people will come in this job after you." As Pat comments, "there's a responsibility, you know, the accuracy and authenticity of knowledge" and that ultimately it is the curator that holds that responsibility also. Anne places specific emphasis on the importance of imparting knowledge in the most inclusive and engaging manner possible. She sees curation as opening up the possibility of engaging those for whom art or galleries are not familiar spaces, and that curation plays a significant role in making art as accessible to everyone. This demonstrates that internal notions of responsibility can take on many forms, and also create a personal sense of accountability to the public within the curator or an institution. These curators are aware of the changing needs and expectations of GLAM, to move from linear, collections-driven, didactic exhibitionary spaces, to those of responsiveness and inclusiveness (Graham and Cook, 2010 : 191).

The issue of this fetishisation of the object, which is symptomatic of a purely collections-driven institution, is something that Pat spoke of in very strong terms, and views as one of the major issues which is changing the museological and curatorial culture in Ireland. Lar reiterated this by critiquing Irish institutions for being about 20 years behind international contemporaries based on how focused their approach is on collections. Lar sees the lack of cohesive curatorial strategy as a peculiarly Irish problem, with a lack of "joined-up thinking about what is a museum for, what is curation for, what's education for, where are we going, where are we going now to be in 10 or 15 years?" Specifically Pat views current curation in institutions such as the NMI as taking an overly scientific view on object interpretation, as if

each object holds a facet of objective truth which can be discerned through scientific and intellectual interrogation. His proposed salve to this looks at museums as spaces that are driven by ideas, and the potential for creativity in story-telling, a process in which objects are vital constituent elements rather than dictating its course. Pat defined curation as a creative act, in line with that extolled by O'Neill (2012), and that essentially curation is the realisation of good ideas for the two-way transfer of knowledge between the institution and its public that he places at the heart of good exhibition work. This is something which Anne also articulated, placing equal emphasis on the management of the collection, and the creative element of researching and interpreting the objects. Pat dismisses the idea that the "the object is all", and the obsessive emphasis placed on conservation values to the relative exclusion of other values. Interestingly he speaks out against the fixation with what he terms as museum "hygiene", in that too much time and effort is spent on monitoring and creating perfect conditions for the object at the expense of the public's experience. He likens it to an entirely germ-free and immaculate public bathroom, where to maintain its sterile status you have to stop anyone from using it. If maintaining an object means that it cannot be effectively accessed by the public, then it is effectively useless. This metaphor explores a persistent dilemma faced by curators, the need to preserve material culture for future generations but to also use this material for the benefit of people now. In essence Pat's view is that conservation concerns or values should not act as a barrier to preclude the use of objects in exhibitions. He highlights the issues addressed by Rinehart and Ippolito (2014) in finding and maintaining a potentially shifting balance which acknowledges both the conservation of material culture and the public's access to it.

The idea of curation as a method of authenticating knowledge is something that is a strong element in the curatorial strategy of the Science Gallery to which Shaun speaks. As the Gallery brings in a set of experts, academics, or practitioners in a field, which they name as the curators for each exhibition held, the Gallery seeks out experts to then place within the curatorial role, rather than finding curators with relevant subject expertise. A distinct part of the process is the Gallery staff, the programming team, guiding the curatorial process and in essence training these curators as they curate an upcoming show. They initiate and guide these new curators through the process of shaping an exhibition brief, putting out a call to artists and other practitioners, and then choosing the content for the exhibition. Here we see a separation of the curation from much of the "hygiene" that Pat speaks of, where all of the more practical elements of exhibition development such as object care, feasibility and health and safety are delegated to the permanent staff in the Gallery, and the curators are then solely

focused on how the content explores the themes or subject at hand. In this system the curator is purely a subject specialist, and is freed from the connection with the purely physical elements of exhibition and collections care, allowing for a different relationship with the curatorial method. Shaun sees this process as taking these specialists through a series of activities which results in them becoming more akin to "actual traditional curators" when they select pieces to be included in the final exhibition, so that they are interrogating, selecting and "looking at it like curators." In this system, the Gallery staff take the place of the mediator, leading and crafting the curatorial process, guiding their curators through it. Again, it is a pulling apart, or striation of the curatorial process, in which elements of curation are delegated and are not all within the scope of the person named as curator. It is a method of dealing with and managing the problem of the "curator as…" (Graham and Cook, 2010) by pulling apart the construct and delegating the work, thus allowing a more refined and institutionally defined role for the curator. Pat notes that within this schema, the curator is no longer a single profession with a cultural institution but "the outcome of a collaborative, inter-disciplinary practice among a variety of professionals." Shaun notes that through this process, the Gallery aims to make curation and exhibition development as positive an experience as possible for these initiated curators, in a way to foster a positive view of engaging in greater communication with the public on their area of expertise. Here taking part in curation as a specialist within the Gallery leads to not only the Gallery benefitting from the expertise, but also creating a wider benefit to the perception of science or academic communication from within academia.

Emma was more reticent to use curation to describe the work of the *Letters of 1916* Project, but was open to using curatorial language in a more flexible, interpretative manner. Based on the activities of document collection, application of metadata standards, how best to organise all of the collected items, and having a working knowledge of best practice, she could see how the work could be described as curation. She did make a delineation between the act of curating and being a curator however; that while this could be viewed as curatorial activity, none of those involved would be designated or named as curators. This theme of the act of curation and being a curator as being separate is something that will emerge in the proceeding section on citizen curators. She makes the distinction between "traditional" curation and digital curation, and while she does not articulate fully the difference between these forms of curation, she felt that her work was more akin to digital curation. This tension emerges again when she felt that all curation is essentially organisation and display, much like Balzer (2014: 29), something which is common to both physical and digital curation.

Nigel mused about the adoption of curation for positions within technology companies such as Google, "their idea of a curator is a sort of a, is a person who's pulling things together, to seize the ingredients in the market stall and creates a wonderful dish out of it and that's their sort of understanding that curators are dilettantes." This critique that Nigel presents of the current applications of curatorial language very much echoes Rosenbaum's manifesto on the subject (2011a), heralding online curators as these selectors and arbitrators of quality and importance. He quite clearly sees this as an entirely separate interpretation and application of the term curation and curator, and that whilst they are valid, that they are fundamentally different from the "traditional" curator of which all of the interviews spoke. The usage of the term in this way is not problematic for Nigel, but he does view it as a "buzzword" application of the term, and that perhaps the usage would eventually fade into obscurity.

5.5   Curation now - practically

In contrast to the ideal form of curation, the questioning then turned to how curation manifests pragmatically in the day-to-day work of the curators being interviewed. Many curators within the GLAM sector, such as Nigel and Brenda, spoke of the necessity to do the work that needed to be done in order to function on a day-to-day basis. Work focused on fundamental activities such as cataloguing, rehousing, conserving, displaying, and organising - as Brenda noted, "a curator seems to do everything." For Carol, curation is "a practical thing"; rather than having a detailed curatorial strategy, it is a process that unfolds as projects or needs arise. She elaborates by saying that she did not reflect on the work as it happened, only considering it curation in retrospect. It is from ideas of curatorial work such as these that in many of the conversations the notion of the curator as a malleable role emerged, reiterating and reaffirming the concept of the idea of the curator as many things, as seen in the earlier literature review. Depending on the scale of the institution, or the resources available, the role of the curator can expand or contract to fill the space that is required, making curatorial work something which can be reinterpreted based on the institution, the available resources, and other factors. So if there is no documentation, conservation, or other technical staff to aid in the overall work of the institution, then the curator will take on extra work as needed. Nigel identifies this problem in the shifting role of the curator as being "parochial", in that the definitions will change depending on the institution and the people or structures involved. As Brenda states, "it's different from museum to museum, it's different from museum to gallery." This implies a lack of standardisation of museological language, geographically or ideologically, leading to curation being adapted and defined based on the individual context in which it is employed. In talking

to a variety of curatorial professionals, it becomes clear that when the curator's role shrinks and expands to cover any roles that are not covered by other staff, the curator becomes an umbrella term for museum work that is fundamental to the functioning of the institution. Anne negotiates the difficulty in defining curation by stating that "there's different styles of curator", this leaves the term open to both individual and institutional interpretation, as we will see.

The evolution of the curatorial role from the 1980s was discussed by both Pat and Nigel, noting how the increasing levels of professionalisation of the museum had impacted on the curator. On a practical level Nigel commented that "in theory there are things that I would have done as a curator, years ago, that I would feel that if you were just a curator now, you could leave all sorts of things off that list." He noted the establishment of the collections manager over the past 30 years (Raikes, 1996) as having an effect on what it means to curate. A collections manager is a position within a GLAM-sector institution in which all of the duties of care and management of the collection are effectively removed from the curator(s). This manager will then oversee the welfare of a collection, from environmental factors of light, humidity, and heat, and physical requirements such as housing, suitable storage, and archival grade materials (Brunot, 2016). They will often also have a role in maintaining the catalogue, or liaising with other staff in charge of the documentation of the collections. The result is one of the defining roles of the curator, caring for a collection, has been removed and allocated to another member of staff. Further exploring why this schism might happen between a curator and a collection, Nigel identifies scale of a collection or institution as guiding this. If a collection is significantly large, then a curator moves from being a custodian of the collections, to being an expert on a particular area. They maintain the knowledge of the collection, but rather than being concerned with the management of a collection, their role is to use the collections.

Not only should they use these collections for research or exhibition development, but also to be part of a larger community of researchers so that they can then facilitate the work of others. Nigel describes this in very practical terms, creating an environment or "habitat" for other researchers to use. This extends from the knowledge of the collections to helping someone navigate and find the required materials, to having relevant equipment such as microscopes, and creating an environment in which that person can conduct their work effectively. It is an extension of Pat's view of the curator as facilitator, something which Brenda frames as almost a moral and ethical imperative for the curator. She sees the curator as bearing the responsibility that the collections be used by researchers, of all types, so that

new and latent knowledge can be discovered. Brenda takes it further by stating that if curators do not facilitate use of collections, then they are negligent, and stifling all manner of new discoveries and interpretations. She points out that this lack of access to the collections can be subtle, and centres more around how well known the collection is and how active the institution is in highlighting access, "we're derelict in our own responsibility in that way, that we're not allowing people, access to this material. Not actively disallowing them, but by not being public."

Interestingly Nigel and others imply that these collections managers are required to ensure that collections are both cared for and can be accessed. It shows that they are aware of a move from "a museum space that is prescribed, authored, physical, closed, linear and distant, to a space that instead tends to be something more dynamic, discursive, imagined, open, radical and immersive" (Parry and Hopwood, 2004 : 73) and that this openness is something that needs to be worked on actively. They imply that when left to their own devices, curators can be too interested in collections and research and not concerned enough with the public or other audiences. It echoes Lar's critique of some curators wishing to reside in an academic ivory tower, safely away from the eyes of the public, where a curator can spend their time pursuing passion projects, conducting research, and not engaging the public with the collections. If allowed to, some curators will engage in what Nigel called "displacement activity", where they will take on work which avoids elements in which they are not interested. He notes that this can happen if too much is asked of a curator, and they retreat to work that they are able and content in undertaking. Nigel commented that it is the scale of an institution that can allow for this to happen as you are in danger of having:

> …far too many curators, enjoying themselves, looking at interesting things, and writing articles about them, and collections not being physically looked after very well and research visitors not being aided hugely, unless they were friends of the curator, interested in the same subject areas.

In better defining and outlining what role a curator is fulfilling in an organisation, Nigel sees it as ensuring that they operate more like a librarian than an author: "make stuff accessible, help people to find things, sort so that it is in the system, processed and on the shelves, and in the databases nowadays." Carol brings this idea of accessibility further, saying that their audience could be in "Brazil or Borris-in-Ossory, so it made no difference to me in my head really, it was just to get the stuff out there online." What is different in Carol's approach, to that of Pat, is that she believes it is critical to "get out where people are, and not wait sitting passively for them to come to us." In this way, the value of the collection is not inherent purely in its existence, but in how accessible it is to people, and this includes how discoverable

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it is. It is a manifestation of the notion that you should disseminate, publish, or make items findable first, filter and refine later, or as Anderson frames it "1. Make everything available. 2. Help me find it." Anderson (2006: 217).

The idea of curators as bearing the ultimate responsibility within GLAM is echoed by Philip and Brenda, and that their actions can have consequences for the fate of a collection, "somebody that can be held responsible" (Philip). This idea of the curator having to be policed in some way shows the negative side of the curator as a mysterious figure. Too much mystery around curatorial work and it becomes impossible for that work to be assessed or managed. So we can see that the creation of other roles to formalise the work of the museum in collections care, management, conservation, or documentation, is a method of monitoring and overseeing that the core functions of an institution are being met. It is this formalisation which illustrates clearly the movement from curation as tradition to convention, as the work is demystified, codified, and professionalised, curation becomes less impenetrable to those both within and outside a GLAM-sector institution. However the curator persists as a figure within the museological landscape. This persistence shows that elements of their more mysterious work with the collections, the product of their intimate knowledge of physical objects, remain critical to the work of these institutions. In short, the curator and the museum seem inextricably linked.

Anne speaks to the tension between what is familiar and presenting the visitor with something new as a curator. With older or national institutions there is often a dual aspect of the audience wanting to see the old favourites, whilst also wanting a new or surprising experience. In this case, the institution is caught in a dilemma of giving the public what they want, in the case of the NGI paintings such as *The Taking of Christ* by Caravaggio, and giving them reasons to revisit the gallery to see something new. There is something comforting or reassuring in the known, in that this institution is stable and in this case, displaying a familiar work which can be returned to again and again. However, stability can also be interpreted as being inert, an institution that can be visited once and nothing is lost or gained in ever visiting again. In offering new and different exhibitions, the gallery or museum looks to attract new and returning visitors, but by definition this requires much more work, resources, and finances. Anne identifies travelling exhibitions as a salve to this problem for galleries. In outsourcing a certain amount of curatorial work to others, the gallery can still mount new shows with a lower amount of financial or staff resources. Nigel also cites the lack of resources as a major factor in how curation and curatorial projects are undertaken within an institution.

As the Science Gallery holds no physical or material collection, Shaun's experience of curation in a practical sense differs in some ways from the other curators interviewed. The main difference that emerges is that the Gallery is only constrained by the physical limitations of its space, and what is feasible to hold there, rather than being constrained by what is available within a collection. The curation here could be likened more to the creative endeavour that Pat feels curation should be. Within the Gallery, the curators look to have artworks and projects generated in response to the curatorial brief they aid in drafting, and can track and help shape the development of these artistic interventions and responses. These curators are curating ideas rather than objects, or as Shaun frames it: "they are really curating the science in that sense because that is the source material that is used." Much like online knowledge initiatives, like Wikipedia, here the Gallery is subject-centric not object-centric (Wyatt, 2011 : 38). In this schema of curation the curators are not constrained by the other factors outlined by Nigel and Brenda, as Shaun explains "our limits are generally not creative limits."

5.6   Who is a curator?

As explored in the preceding chapters, there is the perception that the term curation and curator have been liberated from the museum or gallery, leading to the conclusion that these terms have been democratised to the point at which many people have begun to adopt the language for their work or activities outside of the museum context. However, these interviews subvert that idea, and demonstrate that actually the perception of the curator is still very conservative and "traditional", seeing a curator as a subject specialist where the specialism is largely drawn from knowledge of a physical collection. It is this knowledge that then allows them to engage in the act of curating exhibitions, and imparting that information to others. In this way, being a curator is seen as something very specific (Emma), but that specificity is not necessarily defined fully. Another element that emerged was that despite many of the participants being casually aware of my research on varying levels, the lack of willingness to utilise the language of curation, or to dare to describe themselves as curators, was striking.

This idea of the "traditional" curator, that the curator is somehow bound to an institution or a collection, is reinforced by the fact that the public think of the most important person within a museum or gallery as the curator. As Brenda states, regardless of the nature of the enquiry, the public will often want to speak to the "curator", even if the nature of the enquiry or complaint is completely outside of the institutional role of the curator. For the public, a curator works in a museum, and thus any and all enquiries are directed towards them. In my

own experience of museum work, people were often surprised to hear of someone employed within museum collections and *not* being a curator, as if it is the only position which afforded such work. This perceived centrality and importance of the curator within the museum is something which Pat reflected on with a great deal of humour, stating that in this schema the curator becomes priest-like and belonging to a higher caste than the museum audience. He frames curation as a "thaumaturgic thing" in a larger process of utilising the museum to discipline and educate the public, a view that is informed by the work of Bennett (2004), as explored in the literature review. The notion of the curator as magical or other-worldly is a recurring motif also, as if the curator exists in a different world to that outside of the museum (Kaniari, 2014 : 447). All of these ideas of the curator as the ultimate authority within a museum or cultural landscape add layers to the idea of what a curator is, and complicate the notion of meeting the criteria for being a curator. Taking into account these ideas of who is a curator, it is quite understandable that those who curate in their own time would tend not to employ this language. It comes with far too much baggage to be used in a more casual sense to describe work which people may do as a hobby.

This etymological echo of the curator as a carer or a custodian permeates the interpretation of the curator from both within and outside of the museum and is carried through in the other language associated with museum roles. The term "Keeper", which is used in the NMI, is derived from the fact that it denoted someone who literally held keys: as Nigel frames it, "it is sort of focused around the care of the collections, and it is the custodian that is the key-holder, it's the person who keeps an eye on the collections side of the thing." Philip reiterates this with the idea of the curator as "a keeper and an assembler of stuff." The overriding theme of these terms is their association with the physical collections, and most importantly control of access to these collections. In particular this gatekeeper position, defined by this ability to permit or refuse access to institutional collections, "simultaneously providing and controlling access to information" (Shirky, 2009 : 57), is something that is expressed clearly by a number of those interviewed. There is an element of privilege to the position, which is felt by those who occupy it, that they occupy a rare place within society, and have been entrusted with this position of custodian. Though it is his official title, Nigel opts for curator when describing his job, as again it is a term which those outside of a museum would understand better:

> …if people ask me what I do on my car insurance it says museum curator because I still feel that is the core. Because, apart from anything else, as a keeper, everybody says what's a keeper? That's a very cool title, and I say I've no idea, I think I look after the keys and I keep the keys, and doing something along those

lines. But it is about sort of hoarding and controlling, whereas curator sounds a
bit more friendly.

He likens a curator to an eccentric character in a television show or in a book, and whilst no one is entirely sure what a curator may do from day-to-day, it is interpreted as a largely benign or positive role. This idea of those who curate, even within GLAM, not technically being curators is something that both Brenda and Carol encounter, with neither of them holding positions of curators but undertaking curation in their work. Carol in particular notes that she "never sat down at any point and said God, do you know I think I'm going to be a curator", but that the work found her within the NLI and she found she both enjoyed and excelled at it.

Anne speaks to another side, which in some ways feels contradictory to the curator being seen as an important force within a museum, and that is the self-effacement of the curator. What is meant by this is how the work of the curator, and in particular any singular or individual voice, is lost to the greater institutional whole. The curator's voice becomes one with the institution, reiterating this Wizard of Oz-like single voice Weinberger invokes (2007 : 143). This is played out in the fact that both Anne and Brenda recoiled at the idea of curatorial text being ascribed to them in an authorial sense: "I don't think the curator should be centre stage at all" (Anne). They both speak to being aware of writing and presenting narratives in a manner that was suitable and representative of the institution, "It's not me writing, it's the museum writing" (Brenda). We can see a parallel to the citizen curator on Wikipedia or in the *Letters of 1916* here, where the reader does not know the identity of the curator unless they feel the need to seek that information in the relevant back channels. What is important is the work that is done, not to whom it is ascribed, and the overall institutional voice takes precedence over the individual curator in both scenarios. The subject matter and information is of the utmost importance. Here a curator is both everyone, for example a united curatorial voice of an institution, or no-one, a united voice that cannot be attributed to any one person. This invokes the notion again of the curator as a mysterious, shadowy figure or "wan librarian type" (Balzer, 2014 : 60), inhabiting the dark backrooms, away from the gaze of the public and therefore unknown to them. Pat criticises most curators for becoming institutionalised. The very act of being appointed a curator can fundamentally change a person. Part of this could be seen as relinquishing a personal curatorial voice to one that fits with a specialist institutional role. It is as if in unifying the various curatorial personalities within an institution, something is lost in that process. Pat notes that it is potentially the lack of interdisciplinarity that leads to this needless "silo-ing" of individuals within professional roles. Kate, from the outside, sees this as part of the character or

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personality of the institution and its curators, and that most people do not think critically about how this personality manifests in the collections, and their curation or display. Anne's critique of the perception of curation points to the idea that people do not think they are equipped to think about art in a curatorial or critical way. Unlike other media forms, such as cinema or books, there is something about art that is elitist and precludes people's engagement with it. She reflects that GLAM should, and are, actively working to break down and reject this perception that art, and ultimately its curation, is not for everyone.

Within the Science Gallery, Shaun clearly lays out that there are no creative limits on the audience member as curator, but there are health and safety, and ethical limitations which come into play. Largely this is down to the link with Trinity College Dublin, which means the Gallery is bound by the same ethics approval standards as all other departments within the university. The ethical issues that emerge are similar to those in any academic research, such as security of data, collections of samples, and ensuring that there is no potential harm to the participant. Here we see that who identifies as a curator is constrained not by the curatorial mission of the Gallery or its curatorial staff, but the Gallery's own regulation and place within a larger institution. In trying to open up and challenge who can guide curation, the Gallery is undertaking research to identify those most likely to engage as citizen curators. Given the success they have had in the past in garnering an active audience willing to dedicate their time, data, or resources to the Gallery, Shaun is looking to interrogate what motivates them to be involved, and what are the potential barriers to that involvement for others. In particular, he is attempting to assess if there is something unique about the Gallery environment that inspires this involvement which makes it fundamentally different to other GLAM or even other research environments, such as laboratories. In this way the Gallery is the only institution encountered in this research that is actively pursuing the role of the citizen as a curator, and is interested in what makes the Gallery environment conducive to their engagement in curation, in this case through the juncture of science and art. They are attempting to critically assess and understand potential avenues to generate and sustain new and different models for citizen curation, in conducting their own research, and also looking internationally for best practice and emerging methods. Shaun makes a division between the Gallery's teams of curators as engaging in a "more traditional curatorial process", with the visitor as curator being a separate, novel, or emerging form of curation. For the Gallery these acts of curation can be quite challenging and involved, such as collecting swabs from visitor's bellybuttons to grow bacterial cultures, or crowdsourcing materials to represent all the elements in the periodic table. These activities can be more involved than asking the public

what their favourite painting it, supplying comment or suggestion cards, or working with a small subsection of the public through a school or community group. As Shaun himself notes, the Gallery staff are interested in the visitor as curator, they want to explore the possibilities of this, and push the boundaries of what has been tried in the past. In short they are "very flexible in how we define what a curator is, and what a curator does."

The issue of who is a curator is also palpable for those who work within museums and galleries. Those within museums who have taken part in curatorial work, but do not have the title of curator, do not necessarily feel permitted to use the title if it has not been assigned to them. It brings up this interesting notion that whilst curators do curate, not everyone who curates is considered a curator. This becomes even more pointed for the citizen curator, who may be very overtly engaged in curation but feels unwilling or unable to use the title of curator. Here we see curator as a title that is bestowed upon people, rather than something that people can select for themselves.

5.7 The citizen curator

The overriding theme of the interviews with those that I would term to be citizen curators was their discomfort with taking the title of curator in any form. As we will see, many of them could conceptually understand why their activity or work could be framed as curation, but still could not necessarily embrace the title. This stemmed from their understanding of a curator as someone's profession within a museum or gallery, and that it is essentially the product of knowledge and expertise within an area of material study. As many of them work in digital environments, dealing with digitised images and text, they did not feel overall that curation is the term that came naturally to describe that work. What I did find over the course of the interviews is that the more the participants reflected on their work, and thought about how curation may apply, the more comfortable they became using the term to describe their work and the work of others. There is still an element of hesitancy, as if curation imbued their work with a level of complexity or expertise that they felt may not be applicable. Some, like Emma, do consider some of their work to be curating, whilst still maintaining that they are not curators. This may parallel with many other undertakings that people do in their spare time: a person who writes in their free time may not call themselves a writer as it is not their profession or work for which they are primarily paid. Here is an exposition of how these citizen curators view themselves, and some of the language they employ to understand the work that is largely undertaken in their free time using their "cognitive surplus" (Shirky, 2010). It also explores why they think their work is important or useful to themselves and others.

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Oliver is the most experienced Wikipedia editor I interviewed, and that I know personally. He explicitly sees editing Wikipedia as a form of self-improvement, in particular to facilitate continuous learning, and to challenge himself. Rather than simply reading a book, Oliver uses Wikipedia as a form of active reading, by reading and editing at the same time. This means that any knowledge he gains is shared, dispersed, and built upon rather than remaining private. He termed this as "applied reading", where it is not a separate or discrete activity from writing, thus implementing in his own way a form of "the person who teaches learns twice" (Shirky, 2009 : 258). In digesting and then presenting the information he is increasing his learning potential; even though he reflected that he would rarely look back on a piece of editing with great pride or accomplishment, he felt that it was a more proactive way of using his time than simply reading.

Like many of the citizen curators here, Oliver did not embrace the term curation, and even questioned if he would have enough to say on the topic. In thinking about the interview beforehand, he did realise that one of the most outright curatorial acts on Wikipedia is that of speedy deletion. This refers to the ability of a Wikipedia administrator to delete an article without any community discussion or consensus (Wikipedia contributors, 2016b). It is often reserved for what are deemed to be spam articles, vandalism, or mistakes made by editors, like publishing an incomplete or blank article. It can be used for articles that are deemed to not fit the criteria for inclusion on Wikipedia, and most often this is a perceived lack of notability. Here we see Oliver, and other administrators acting as curators, deciding what is included in the Wikipedia "collection." This is analogous with the fundamental collections management work of a museum: what is accessioned, disposed of, and what is refused admission into the collection. Oliver refers to this as a "raw curation" on Wikipedia, as speedy deletion represents an administrator's opinion on whether an article should exist or not. He applies this authority in a slightly more nuanced way than other administrators, when he would often not delete an article outright, but open it up to a deletion discussion so that the community could come to a consensus. This method also allows for the original authors to defend, or even improve, the article at hand. What is most notable in Oliver's curatorial method is that it is an answer to Shannon's criticism of the power of administrators to delete without consultation. In a community-driven project, she believes that no one person should have the ability to delete without discussion, and that it goes against the communal spirit of Wikipedia. Whilst many might argue that it is in the best interest of Wikipedia that a few trusted editors have this right, to fight against vandalism and the use of Wikipedia as a PR

tool, the fact that Oliver had come to this conclusion within his own process shows that there is a need for an agreement on any de-accessioning or disposal activity.

Shannon's view may be influenced by the fact that more of her experience comes from her engagement with the offline elements of the Wikimedia movement. As the Chairperson of WCI, Shannon would spend a great deal of time holding workshops on editing Wikipedia, teaching people how to make their first edits, and explaining the benefits of Wikipedia to a variety of audiences. Her experience of the Wikimedia movement is in a more organisational and administrative sense, rather than being deeply entrenched in the digital community like Oliver. Shannon, like Oliver, is using her activity within WCI as a learning tool, but more so to learn new abilities and to deepen her understanding of the open knowledge sector. This is overtly a self-improvement activity for her, with which she would like to build a career. In this manner, she and I have a great deal in common, as I have been using the experience as a research base as well as a way to forge a longer career in the area. Therefore our learning is far less casual than Oliver's, as our activism and work within the community is geared towards improving our own skills, and developing an area of specialism. However, it is not purely motivated by that, as we share a joint interest in the inherent value of open knowledge and the power behind improving the content on Wikipedia, thus spending our spare time creating rather than just consuming (Shirky, 2010 : 14).

Shannon was a participant who became more confident in using the term curation in relation to her own work over the course of the conversation. At the outset she had the "traditional" view of the curator working with a collection, and whilst she recognised that this concept of a collection could reach into the digital, she could not see how curation could explicate her work and framed curation as something which involved "items that you can touch." In abstract she could acknowledge that her work, particularly on *Wiki Loves Monuments*, could be seen as curation. Within this project, she and others in WCI:

> …gathered all this disparate, unreadable, ridiculous information, and we've put it in one place, and we've put it in a form for people that's easy to understand. So, I guess in that instance, we are curating that information, and even saying that it still doesn't feel right.

She was far more comfortable using administrative language to explain her work within WCI. She could not, by her own admission, separate the notion of curation from the physical, although she also maintained that at times "digital stuff is just as important, if not more important, than the actual physical stuff." During the conversation, as we walked around the term curation and what it means to be a curator, the more comfortable she became with the

term. Exploring how a curator could differ from a researcher or historian in particular, and how their work could overlap and interact led her to state towards the end that "I guess we're all curators." Oliver describes this possibility of curators and citizen curators being alike as having their own "little nooks and their own little interests", that they "are interested in collecting and maintaining, and protecting their, it's not even their patch, so much as their knowledge, and their y'know, their way of presenting knowledge." It is this common interest in the objects or the knowledge that unites them, regardless of how their work manifests. It demonstrates Shirky's idea which "suggests that the old division of amateur and professional is only a gradient rather than a gap" (2009 : 75) and that with passion and practice a citizen curator can be as knowledgeable on a given subject as a professional one.

Kate in the WMI relies heavily on editorial and managerial language, with the group of people involved in the running of the museum thinking of themselves as volunteers. Like the others, Kate felt unwilling to call herself a curator even though as a co-founder of the museum she had been part of the team that had chosen overtly museological and curatorial language in the project's creation. The WMI is a striking example of non-professionals seeing a gap in the cultural discourse of, in this case, the history of women in Ireland. It represents a group of people who have taken on the task of filling this gap of an institution dedicated to women's history, and have very overtly chosen to align with the language of the museum, yet are unwilling to call themselves curators. Regardless of Kate's reticence, they are filling a perceived curatorial gap, and as they are part of the International Women's Museum Association, they are being internationally recognised for that work. The museum is currently entirely online, and has held just one physical exhibition of photographs in Trinity College Dublin. It is this one exhibition that Kate views as a "very straightforward bit of curation … I chose the work and it went on the wall", again reiterating the view that curation is something that occurs in physical spaces with material objects.

As the group have no archive to draw on, a large function of the WMI's website is soliciting and hosting biographies of notable women with connections to Ireland. This means that a large proportion of their work is text based, which informs the use of language Kate employs to describe her work, placing it within the realms of editing rather than curating. Those involved in populating the website with articles are called content editors. She places herself in an organisational role, overseeing how others in the group go about finding writers or contributors to add content to the website. Interestingly, she sees this work as a content manager as more complex than the curation of the Trinity exhibition, as if the physical and temporal constraints of that exhibition make the curation simpler. While the articles they

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host are of a longer length than text used in exhibition labels, the fact that she doesn't associate the production of text with curation is an interesting feature of her curatorial understanding. Reflecting on this process of content generation and management, Kate acknowledged that she drives the "curatorial direction" of the WMI, and it is both a managerial and creative process. However, for Kate, curation is fundamentally a far more visual activity, drawing much of her understanding from art curation rather than museological curation. Like Pat, Kate seems drawn to curatorial processes that incorporate artists and that invoke contemporary art to further understanding of a topic or historical collection. In doing so, she imbues curation within museums as a more creative act than the editorial work on the museum's website, and that critically curation is a skill that is taught in some formal manner. Kate's main reasoning for not using curatorial language or identifying as a curator is that she has no formal training in that area, and thus feels she is not qualified to be called a curator. She does intend to improve her knowledge of curation in her own time, and sees this education of herself in curation as fundamental to the development of the WMI. Again, we see that curation is now viewed as a discernible set of conventional and defined skills that can be taught, and perhaps in this case, be acquired through self-directed learning. As the project develops, and becomes more complex, Kate anticipates that the group will have to create a more overt curatorial strategy. She is very clear that she feels the need for her, or others in the group, to be educated in what she refers to as "traditional curation" to fulfil the potential brief of the museum. Kate does admit that not being part of this traditional, academic curation means that they are freer in how they engage with curation. This hasn't freed her from the idea that she, and the WMI, need to be better acquainted with formalised curatorial practice however, and she reiterated that there was a need to gain more knowledge and experience on academic views of curation as pertinent to their museum and goals. In this way for the WMI, there was a distinct feeling that they should look to other women's museums and history initiatives to learn "from people who've done it before." The potential to learn a new set of skills is part of the attraction for Kate to learn more, stating that "it's been quite a satisfying process to realise that actually curation is really exciting!" This is a sentiment that Anne echoes as a professional curator, as she views herself as not having taken a conventional route to her job. It is this unconventional route that allows her to be more "open to different ideas."

This element of learning, as seen above, carries through with Philip and his experience of the *Letters of 1916* project. In comparison to a project like Wikipedia, *Letters of 1916* is smaller in scale, and this means that those involved in its organisation and oversight, like Emma, have

a much greater understanding of their contributing volunteers. It was because of this that Emma was able to put me in contact with Philip, who is one of the most prolific transcribers of letters in the project. Philip was also one of the most unwilling to engage with curatorial language, and struggled to see how his own work could be interpreted that way. Overall he could understand the project, and the work of those like Emma, as curation, but not his own participation. Philip did very much see his work with the project as allowing him to learn actively as a retiree. Again it is an example of Shirky's cognitive surplus, with Philip making time for something purely because it interests him (2010 : 20). This learning is not limited to what he learnt about historical figures, locations, or events mentioned in the letters he transcribed, but it spurred him to seek out other learning opportunities. Some were very much like the *Letters* project, engaging in other online initiatives like *Your Paintings*, but others were far more structured and formal, such as enrolling in a course to become a tour guide. His involvement in the project also led him to learn about and appreciate how and where he could access information relating to his 1916 research. Philip didn't even come to the project with an existing in-depth knowledge of this period of history, and he used it as a way of engaging with the lived history of 1916 in Ireland. While he may not have had this type of formalised learning as a planned outcome of his work with the project, it mirrors Kate and Shannon's experience of wishing to learn and improve their own skills whilst simultaneously contributing.

Emma has a more formal relationship with the *Letters of 1916*, as she is employed to work on it, and has held similar positions on digitisation projects in the past. Nonetheless, she felt that she could relate to the work of citizen curators, as she is one herself, maintaining her own photographic archive of Dublin's "ghost signs". These are signs remaining in the Dublin urban landscape which are defunct or relate to businesses that no longer exist. Within this self-motivated project, Emma has created her own curatorial brief for inclusion and exclusion of signs, and how she generally presents, organises, and interacts with her followers. As she is the sole force behind the project, and it is hers in its entirety, she was more comfortable calling herself the curator of the project. She alludes to the emancipatory element of such online activity, in that "you have to be a photographer to have a collection of photographs, or that you have to be a historian to … to put … historical documents online." As she had this experience of creating such a project, and also having others engage with her content through Instagram, she was clear about the value of the work done by the transcribers in the *Letters* project. Not only did she state that the work was invaluable, but that making them aware of this was something that those employed in the project were keen

to communicate to the participants. She saw the project as fulfilling an important role within the historical work relating to the Decade of Centenaries, but also as a vehicle to promote the understanding of and engagement with digital humanities. Within that she saw the willingness of people to devote their spare time and cognitive surplus to the project as something to be lauded rather than taking any of it for granted. This emphasis on the value of the work of the transcribers as citizen curators, and how the project would have never been realised due to lack of resources had it not been achieved this way, articulates very succinctly the unique and powerful position the public as citizen curators can hold in cultural and heritage work: "so we rely on them, and then, they rely on us in a way." She cites this inclusion of the public within broader digital or public humanities work and creating accessible digital repositories as one of her motivations for working in the sector.

In considering the value of what individuals can bring to enrich the overall understanding of historical periods, Pat and Brenda were enthusiastic on how important personal and family histories, objects, and texts can be. Noting projects such as the *Letters of 1916*, Pat noted the importance of looking away from the grand narrative of the Easter Rising of 1916 to what he termed as the "kind of meanwhile of history, meanwhile back at the ranch." In drawing in the ordinary history of people's family or locality we can collectively better understand the period, by embracing those elements that have previously remained entirely private or not publicly conveyed. He likened it to moving from a singular voice to "more than one voice singing simultaneously about history", empowering people to reach back into their own histories to discover that which is "relevant and meaningful in their own lives", creating moments of meaningful connection between their own lives and those in the past. In doing so, the historical narrative moves from something intangible and un-relatable, to something deeply personal with which there is a significant relationship to be found. He roots this fostering of individual engagement with personal or family histories as part of the civic role of a museum in "helping them to draw out their own life worlds" and "to place a value on their history and their memories".

Carol's experience of the National Library of Ireland's *the Commons on Flickr* project is probably the most fully formed and realised citizen curation project that was included in this research. In particular, the integration of the data collected and organised by what Carol called her "Flickroonies" into the Library's official catalogue seems to be unprecedented in the national institutions of Ireland. She noted that this project may have only been allowed to proceed due to the lack of knowledge about Flickr and social media amongst the NLI's curatorial staff. This lack of understanding resulted in the online presence of the NLI, and

its relationship with its citizen curators, evolving independently and without much influence form the Library's curators. It allowed the project, and the NLI's social media, to adapt to fit the platforms rather than the other way around, and once this had begun it could not be easily reversed given its success. As Carol puts it, she was "blowing open the doors", and once that process had begun, and the rewards were becoming more obvious, there was no stopping the momentum. The research work that was done by the citizen curators on the Library's Flickr stream came from a community that developed around the photographs, and the information gathered became of a consistently high and valuable standard. The result was that the catalogue entries not only linked to the images featured on Flickr, but once a consensus was reached amongst the Flickroonies and Carol about the veracity of the information gathered, she would then update the information in individual catalogue records to reflect these new or refined facts. This process, one that previously the public were completely locked out of, was one that they could now pursue based purely on their own interest (Shirky, 2010 : 27). The fact that it was not only Carol who was assessing this information, but that she was facilitating a consensus amongst her contributors, means she did not act as the ultimate authority over its validity. She acted more as a peer with the group, using the facilities within the Library to verify information as it emerged. As the community developed on Flickr, individual experts on discrete areas appeared also, some with expert knowledge on letter boxes, lamp posts, or street lights, all of which could be used to identify the period and location of featured images. They also created their own terms, a form of shorthand, to alert other contributors to information. One, which was explicitly to warn people about tragic or young deaths of those featured in photographs was the "sudden death claxon." This acts like a content warning, as the community would often grow attached or fond of some of those historical figures in the photographs, showing the community of practice that they have established: "Etienne Wenger calls a community of practice, a group of people who converse about some shared task in order to get better at it" (Shirky, 2009 : 100).

Carol notes that this community did not react well to being referred to as being a form of "crowdsourcing." Here we can see a divergence in the interpretation of crowdsourcing from citizen curation. Crowdsourcing can be far more ad hoc, and may not require the more involved and developed relationships between the contributors that is seen on the NLI Flickr stream. It is the nature of the interaction that seems to make it different, as opposed to projects in which the individuals involved may never interact or collaborate in such an explicit or intimate way. The objection lay in the emphasis on the community, that it was a cohesive

and cooperative group working together, which did not seem to fit with the notion of crowdsourcing. Emma makes a similar observation, that in such a community, or in the broader online community, everyone has the possibility of finding and inhabiting a niche, either through their own collections or through larger collaborative projects. To remain successful and sustainable however, both Carol and Lar mentioned problems with these projects in the long term. They voiced concerns about not using these collaborations as "one offs", that are used to augment the profile of an institution, and that there should have meaningful goals that are seen to progress into the future planning of the institution involved. This not only strengthens the partnership of the public and cultural institutions, but also proves to the public just how important that partnership is to the institution.

A project that was attempting to engage the public, but with a far more limited goal, was *Ireland's Favourite Painting* by the Irish national broadcaster RTÉ in 2012. Here the public were presented with a pre-selected list of 100 Irish artworks that they were then invited to vote on to select their favourite piece (RTÉ, 2016). As Anne concluded, it was ultimately very beneficial to the NGI as one of their artworks was voted number one, but it was not actually Ireland's favourite painting, as "they were fed this 100 and they had to choose from that." As the public had no say in the compiling of the initial list, it was not crowd or public driven, and thus limited the true public interaction with the idea. The press that the NGI received did have tangible benefits in increased awareness and interest in the winning and other artworks, but its framing as a people driven project is flawed and creates a false conception of what public engagement really looks like. Anne reflected on an exhibition which worked in collaboration with older men in a nursing home and a gallery, and she viewed this as a much better exemplar of true curatorial collaboration with the public. She saw the possibility for communal learning and fresh perspectives as the most valuable outcome of such projects: "I think it can be really valuable, and rich, and interesting for everybody, not least the curators, because we can all learn something from other new, fresh perspectives on our collection." This idea of seeing an object or a collection through fresh eyes is something that Shannon agreed was fundamental to successful, progressive, or novel forms of curation.

Carol witnessed the group of citizen curators on Flickr utilising a number of other digital humanities projects, such as *Letters of 1916*, the Military Archives, and the Irish 1901 and 1911 Censuses. They built a community, and knew who had access to other resources that were physical or behind paywalls. In this way, the Library's images exist within a larger ecosystem of digital and volunteer powered projects, which fed into and supported the work of each other. It is reminiscent of how Anne noted that curators will use Wikipedia as a

starting point, to give them a "lead." So we are getting communities of curators and citizen curators working in overlapping environments, complementing and augmenting each other's work. It demonstrates that these forms of curation do not exist in the silos that Pat and Lar so fear, that they are part of a larger interconnected continuum of knowledge transfer, but that perhaps that continuum is not acknowledged. It is contingent on the fact that the inherent costs of engagement, in time and resources, is lowered as they appear online: "the cost of finding like-minded people has been lowered and, more important, de-professionalized" (Shirky, 2009 : 63). In the case of Wikipedia, it is so entrenched within the digital landscape that in doing cursory searches online, it can be difficult to avoid it, but in the Irish context, with a few institutions placing repositories online, specialised and interested audiences are not able to fully exploit them.

5.8   Conclusion

The specific way in which these curators refer back onto their own experiences and peculiarities of their circumstances and work highlights the utility of examining curation within a geographically and culturally bound space. As encountered within the literature review, in particular in relation to longer exegeses of curation like that of Graham and Cook (2010), curation and the curator appears most clearly in people's thought within practice. The difficultly arises in thinking about the curator and their work in abstract, and makes people's experience of curatorial practice fundamental to their understanding of what it means to curate and/or be a curator. One cannot be removed from the other without a loss of understanding, either on the part of the interviewee or the interviewer. It serves to reinforce the importance of the autoethnographic method, in acknowledging my own part within the broader cultural system which is being examined, as well as embracing that the context is inextricably intertwined with the central questions at hand.

This examination of the public's use of curation needs to take in the aspects that Shannon and Kate highlighted, namely citizen curation as a means of learning and development of personal skills. Their work in the WMI and WCI then becomes a driver of this informal and self-driven learning. Here we are witnessing curation becoming a tool not only of the democratisation of knowledge and digital objects online, but of the skills and knowledge around curation. These people, and myself included, have a dual motivation here, they wish to add to and improve particular areas of knowledge online, but they are aware of how the time they spend on these projects and the skills they develop could be of benefit to them in the future. As Shannon phrases it "some of it was altruistic, and some of it was materialistic." This provides an extra incentive to work harder at the project at hand, not only because they

believe in the inherent value of the work, but they also wish it to be of a standard that allows them to use it as examples of professional work.

Once again we have been confronted with the evasive nature of curation and the curator, with this idea that curation is something that you recognise when you see it. That whilst curation is something that can be learnt, that it is also something that requires practice, as Shannon states: "I think it's more an experience type thing, you have to be doing it." Curation still appears to be inextricably bound to the physical through material collections. The tension between the curation of the physical and the digital was almost palpable during some of the conversations. The interviewees struggled to negotiate the relationship between these two activities. It was an issue that none of them could successfully overcome, and it was a source of frustration to some participants that there was a sense of difference that they could not fully articulate. It felt elusive, much like the nature of curation or being a curator.

One of the most interesting thoughts on the use of curation outside of the museum came from Nigel. If we interpret the adoption of curatorial language as a form of flattery, or that it is a term "sexy enough to want to steal", then it could be seen that curating is seen as an entirely worthwhile and important activity. That in fact curating something elevates it to a previously unforeseen level, and that this level is worthy of a higher price, more consideration, or more attention. In this scenario the curator lends more than just expertise, they bring something to an object that is unparalleled by other professionals, a set of skills that no one else can offer. However, these skills still seem elusive and perhaps impossible to articulate. In many ways, these discussions around the nature of the curator and what it means to curate are not fundamental to the work of a curator:

> I can see as a word it will get used and abused, and go round in circles, but at the end of the day you'll still have people in museums looking after stuff, and I suspect they will still be largely called curators.

What is interesting about these groups of citizen curators and their own work is that some, like Shannon, would acknowledge others' work as curation, but not her own. She interpreted the *Letters of 1916* as curation, but not her work on Wikipedia. For those outside of institutional curation, it appears that curation is perpetually something that happens somewhere else, but not in their own work. This duality, almost cognitive dissonance of understanding how their activity could be curation, while also refusing to take on that mantle is something that was repeated but was difficult to clarify. There was a sense, emotional and difficult to articulate, that made it hard for these citizen curators to view their own work through the curatorial lens. Perhaps those whom I spoke to are unusual in this respect, but

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it is a striking and communal notion that they shared. For Shannon, it was the fact that she was never employed or named as a curator, however, as we have seen even those who curate in GLAM are not always called curators.

Perhaps there is a role in projects such as *Letters of 1916* or the NLI, to critically engage with how they describe the work of their volunteers and Flickroonies, and reflect on what is the work or contribution they are making. Just as Carol saw the negative reaction to the term crowdsourcing, there appears to be a need to discuss with their communities, to see how best they interpret or describe their own work. Much like the projects at hand, the exegesis of the terminology would need to be a partnership, and one that like the communities themselves, develops over time. The ability to find and access resources, knowledge, or objects creates access to those outside of the cultural profession that is now at an unprecedented scale. The lack of scarcity of access means that there is also a need to re-evaluate the role of the curator whilst better defining the role of the citizen curator. As Shirky outlines, "the scarcity of the resource itself creates the need for a professional class – there are few librarians but many patrons" (2009 : 57), but as we have seen, this schema has been turned on its head within a given set of projects. This would allow for greater critical engagement with curation by the public, affording them the space and tools to critically examine the act of curation both online and within physical exhibition spaces. However, the public should not necessarily wait for GLAM-sector institutions to provide space for these conversations or opportunities. As Pat clearly states: "People can't be given power, they have to take it", the drive and incentive must come equally or even more powerfully from outside the walls of the cultural institution to drive curatorial change. It is this anticipated change or upheaval in curation that is examined in the next chapter, on the future of curation.

6 The future of curation and exhibition

6.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the future of curation was reflected on with trepidation by those working within GLAM in Ireland. There was a sense of being left behind, and that Irish GLAM-sector institutions were not moving or evolving quickly enough to remain important in the twenty-first century. Some of the more cynical voices wondered if some institutions mentioned had even come to terms with museological changes from the twentieth century, and by the time they had, that they would be entirely irrelevant. The overriding sentiment was that a museum, and the work of the curator, can and should go beyond the materiality of the museum and its collections. Whilst Pat's concept of the maintaining of collections standards and "hygiene" is important, he emphasised that it should not dominate the work of the institution overall. Ultimately the work of the curator should both embrace and transcend the mundanity of pure collections care: "they would get an inscription wrong, or an error in the date, which is important in its own way, but all added up that's not really what a museum is about." Lar cited how in continuing to focus on collections, GLAM remain looking inward, and if they don't fill the gaps in creative and engaging digital content, then others will do it for them. The following chapter will explore how the interviewees interpreted and anticipated the future of curation. To further examine the inherent differences between digital and institutional curation, one interviewee's experience is taken as a vignette to explore the different curatorial methods employed. To contrast with this, my own experiences of engaging as a citizen curator on Wikipedia will also be examined. This will allow for the construct of the continuum of curation to be further developed from the model first presented in Chapter 2.

6.2 The future of curation

The place of the museum in the contemporary world becomes problematised when faced with the perceived or possible redundancy of the physical museum in relation to the digital museum and digitised collections. As Pat frames it, in a world where all three-dimensional collections, bound by their geographical and physical nature, can be transferred into two-dimensional digital iterations free from the tyranny of the physical, "then what is the residual function of the museum?" One reality Pat explores is where museums are fulfilling the function of the "gold standard" within the realm of material culture. In this schema the museum functions purely as a repository for material that is accessed digitally, in the knowledge that it is being kept for perpetuity in a museological vault of sorts. As he states,

this is a rather "thin" or almost dystopian view for the future of museums, but this fear of the digital does seem to influence the view of the utility of digitisation and online access for the museum and its staff, rather than for the public. As Romanek articulates it:

> In many ways the concept of authenticity is the central issue and foundational concept for cultural heritage institutions, and the fact that digitally curated objects and digitally curated collections throw open new questions about authenticity, and threaten to destabilise this foundation, make this process of digital curation both exciting and unsettling. (2008 : 5)

This idea of the authenticity of an object, or the curator as authenticator, reverberates with themes encountered in the literature review. For Appadurai authenticity is bound up in notions of value in relation to objects as commodities (1988 : 45), which echoes with Pat's idea of the physical object being held as a valued original. Here the digital iterations are mere replicas of the true original, imparting a similar experience of the authenticated physical object but disposable and valueless in comparison. We encounter Balzer's curator imbuing the physical object with value once again (2014), as the expert authenticator. Here we are viewing GLAM not only as the keepers of physical objects within this gold standard schema, but it is the curators whom we trust to test that it is real gold kept in the vault.

Pat counters this view by stating that museums need to emphasise and highlight the inherent importance of the three-dimensional nature of their collections, as history and human experience is in three dimensions. This view eschews the idea of objects being valued for what they are, but that they are valuable purely based on the fact they are physical objects, regardless of perceived value or import. This is a question with which he has been grappling for a number of years, this tension between the drive to digitise whilst maintaining a focus or strategy to create a new relevance for physical museums and collections (Cooke, 2005). It is the intrinsic properties of time and space, the human perception of these, and their effect on objects that renders them essential to understanding history and culture. That it is through these objects that curators and the public can "ask deep disturbing questions about history." He extends this to the function of museums to confront the public with the lack of materiality also, in particular in relation to the poor and their lack of material trace within GLAM-sector collections. It is within the physical space of the museum that the presence or absence of these "transient" histories and worlds can be explored in a unique way distinct to that of the digital experience. In essence, Pat is challenging museums to actively think about and articulate their own relevance to contemporary society. Curators within GLAM need to acknowledge that they no longer work within a closed system in which their relevance is

something that is unquestioned, and that curation is something that is no longer confined to cultural institutions.

In embracing the role of citizen curators, as an engaged public, the museum can tackle the more troubled or uncomfortable histories and realties of which Pat speaks; in working with communities to explore all aspects of human experience, curators can "discomfort prevailing or settled assumptions, complacencies … that's what museums should be about too, to be about grit in the oyster and so on, in some way." Curators can work in tandem with their citizen counterparts, outside of institutional perceptions or misconceptions, so that they can engage with each other in a critical manner. Carol believes that it is the placement of these citizen curators on the same level as staff that is key to developing public involvement: when engaging with the public, not only should they be allowed to participate through social media and other platforms, but any and all interaction needs to be acknowledged by the institutions. She emphasises that within that acknowledgement, there should be an element of personality, possibly even humour, to highlight the fact that it is a human interaction, rather than the person speaking to an institution. What is at play here is what Shirky describes as a key human trait, the need to share (2010 : 158), and the role of the museum or curator here is to acknowledge and embrace that sharing.

Whilst Pat questions the validity of placing entire databases of objects online, framed in his discontent with the potential future of material culture, Carol has a different viewpoint. In particular she highlights the inability to predict what the public will find interesting. A curator might be an expert on a collection, but that does not necessarily mean that they are best placed to know with what the public want to interact. Carol places this in the context of selecting pictures for the NLI Flickr stream, where she could never fully anticipate what pictures would inspire the most engagement from her Flickroonies. It demonstrates the value of the Long Tail (Anderson, 2006); by making everything available, or not trying to anticipate what will be in demand, then all objects can find their own audiences. GLAM, and their curators, may need to acknowledge that they are not always the most qualified to assess in what the public or a particular sub-set are interested. In this there is the ability to embrace what Shirky terms as "frozen sharing" (2010 : 174), sharing something even if no one else is looking for it immediately, but allowing for its discovery in the future. In this way the sharing of a digitised object is an extension of archiving, archiving material with the hope that it may be useful or valuable in the future. As Shannon interrogated this interpretation of curation, she reflected on how curation can often be exclusionary in how it perceives the public, and that like many other forms of production, curation is not always very successful. Again, this

is how curation can fail to engage with a subject in a way that is entertaining, appealing, interesting, or thought-provoking for the public. She likens it to the lack of street signs in Ireland, as "they assume that everybody knows where everything is!" This notion of perceived levels of knowledge seeps into how prominent GLAM-sector institutions can overestimate how well-known their collections are. Anne sees this as an increasing problem in the future, that if an object or a collection is not discoverable online then it will effectively not exist to those outside of the institution. She then anticipates a snowballing effect where the less findable a collection is, the less research is done, the less opportunity for new curation and interpretation, leading the GLAM and collections down a route of obsolescence. As Brenda framed it, by not making collections visible and accessible "we're doing research a disservice." Like Pat and Nigel, Anne sees openness to ideas and new forms of curation as key to GLAM remaining relevant in the future, as well as making objects and information accessible online. Lar reiterates this, by further emphasising that there is a need to continuously look to how an institution, collection, or space can be given over to new, informal, and experimental forms of learning.

Pat's idea of curation being a creative act is something that others touched upon, with Nigel echoing this in stating that the only limit to engaging with a museum or a collection was down to imagination. Going forward, this reorientation of curation as a creative, imaginative, or generative act is a very useful one, and allows for the bridging of curation from the physical to the digital. Pat very much places the creativity of a curator as being within a larger group of actors however, that the curator cannot generate and realise all of the potential ideas on their own. As part of a larger group, the curator can act as a creative leader, adding expertise and weight to the larger, more diverse, curatorial process. As Rinehart and Ippolito articulate it, the curator can add "rigor, authority, and even linguistic specificity" (2014 : 233). Fundamentally the curator can guide a process which leads to the, as Pat encapsulates it, pursuit of "a set of ideas through material things." Pat believes that within this engagement museum staff can make a difference, again reiterating his conviction of the need for the museum to be broadly cognisant of its civic duties. Shaun brings in this idea of the curator facilitating rather than dictating a process when speaking of how future citizen participation is envisaged in the Gallery. In particular, he states that the current model in which the activity of the public is predetermined is something that they wish to subvert, and rather foster an environment in which "everyone is on equal footing as well … [a] democratisation of science, and art, and … culture." These sentiments reverberate strongly with that of Gauntlett, who states that "A culture is more likely to thrive if it has democratic, easy-to-use tools with which

cultural meaning and understandings can be built and shared" (2015 : 104). What we are seeing here is that a cultural institution can equally thrive, as in the case of the Science Gallery, when the public are equipped by and with the institution in question.

Both Anne and Nigel comment that theoretically there are no barriers to how an institution engages with the public, and many of the curators I spoke to were enthused and excited about digital projects that did so in novel ways. Nigel, Pat, and Anne spoke of the need to be receptive to such opportunities. In Nigel's case, this was as simple as being open to who uses a collection, and where possible allowing the use of collections and the museum building for creative outputs. Pat placed the onus on the museum staff and curators to engage with proposed projects in a positive manner rather than allowing conservation values to pre-empt creative possibilities. Instead of looking for the reasons that a space or a collection cannot be used, staff should look at how it could be done and work from there. For Shaun this need to open up an institution to become more actively engaged with the public centres on the possibilities for the public to partake in scientific research. For him, the future of curation in the Gallery is exploring and challenging how the scientific process can be unlocked, from looking to the public for ideas on research topics, to creating access for the public to fully functioning wet lab space. Again, here the limits are seen as creative, that the future lies in embracing the place of the citizen within the curatorial and, in this instance, the scientific world. Shaun notes that over the years he has come to know that "the public are made up of very interesting and specialised groups of people" and that it behoves the institution to acknowledge and attempt to work with these people, rather than denying their potential. Carol strongly believes in order to engage people, you need to admit the gaps in knowledge and allow them to help fill them. If you present people with a complete picture or chronology of facts, then there is no way in for them to help build up the narrative further, you don't afford them the opportunity to help: "when you're willingly and genuinely saying 'we need your help people', we got it." In this schema, it leaves space for the citizen curators, specialists or active learners in their own areas, to emerge and most importantly engage. The interaction between the institution and the public becomes "a site of mutuality, where knowledge is constructed, rather than transmitted" (Arvanitis, 2005 : 252) and allows for knowledge sharing to become a true "social act" (Weinberger, 2007 : 133). When an organisation gets a date, or a fact wrong, as Pat noted earlier, there is the ability to not only alert the institution, but to be pivotal in correcting, elaborating, or improving the knowledge at hand.

The potential and need to humanise objects within museums is something that emerged across many of the interviews. Though the approaches on how to go about connecting

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audiences and objects on a more visceral or emotional level differed in application, the need to create that bond or moment of connection is the common factor. This notion of connection being key is one that is highlighted forcefully by Gauntlett, where he lays out that "making is connecting" with the concept of "connect[ing] things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new" (2013 : 2) particularly relevant here. These connections can and should be facilitated by the institution, allowing for these moments of individual or collective creativity. For some, those connections could be confrontational or even unpleasant, such as art installations in Kilmainham Gaol, or interactive theatre in Collins Barracks. Lar stated the value in more emotional interaction in GLAM, as for him "I think those experiences of emotion last longer that your traditional kind of exhibition experience." For others such as Anne, it was to demystify objects, like paintings within the National Gallery, to break down perceived barriers regarding knowledge of art or ability to critique artistic works. There was a distinct awareness of the need to change and adapt object curation to maintain its relevance, a concern about the ability for institutions to do so while continuing to remain true to an institutional voice was articulated. The need to discomfort is one that Pat held as key to the relevance of cultural production, that exhibitions should not be all safe and comfortable spaces. Speaking to the use of artistic collaboration within museums, as well as more conventional exhibitions, Pat speaks to the need to avoid what he refers to as the "happy-clappy versions of history" where disquiet of the audience is side-stepped through careful avoidance of difficult or painful histories or current realities. Subjects such as poverty, racism, or trauma need to be explored within the work of the curator and the institution as "it is appropriate for curatorial leadership to challenge and to exercise its authority in that way." In doing so, the curator can confront the audience with a challenging perspective on history or culture, rather than presenting everything through a positive frame as "good news." Pat asserts that this requires not only leadership from the curator, but a degree of personal conviction. Conviction, or belief in the importance of the work, is a passion that can be identified in the work of citizen curators, who often explicitly look beyond themselves to the importance of the work at hand. The commonality between these curators, believing in the importance of their work beyond themselves whilst also drawing on their own convictions is brought into focus here.

Carol spoke about putting a human voice to what could be seen as a very large, elitist, and intimidating institution, and that social media allows that transformation, to humanise the experience with the institution. In particular, when using platforms like Twitter institutions need to engage with followers on a more spontaneous level to be successful, and cultivating

a friendly persona to inhabit these social spaces is needed. Carol deemed this so integral to the success that the suitability of the person behind the social media account is far more important than the role they fulfil within the institution. Her example is that if the cleaner has the skills to create a successful Twitter following and persona, then give them the role; don't give it to a staff member based on their grade, assign it based on their competency. Kate sees this humanising as critical to making history and culture accessible to everyone, pointing to the fact that if museums and galleries alienate any member of the public, in particular with a "lofty" or "standoffish" approach to exhibition, then they are failing as an institution. In this the WMI attempt to maintain "that balance between academia, and also being interesting and kind of entertaining." Within this humanising of the objects and the institution, Kate sees curation as having the potential to both allow "people access to things, whilst also allowing them their own experiences both." These "things" can be the objects themselves, the information provided, the ability for the public to engage with the object, or even to have a conversation about it either online or in the institution.

This need to reorient or redefine the role of the curator is one that belongs within a longer chronology of change that some in GLAM articulated. Nigel and Pat spoke to their experience of seeing curation and the curator change since the 1980s, where a curator would fulfil many roles that are now delegated to other employees or even departments, such as education, conservation, documentation, or marketing. This appeared to be a double-edged sword, where the curator has been stripped of the authority over collections and exhibitions that may have previously been in their control, but it has also liberated them from doing some of the more laborious or time consuming activities. Pat sees this delineation of role within GLAM as an over-specialisation that allows individuals to hide "behind their speciality and their authority". Lar and Pat borrow from the language often used to describe issues of inter-disciplinarity within academia, in which the professionalisation of museum work has precipitated the creation of silos of expertise, from which people are not willing or permitted to stray. Pat identifies the overly prescriptive interpretation of museum roles as the issue, where emphasis on the technocratic elements of the work can foreclose imaginative and communicative potential. That over-specialisation has given people a method of avoiding any work that falls outside of the expertise or area of authority. It is in this way that the curator stands outside this dilemma; by having such an often vaguely defined role, they still have the ability to mould the job to their own tastes or abilities, with the potential for negative or positive outcomes. Other cultural professionals may not have to deal with this level of

ambiguity, an ambiguity which can allow for an element of creative and professional freedom within the job's brief.

Anne identifies the liberating element of the digital as the most exciting potential for digital collections. By digitising collections, as she sees it, disparate collections which are housed in various cultural institutions can be brought together in an online format. This breaking of the tyranny of the physical, as Anderson frames it (2006), then transcends issues of access, ownership, and other institutional conflicts, allowing for a collection to exist above or beyond any such issues. As a researcher herself, Anne finds this possibility the most exciting, as it opens up a multitude of avenues for fresh research, and for viewing collections in new and unexpected ways. The potential for seeing patterns, a trait that was seen as central to the work of a curator by many, can only be heightened when the barriers between objects are broken. In this schema, Anderson would term this as "post-filtering", allowing access to all objects and not predetermining what people will come looking for, the antithesis to the exhibition, which is by definition "pre-filtering" (ibid : 223). The awareness of the potential within the national institutions bodes well for the future, and that this is an element within the future landscape of curation in the digital world. Nigel makes the important point that GLAM-sector institutions have been attempting to do this before the advent of ubiquitous digital media through the imaginative use of booklets, books, articles, and activity sheets aimed at the public. The need for these to be imaginative or creative so that both physical and digital media do not simply reinforce "the physical exhibition and its didactic themes" is key to his point. Kate uses the WMI to illustrate another aspect of liberating history and objects from physical institutions. For the WMI it is the ability to open up the history of women associated with Ireland, and to take into account the experience and history of the Irish diaspora, both historical and contemporary that is its strength. There is potential for a group of citizen curators, using their own time and access to various resources, to address this gap in history - as Kate framed it, the "huge dearth of information about women who left Ireland." By situating this project online, and not focusing their efforts on physical exhibition, they can pursue their unique position to act as a meeting point for these geographically disparate histories and knowledge centres.

Nigel reflected on the overall weaving of the museum into the social fabric, both physically and digitally, and how this integrating of the museum into the weft of broader social life may be reflected in this use of curatorial language as explored in the other chapters. Pat mused on how words are used without a true reflection of what he referred to as "embedded semantic tropes", and although he was speaking to the word "community", the same holds

true for the language of curation. As witnessed in these interviews, the interpretation of curation is not often very deep or reflective, it is a highly pragmatic and constructive term. Curation is deemed to be a dynamic and physical activity, involving the care, movement, arrangement and understanding of the material world. Thus it is in this idea of creation, collation, familiarisation, and collection, that we can see why people would adopt this language to articulate certain activities online. Whilst not a physical action, the act of being able to sift through a seemingly endless warehouse of objects which is the Web, to pluck out the most useful, demonstrative, pertinent, or trustworthy elements very easily transposes on to the notion of the curator carefully selecting objects from the store shelves and placing them within the exhibition case. Though people engaged with curation still struggle at times with this transposition, it is one they acknowledge with some degree of inevitability. It is a democratising of the tools of curation, much like the tools of production outlined by Anderson (2006 : 53-54): personal computers, cheap digital cameras, sound recording devices, access to out-of-print books and manuscripts. Pat identifies the need for curators and institutions to become more adept in their use of new technologies and exhibition methods to stay relevant and interesting to the public, which is becoming better educated and expects visually sophisticated experiences and interactions. Lar saw this as happening both physically and digitally, reflecting on how museums could orientate themselves more like some libraries, focusing less on the collections they hold and more on being a community resource. He frames it in how GLAM can remain relevant - rather than fearing the changes that the digital has wrought, instead they should look upon them as a chance to realise that an institution is about more than its collections alone.

By engaging with curation, Kate is now more critical of this so-called "traditional" curation within cultural institutions. This awareness of curation then makes the museum experience far less passive, as the viewer can engage with elements of the exhibition experience that may have gone unnoticed in the past. Elements such as wall colour, font size, or choice of information hierarchy, are no longer seen as fixed items within the exhibition landscape, but choices that are made and therefore can be challenged or even criticised. In this way it is not just the material and information content that can be open for discussion by the public, but the entire exhibition experience as a whole. This demonstrates how powerful the explication of curation can be for the public experience of exhibitions, as Kate explains "now I kind of increasingly do see it as … a whole series of choices that people have made, for one reason or another, and with different ethoses behind them, and I find that really interesting, because it does mean that you can enjoy an experience in a museum or gallery for a whole range of

reasons." In the demystification of curation, suddenly museums and galleries no longer exist in current manifestations because "this is the way it is and I don't understand this because it's my fault" (Kate), rather the whole exhibitionary experience becomes something with which the public can potentially critically engage.

How curation is just one possible activity within the museum is something that many of those within cultural institutions had explored. Nigel, Anne, and Pat saw facilitating contemporary artists within their collections and spaces as critical to the diversification of dialogue within these institutions. Brenda and Lar prefer their experience of working with interactive theatre to explore the time periods and objects held within Collins Barracks. In both cases, the artistic element is drawn into the museum landscape to engage with collections in a more creative and visceral way. Brenda and Pat in particular spoke of how artists and actors can explore problematic and potentially unsettling topics in a manner that is not usually permitted to curators; the exploration of emotions, and complex or divisive historical narratives, is something that the professional curator, speaking with the institutional voice, may not be allowed to explore. Pat discussed taking objects out of vitrines, allowing them to interact with actors or new contemporary art, and thus permitting for the object to be confrontational to the viewer. Here the artistic intervention can be liked or disliked, with people feeling freer to accept or reject the artistic offering in a way that is not usual for curated exhibits of historical objects. While theatre and contemporary art will manifest in different ways, they facilitate a similar and new interaction with the collection at hand. They are not seen as equal by the curators who commission them however, and one group of curators can be critical of the other's reliance on a particular form of intervention. When speaking of the future possibility, they invoke their past experiences with each intervention and the further possibilities they hold.

In selecting a certain exhibition or artistic intervention to complement the overall curatorial strategy, these curators are attempting to mitigate one of the largest issues that was voiced, the lack of staff. By drawing outside practitioners into the museum ecosystem, they are not only facilitating a fresh and novel approach to object interpretation and the exploration of history, they are also bringing in more people to participate with the curatorial process. Curators are limited in how much they can achieve personally, and Pat emphasises the need for curators to look for help in fulfilling their work, needing to be "open and disposed towards learning, from others with expertise on how to do things." Nigel looks at it as a matter of simply how much one person can achieve within their job, "The other thing is that the public are potentially insatiable. You can educate every single one of them one-to-one,

you will never live long enough to meet them all." Looking at in a highly pragmatic way, Nigel sees engagement with the public almost through the economy of scale, seeing that the larger the audience the greater the impact. He places radio and television at the pinnacle of this schema with the greatest impact, with one-to-one interaction at the bottom with the lowest overall impact: "And this is sort of a hierarchy of engagement, further away from the person that's doing the learning, but you're producing a product or a service that is reaching a bigger and bigger audience." Interestingly, he did not feature online resources or the NMI website within this structure, which shows that the digital is still not featuring fully within his landscape of outreach. This is down to the fact that within the structure of the NMI, the website and other online resources fall outside of his remit. Nigel presents a valid critique of online "conversations" in contrast to traditional broadcast media, in that online discussions can be more fragmentary and "less likely to 'trend'". There is a truth to this, where if an institution does not have a distinct or influential online presence, the ability to conduct or facilitate productive and fluid interactions that may have a more powerful impact is hampered.

Oliver highlights an issue with a purely digital curation, one with no geographical place, that can be freeing as with the WMI, but also problematic: "if it's in a Dublin museum you can expect it to be called Derry, if it's in a Belfast museum you can expect it to be called Londonderry, what happens when the museum exists in the cloud?" Shannon echoes this with concerns about how to approach elements of history that will have two, if not more, historical interpretations. However, she is more optimistic on the problem, looking at it as a creative opportunity, rather than something insurmountable. She addresses it in two different ways: in contexts such as Wikipedia, the neutral point of view should always be observed, with content remaining factual; she then addresses the other side, in which creative or more spontaneous interactions are needed to address interpretative issues. For her, remaining entirely factual and not having other platforms to acknowledge context and nuance, is to the detriment of the experience. Again, Shannon looks upon navigating these issues as a skill that is acquired over time, through familiarity with a subject, and knowledge of the potential problematic narratives. In this, Shannon is reiterating and restating Pat's idea that GLAM, either in their physical or digital presence, should not ignore these narratives. Both Shannon and Pat place a huge value on the place of curation to challenge and discomfort, but also better inform and collaborate with the public. Anne addresses this idea of interpretation and presentation of artworks over time in an interesting, and pragmatic way. She points to the possible digitisation of all past labels of exhibited artwork as a way to show how exhibition

and appreciation has changed over time. This archive of previous labels and research is something that already exists in the NGI, and many other institutions, and is a simple way of showing an institution's curatorial evolution. Presently, in the NGI, "the richest material is actually in hard copy format", but there is an awareness of the potential this material holds.

Shaun speaks to how the Gallery is using itself as a platform to develop more sophisticated and involved interactions between scientists and the public, where the public genuinely and concretely feed back into the scientific process. This is a process in which the role of the citizen is not defined by the scientist, but rather there is a genuine exploration of a given discipline, area of enquiry, or question. Here the member of the public is placed on an equal footing with the expert, and they engage with each other to look at a given topic in a new or fresher light. In this context, the collaboration can be very involved for the citizen, like wearing a whole suit of biometric sensors for an evening, or can be more casual, like responding to a question on a large chalkboard. This refusal to place arbitrary boundaries on collaborative acts reflects Pat's attitude to artists using GLAM space in an uninhibited manner. Again it speaks to the potential to make curation and curatorial engagement a fundamentally creative act, placing the emphasis on the open reception of ideas, allowing both the institution and the public to experiment within the space, physical or digital. Pat summates the ease at which this approach can be embraced rather than rejected as infeasible: "If you remember a good idea it doesn't cost anything."

6.3   Exhibition and curation: online versus institutional

As an example of the differences between curatorial practice physically in an institution and online, Brenda's experience of presenting the same object in both settings will be used as a form of vignette. She created her blog, *The Cricket Bat that Died for Ireland*, to allow her to showcase many of the objects in the Easter Week collection that had never been on display, or that had been in long-term storage. These collections pertain to the events surrounding the Easter Rising of 1916. She has been working as a Documentation Assistant on this and other collections for a number of years, and admitted that the blog was a response to the exasperation she felt at the lack of public, digital, online access to these catalogues:

> So people may never know that we've got, especially if we can't get our collections online. And I think the blog actually came out of pure frustration of trying for so long, working on the databases for so long, to try to get it out there, and people coming up to me and saying oh I didn't know you had that collection.

In 2015, she had also been curating objects to go on display in the NMI's exhibition to mark the centenary of Easter 1916 called *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising*. This led to her

working with objects that had been featured on her blog, and now would be on display in this seminal exhibition. One such object that was the focus of both a blog post and featured within the exhibition is a nun's habit (Malone, 2015), which was used by the Irish Republican Liam Mellows to escape Ireland in the months following the Easter Rising. In reality, the object is rather unassuming, a piece of worn dark muslin cloth with the remnants of a head band. However, the story it tells, of a young man involved in the armed uprising in Ireland, and his subsequent escape to America, is a more complicated one. Brenda spoke of the differences between the two experiences she had interpreting this object. These largely focused on the use of language, namely the volume of text used, the tone and the voice employed.

Firstly the blog post is much longer in length that the text panel within the exhibition. That panel reads:

On the run

> Liam Mellows and two of his officers, Alfie Monaghan and Frank Hynes, went on the run after the Volunteers disbanded in Galway. They spent 5 months in the mountains around Knockjames, Co. Clare, before Dublin Headquarters ordered Mellows to go to America. He and his travel companion, Pauline Barry, were disguised as nuns as they escaped from Ireland. HE:EW.1108 – black veil worn by Liam Mellows while escaping to America from Ireland after the Rising.

In contrast with this panel, the blog post runs to almost 1500 words and incorporates a number of extra images, showing Mellows, the veil, his uniform, and other contemporary pictures from the NMI collections. This longer form of curation allows drawing in all the characters involved in the story, other pertinent objects from within the collection, as well as adding her own thoughts on what it must have been like for a pious young man like Mellows to dress as a nun. The speculation and resulting humanisation of Mellows through the blog post is in stark contrast to the numerous constraints that shape exhibition panel text:

> …in exhibition text you, you use language that is for the average 12 year old, so that everyone can understand it. You stick with 50 words, because, well you try to anyway, because people don't read past 50 words in a text panel.

The blog allows her to pose her own questions, to muse about what it must have been like for Mellows, which is something that the museum panel does not allow for. Once again we are seeing the re-emergence of an institutional curatorial tone, the voice with which Brenda has written the text panel is not hers alone, unlike the blog post. Brenda reflects that people will probably have an internal or shared personal dialogue with companions about the veil within the exhibition, if they read the text, but that explicitly drawing their attention to this

question would not be suitable: "But you can deal with that in a blog, you can't deal with that in an exhibition. And this object is going on exhibition."

The text is not only different in tone due to the extra length, but Brenda was aware of the degree of extra freedom that she had in presenting the veil on the blog in contrast to the exhibition:

> I'm definitely using different language, and I think, it's one of the things I find very attractive about blogging, or very satisfying about it … when say I'm writing text for this exhibition, I'm mindful of lots, and lots, and lots of things. And the first thing I suppose is how does this reflect on the museum?

Within the exhibition this voice she employs is not her own. When writing that text she is aware of the fact that she must shape the language to that befitting the NMI and its exhibitions. In particular, Brenda framed the exhibition as not the suitable venue for expressing any new or divergent theories on the narratives being presented. What is being presented is "the standard idea … you have to be very careful in what you say, you can't express opinion there for example." Here we see the function of the NMI as a vehicle to present a familiar or accepted version of history, and that its staff do not view it as the correct place to explore new or perhaps controversial opinions or historical interpretations. Here we can reflect back on the experience of curators using artists and actors to explore these new opinions or interpretations, as a method of experimenting with new ways of viewing the past. It is clear here, that in this case of the NMI, exhibition panels are not viewed as a suitable avenue for such exploration. This can be juxtaposed with the blog, which is a personal project, self-driven, and is influenced by her own interests and opinions:

> And it's the museum official voice whatever is up on the panels. I make it very clear in the blog that these opinions are my own, the research is my own. Yes, the objects belong to the National Museum, but let's face it anyone can go into the gallery and decide to set up a blog on what's on display in the National Museum of Ireland.

Here she is aware that while the blog is separate from her work within the Museum, there is a link that cannot be fully severed. She is continuously aware of how this project reflects on the NMI, and in this sense it is not fully independent of that tonal influence: "It is my own project, but I am associated with the Museum, and therefore I need to be careful, and I am." It also acknowledges the privileged position she is in to work with these objects, and that it is something that is not open to anyone to do:

> I would be less hesitant to express an opinion in the blog. Though still very mindful that, I mean a situation where I am a blogger, I have permission from

the Museum to do it, I was told I had to do it outside my work time, so it's not exactly, it's not Museum work at all.

Given that it is so closely related to her professional work within the Museum, it speaks to how important Brenda thinks these objects are that she uses her own spare time to write and maintain this blog. Her unique position gives her a familiarity with the objects at hand, and the stories behind them, and she feels the urge to not allow this opportunity to be wasted. Being able to draw on her own accrued knowledge though her interaction and cataloguing of the objects, and then opening up the conversation to others, demonstrates that she believes there is a place for the public within that conversation: "I love doing the blog because people answer you." As the blog allows for feedback from the audience, it is a more open-ended conversation about the object or topic at hand. This is in contrast to the museum or exhibit label, which in its physicality appears more final, not allowing space for conversation or contestation: "Printing requires documents to be declared to be finished at some point, which tends to squeeze the ambiguity out of them" (Weinberger, 2007 : 145). Here Brenda can play with more open-ended questions, something the format of NMI exhibitions doesn't appear to facilitate. There is a nuance to the blog, where not only a conversation can begin between Brenda and the readers, but it also places them on an equal level when the perceived hierarchy of authority of the museum and the visitor is removed.

What is interesting here, is that Brenda is both a professional expert, but also an online enthusiast. Often these two are presented as the two sides of a coin, or opposite ends of a spectrum:

> But today, the dominance of professional experts is being disrupted by the conspicuous appearance of online enthusiasts who are doing similar work, usually performed and shared for free, and often to a high standard, just because they want to. (Gauntlett, 2015 : 125)

However, here it becomes clear that it is not as clear-cut or defined as that. The boundaries between a "professional" expert and an enthusiast are more fluid and malleable. As well as their roles not being as separate and defined as some submit, their motivations may also lie in a similar place, in the love and passion for a subject or area rather than monetary or professional gain.

Interestingly she also brings in more humanising elements, such as humour, into her treatment of objects on the blog. The implication is that humour is not best placed or welcome within the exhibitions of the NMI, and that in this more informal de-institutionalised setting, humour can be more appropriate. This emerged when we talked

about the title for the blog post, when both of us agreed that "Nuns on the Run" was the first thought we had. However, that level of irreverence was possibly too much even for the blog, as many concerns such as the impact on living family members need to be considered when framing conversations on people like Mellows. These concerns aside, the blog does afford Brenda the space to be more playful with the subject matter, and to imbue the story with the humour that may come naturally to the topic: "you can even have even maybe a slight sense of humour? Sometimes … because let's face it some objects are ridiculous." This is not to say that writing in this freer form on the blog is easier than the more constrained and formulaic exhibition text, in fact its freedom could make it even more difficult. Apart from concerns about the implications of writing about a historical figure, there is also a concern about making light of a situation in which someone's life was in danger. It throws up quandaries about how to present such a story: "I had a real hard time writing it because I was trying to not make this a piece of comedy, because it just naturally is, comedic." In having the blog as an additional outlet, Brenda can work with and present very different forms of objects, narratives, and observations which cannot find a home within the exhibitions of the NMI.

6.4   Curating through Wikipedia

As part of my engagement with Wikimedia over the past three years, I undertook to edit and contribute more to Wikipedia. Much like other ethnographic studies of Wikipedia mentioned in earlier chapters, such as Jemielniak (2014), I wanted to draw on what it meant to be a Wikipedian from personal experience rather than from a purely observational perspective. Another motivation for this was to employ the notion suggested by Gauntlett inspired by William Morris: "you had to make things to understand them fully" (2015 : 47). Whilst Gauntlett is invoking this idea in relation to creative acts, such as crafting, as being a Wikipedian involves the creation of digital objects in the form of articles or adding media like photographs, its application here remains relevant. Thus, to understand what it means to be a citizen curator, I needed to engage with what that meant, and to add it to my own lived experience, contrasted and complemented by my previous professional museum work.

In April 2015 I came across a challenge designed and instigated by a Bulgarian Wikipedian, Vassia Atanassova, called *100wikidays*. This was modelled on the idea of 100 days of happiness, where the person undertaking the challenge has to focus on a source of joy or happiness in their lives for 100 consecutive days, generally using social media as a reporting mechanism. *100wikidays* demands that the participants publish an article every day for 100 days straight (Wikimedia Meta-Wiki, 2016a). Having attended the GLAM-WIKI conference

in The Hague, I was introduced to the idea of *100wikidays* by what the group call a fellow "victim." This language of contagion in referring to those taking the challenge as "victims" is one that is used in jest by those involved, but the organic nature of the challenge is undeniable, with those undertaking it recruiting fellow Wikipedians as they progress. The group have a Facebook group and a page on Meta-Wiki to report or log their progress, and often encourage each other by suggesting articles and other general advice on how to complete the challenge. These outlets are also a form of reporting or surveillance on the participants of the challenge. There are echoes of Foucault's surveillance society within the group, in which the activities are not focused on "spectacle, but … surveillance" (1991 : 217). The formation of the group, the creation of the social outlet of the Facebook group, and the mode of recruitment through benign contagion demonstrates than rather than the sterile or functional atmosphere behind Wikipedia, "Wikipedians, like hackers and contrary to the stereotype of computer nerds, are very social … Wikipedians organize themselves into formal and informal groups" (Jemielniak, 2014 : 23). What is witnessed here is a manifestation of Foucault's panoptical vision, in which crowds are blown apart to reveal the individuals within:

> The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individuals. (1991 : 201)

The challenge has now attracted almost 200 "victims", with me being number 40. For a period of time I was the only editor to have completed the challenge on the English language Wikipedia. Most of the participants were working on other language Wikipedias, often translating English or other language articles into their own native language. A large number of the most enthusiastic editors have undertaken the challenge a second or third time since. My *100wikidays* ran from 2nd May to 9th September 2015 (O'Neill, 2016a).

I began to blog about my experiences of *100wikidays* from the beginning (O'Neill, 2015b), as well as using a research notebook to record other notes. I was always explicit about my use of the challenge as part of my research and to better understand what it means to be a Wikipedian, both within the blog and in my interactions with fellow participants. The overall theme of my challenge was to write about subjects with a relevance to Ireland. From there, the content of the articles largely fell into five groups: places and people relating to County Carlow; Irish people in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); Irish artists; Irish museums; and Irish National Monuments. These topics were all rooted explicitly in areas that are of personal interest to me - the county in Ireland that I am from, the figures

in history that interest me most from my museum and academic work (STEM and artists), cultural institutions, and the built heritage of Ireland. All of these subjects are of deep personal interest to me, either emotionally interested as a form of pride about the county and country I'm from, or intellectually interested in the scientific and artistic history of Ireland. This interest in these areas of history is inspired by my work in the NMI, involvement in an Irish advocacy group known as Women in Technology and Science (WITS), involvement in the National Committee for Commemorative Plaques for Science and Technology (NCCPST), and my undergraduate degree in graphic design. The group WITS have published two books which cover the history of women in STEM in Ireland, namely *Stars, Shells, and Bluebells* (Mulvihill, 1997) and *Lab Coats and Lace* (Mulvihill, 2009). I became aware of WITS having encountered a number of the women detailed in these books from the collections of the Natural History Museum. I joined WITS in 2015, and was then appointed their representative on the NCCPST. This Committee was founded with the goal of commemorating those in Ireland who have made a significant contribution to their area of STEM by erecting plaques in their honour.

After compiling a list of articles that I could write for the challenge (O'Neill, 2016b), and overcoming initial anxiety about creating so many new articles that could be deleted, the pace of the challenge quickly took on a familiar speed. At first I attempted to evenly spread out the articles I was writing across a number of the themes, to give them all equal representation and weight. This manifested itself in alternating between Irish museums, National Monuments or built heritage, and biographies of Irish artists and people in STEM. This alternation between biography and institutional or architectural description was conscious, so that the work did not become too repetitive over the course of the 100 days. I visualised this work using colour-coding in my notebook, allowing me to track the overall trends in my work (Fig. 6-1). Red denoted a Carlow connection, blue for Irish people in STEM, purple for Irish artists, green for museums and cultural institutions, and finally yellow for National Monuments. The most striking thing to emerge for me at the mid-way point was the fact that the work had become very comfortable and familiar. I fell into certain patterns, finding reliable resources and returning to them repeatedly, and using previous articles as templates for others, especially in relation to local Irish county museums. In the prescribed format of Wikipedia, with its style guides and templates, the work here was more akin to Brenda's text panels in the exhibition rather than her blog. Given that there was so much structure, and that my anxiety about articles being deleted was unfounded, the work was steady and did not give as much fodder for further deep reflection on the work as I had initially anticipated.

Once I had established these work patterns, there was less to reflect on, other than the content of the articles themselves (O'Neill, 2015a).
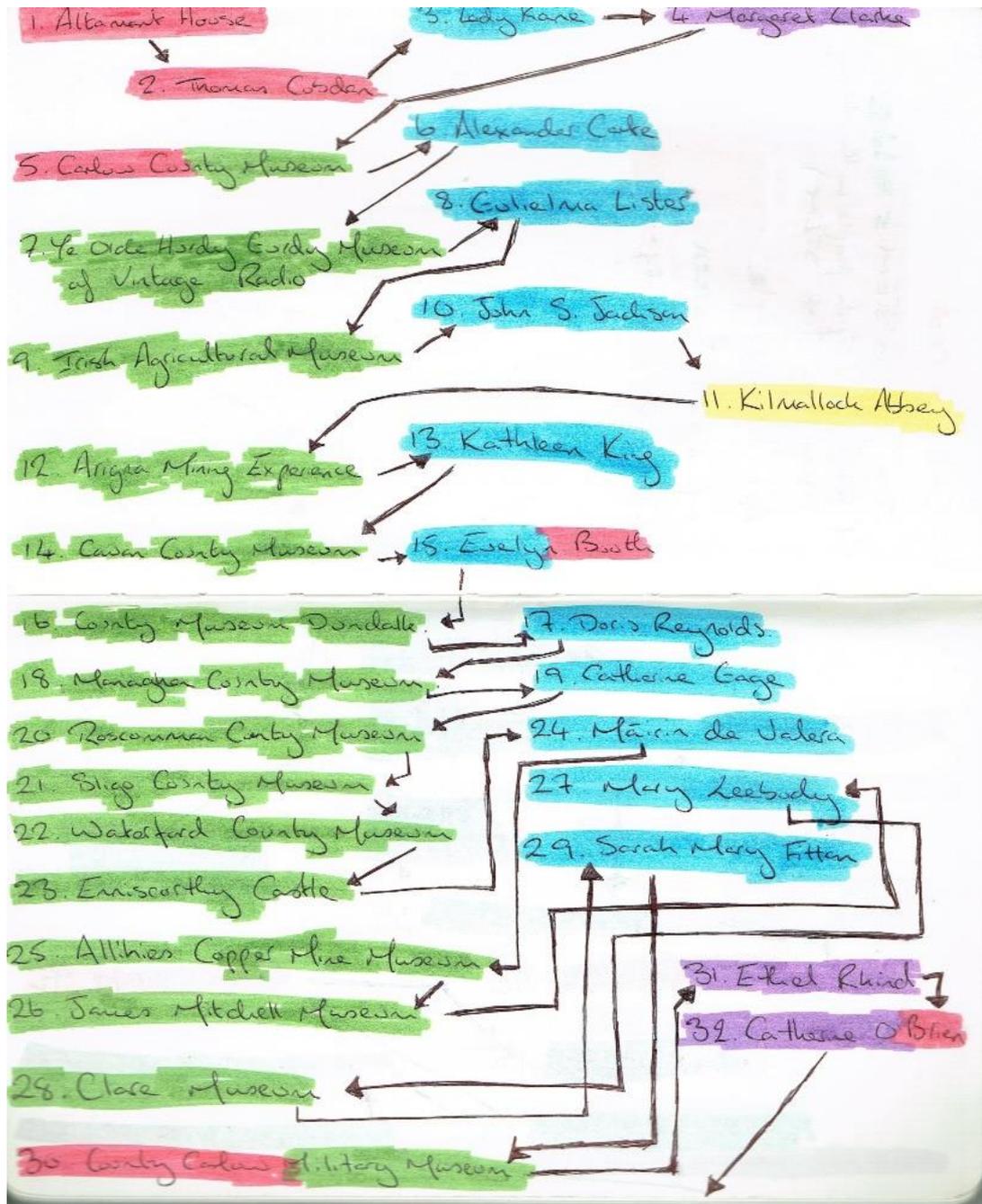
Figure 6-1 Visualisation of my articles for 100wikidays

Having blogged about five or six days at a time, the final two blog posts covered 20 to 40 articles in two posts. There was simply less to say about my curatorial process at this point, as it was firmly established. By day 52 I had found the richest seam of articles to write, on Irish female artists. I discovered that one of the most influential and well-known Irish twentieth-century female artists, Mary Swanzy, did not have an article and that opened up a stream of content that largely followed on from each other. Art teachers and lecturers led to

students, artistic parents led to their children, and members of artistic collectives led to their fellow members (Fig. 6-1). It was a seemingly unending well from which to draw, and the sheer enormity of doing so was both daunting and exhilarating. It gave the challenge and its outcomes a slightly different dimension for me. On reflecting on the articles about Irish museums and National Monuments there was a particular drive, one to complete lists. Both of these topics had lists on Wikipedia to begin with (Wikipedia contributors, 2015, Wikipedia contributors, 2016a), and my urge to write them was one driven by the need to complete these lists in some fashion. I hadn't compiled these lists, so the drive was somewhat external to me, even if it was enjoyable and gratifying. Finding that so many Irish artists, and women in particular, were completely missing from Wikipedia created a new impetus for me. Not only were there elements of a particular area of knowledge missing from Wikipedia, in the case of women's history, what is often termed the "Gender Gap" (Wikimedia Meta-Wiki, 2016b), this dearth of coverage felt less like a gap, and more like the entire area had been ignored. In completing almost 40 biographies of female artists, there was a distinct sense of being part of something much larger than myself, something that transcended the simple writing challenge. Much like curators such as Brenda and Carol working with material collections, I felt that this work was beyond me as a singular editor, and that it represented something more powerful as a wider whole. It was from this experience that it started to feel that the work I had engaged in had moved more indelibly into the realm of citizen curation.

Rather than the list completing work, much like the cataloguing work I was employed to do in the NMI, the end of the challenge felt like it had engaged my curation skills and that the work was part of a larger body of curatorial work. This was brought into even starker focus with the emergence of the *Women in Red* project which was launched in 2015 at Wikimania in Mexico City (Stephenson-Goodknight, 2015). This project aims to improve the coverage of women's biographies across Wikipedia, in all languages, to bridge that Gender Gap. The red refers to the links in articles which denote an article yet to be created on Wikipedia in contrast to a blue link of an existing article (Wikipedia contributors, 2016c). I was in the midst of my challenge when this project was launched, and I was focused on a number of female artists at the time. Without doing anything other than creating the articles, I felt like I was a part of a larger movement, of a cultural cause. It began to become clearer to me that it is the ambiguity and malleability of the curator is something which makes it appear to be the most succinct and useful way to understand and describe my own work here. It was the realisation that Gray's (2015 : 2) assertion, that "social media researchers are curators too", rang true - in particular the concepts of the curator believing in the work being larger than

themselves, and the inherent creativity that is linked to the role, appealed most strikingly. Coming from an inter-disciplinary path, moving from the visual arts, to material studies, to digital scholarship, the ability to house all of my interests and motivations under one umbrella term was both reassuring and energising. There was a personal cohesion to the work which made it engaging and interesting for me on an individual level, but it also was part of something much larger and complex than my work alone. A milestone in that was seeing some of the articles I had written in English being translated into Hebrew, Ukrainian, and Estonian. These translations gave credence to the idea that this work was not only important to me, but that others appreciated it as well, demonstrating to me that these articles had a confirmed "value" outside of my own interpretation (Baudrillard, 1997 : 22).

Reflecting on the initial proposed construct of curation as a linear continuum or ladder from Chapter 2 (Fig. 6-2), this linear interpretation does not appear to match comfortably with reality. Taking myself as an example of a citizen curator, my work and the motivations behind it fit less into a linear model, and sit more within a complex, layered and overlapping Venn diagram-like spectrum, more akin to a colour wheel. If we map my work onto such a diagram, it better illustrates and captures the shifting and complex levels of perceived expert knowledge, personal and professional agency or motivations, and authority (Fig. 6-3). A linear continuum only allows for a curator to be located or plotted along it at one given moment, and when the full gamut of curatorial work is taken into account, they may occupy differing and seemingly conflicting points on the spectrum simultaneously. Further analysing my work, both professional and voluntary, through this visualisation it is clear how each element of my work bleeds into the other elements, and coalesces at the centre with my curatorial work. The curation is not dependant on my paid work, nor does it exist exclusively inside my voluntary "cognitive surplus" activities, with each informing the other. Within each of these plotted circles in Fig. 6-3, I occupy a different increment on the continuum of participation in Fig. 6-2. Obviously within WCI and my research, I am involved in a grassroots movement at number 8 in Fig. 6-2 as Wikipedia is a citizen controlled project. However within my work with the NCCPST, I am part of the mechanism of control of a more select group, which could be plotted as closer to the 3 delineation of informed by the public, but not directed by it.
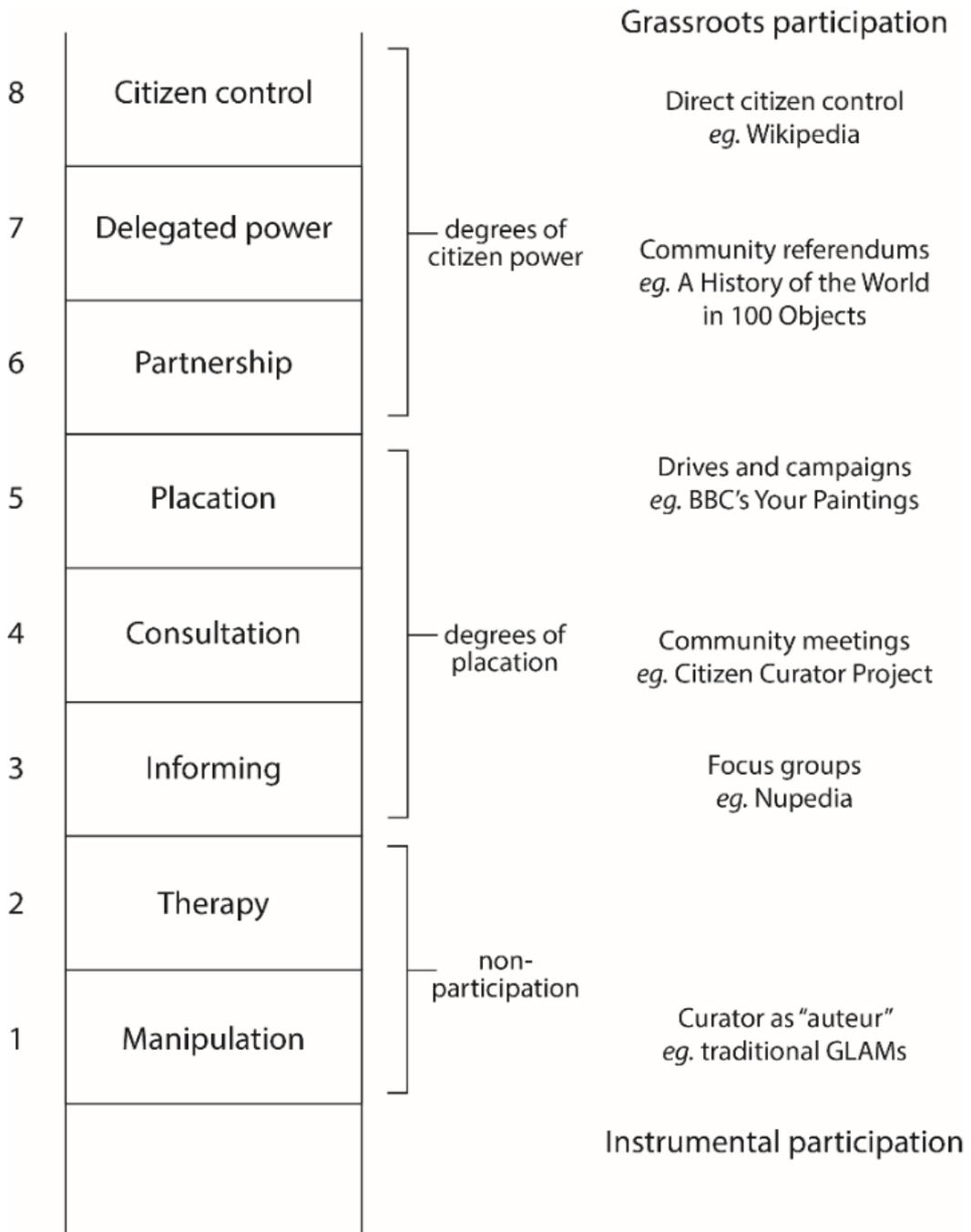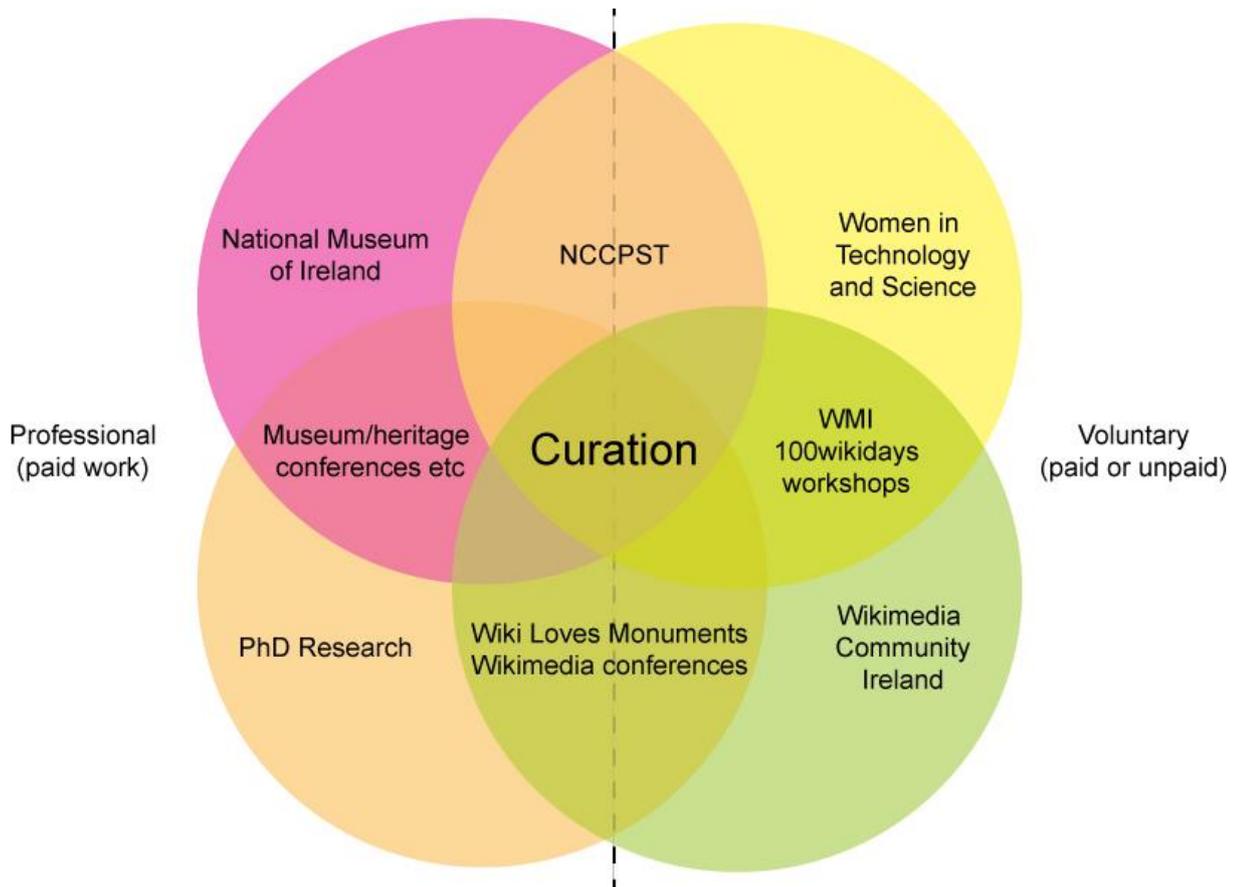
Figure 6-2 Continuum of citizen curation as participatory activity

Figure 6-3 Visualisation of my professional and voluntary work, highlighting my own curation at the centre

What appears to be the main problem with employing a ladder schema within curation is that these concepts draw on very physical and linear examples, in Arnstein's case (1969), geographically and ideologically contained activism. Within this structure, it is easier to stratify and separate out the layers which any given person occupies. Not only is this schema geographically and ideologically specific, it is also highly specific to a time when digital means of connection, assembly, and knowledge transfer had yet to become accessible. Individuals were defined and curtailed by their locality, bound to the local power structures, and restricted by the temporal and monetary costs of expanding beyond the local. Now, more than ever before, an individual and in this case a citizen curator, can more fully occupy more spaces simultaneously. As Shirky frames it:

> Back when coordinating group action was hard, most amateur groups stayed small and informal. Now that we have the tools that let groups of people find one another and share their thoughts and actions, we are seeing a strange new hybrid: large, public, amateur groups. (2010 : 86).

What is important to note here in Shirky's interpretation is his definition of *amateur*, which he defines not by skill but by motivation: "the term itself derives from the Latin *amore* – 'to

love.' The essence of amateurism is intrinsic motivation: to be an amateur is to do something for the love of it" (ibid : 82). He does appear to make a delineation which excludes passion or love from the work of the professional, which as we have seen through the reflections of a number of the curators interviewed, is not an accurate portrayal. Again, we see how complex and overlapping curatorial work and motivation can be. The transactional costs of time and money are now lowered to almost zero, and moving between digital spaces can happen effortlessly as mobile technology increasingly allows it to happen away from desktop computing.

As Arnstein (1969: 217) and Freeman (1972) point out however, it is important to highlight the elements of privilege within my own experience and in that of my interviewees. In a global sense we are the exception, as the majority of people globally do not have access to the Internet let alone the free time or information literacy to participate with a project such as this in such an intensive manner. As encountered in Chapter 2, what we are seeing here is a phenomenon that may be true for a majority of those living in developed countries, but not for the majority of those living in the developing world. Once again, we see the cultural and geographic specificity of the study bringing itself to bear on the research and the context of the outcomes. However, as mobile technologies are taken up in continents such as Africa, and with projects such as *Wikipedia Zero*, a lightweight or downloadable Wikipedia which required no data charge on the part of the user (Wikimedia Foundation, 2016), the construct of the citizen as seen here may become more applicable. Not only does the divide exist globally, but also locally, with not all those in Ireland having the same level of literacy, spare time, or other ability to apply to a project in a manner such as this. Therefore an explicit acknowledgement of those barriers for some through a lack of one or many forms of privilege must be stated.

Demonstrated here is that the ladder continuum is useful within a particular dimension of curatorial examination, mainly when looking at the varying types of curatorial institutions and their relationship to each other and the public. It does not, however, sufficiently describe the individual experience. That experience is more faceted and intricate, shifting in its nature, moving from professional to hobbyist, paid work to voluntary, physical to digital, and back again. When one can move from the physical to the digital, apparently seamlessly, drawing in all the facets and elements of personal and professional motivations, then the ability to blend becomes a natural and inescapable outcome. As Brenda feels drawn to write about objects she encounters in her work, but that are not accessible to the public, she moves from curator to citizen curator within the same moment. Equally, when faced with the challenge

of creating any article that does not exist on Wikipedia, I draw on my own well of interest and experience to fill those gaps that are most important to me. Here, the personal and curatorial are inseparable, intertwined, and directly influence each other.

6.5   Conclusion

What we are witnessing here is curation developing beyond the purely physically bound conception seen in the previous chapter. Whilst still in a nascent state, there are hints that curation can be used as a process to draw out hidden knowledge, not only from the institution, but also the individual. This knowledge is hidden both in the material repositories of GLAM and latent knowledge within the public. The knowledge here can be historical, personal, or even emotional, and there is a growing impetus amongst those interviewed to engage with and create meaningful connections using that latent reservoir of information.

The location of the object can be largely irrelevant, as it is the discoverability of the object that is of greatest import. The ability to find an object is as important to a member of staff in a museum, as it is to a scholarly researcher, as it is to those with a more casual interest. That curation is a collaborative or iterative process, open-ended, where both curator and audience can learn from the experience, is something that is emerging from the practice of a number of curators here. Whilst they feel a protective and custodial duty to their collections, they also know that a collection is only useful when accessible, interpreted and - most importantly - used. Both those who work within and outside GLAM are reflecting on the challenge of how to keep these institutions relevant in the digital world. From the examples of my own work and that of Brenda, it is something that is not only of interest to us, but gives us an impetus to do something about it. Seeing the under-representation of Irish material culture or history has given us fodder for personal projects, and driven us to engage with different forms of knowledge presentation than we would have used professionally. As Shannon notes, "Anybody could curate information, it's being good at it, it's knowing, it's having the eye." Equally anyone can find their curatorial niche as seen with both myself and Brenda.

Ultimately this examination of what curation is coming to mean, both conceptually and in practice, is something more layered and complex than originally anticipated. The spectrum that has emerged is not about polarities, dichotomies, or opposing forms, it is about how liquid and malleable the curator and curation can be. As we will see in the next chapter, curation is more about an interplay of forms of curatorial work, participation, and

collaboration between individuals and institutions than placing these elements into discrete and separate boxes.

7 The rise of the citizen curator: to participate is to curate

7.1 Introduction

What is apparent from the previous chapters is that citizen curation, as observed now, is an emerging phenomenon. Whilst taking on tools of curation which are much older, it is the Web that is facilitating an increased amount of curation, as well as continuously changing, adapting, and challenging what it means to curate now. This chapter will explore how curation has changed from a set of traditions to conventions, using the experiences of the WCI to illustrate citizens actively curating. That will be followed by a discussion on how the Web is now a large "liquid museum" in which a potentially infinite number of curators can curate digital objects purely by participating. The exploration of these themes allows for the emergence of a spectrum of curation, describing the interconnecting and interlocking nature of the different forms of curator.

7.2 Tradition to convention

It is the liberation of curation from the traditional to the conventional that has facilitated the emergence of the citizen curator. As has been explored within the literature and through the interviews, the demystification of curation and the emergence of the superstar curator has facilitated the wider understanding of what it means to curate or indeed to be a curator. Rather than the career of the curator being shrouded in mystery, where there was no apparent or obvious path to becoming one, now there are undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in curation. There is a defined path to becoming a curator, and it is not contingent on the accidental or serendipitous events on which some curators founded their careers in the past. Television shows, documentaries (Rushton and Holland, 2007), and mainstream non-academic books (Fortey, 2008) on the work of GLAM open previously sealed doors to the back rooms of these institutions. In opening these doors the public can witness the work of the curator, and discover how they came to work in these less ordinary jobs. The curator, once a rarefied and seldom seen figure, is now something that can be defined, codified, and understood by those outside of the GLAM world. Curation has moved from a closed order, where the internal workings of the curator were passed from predecessor to successor, to a more transparent system of conventions and systems, the intricacies of which are open to all who are interested. To become a curator, one no longer needs to serendipitously follow a career path which unfolds towards curation, theoretically one can study it from undergraduate level upwards, take an online course, an internship, or engage in self-directed learning to become a curator.

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Further exploring the idea of tradition versus convention, Hobsbawm frames convention in a constructive manner for this discussion:

> Convention and routine, which has no significant or symbolic function as such, though it may acquire it incidentally. It is evident that any social practice that needs to be carried out repeatedly will tend, for convenience and efficiency, to develop a set of such conventions and routines, which may be de facto or de jure formalized for the purposes of imparting the practice to new practitioners. Societies since the industrial revolution have naturally been obliged to invent, institute or develop new networks of such convention or routine more frequently than previous ones. (2012 : 3)

Here we can understand that like many processes that were spawned from the Victorian era, GLAM have been creating, formalising, and disseminating traditions, routines, and finally conventions unique to their institutions and their work. The need to have such traditions was precipitated by the need to impart information from one curator to the next. These traditions became so routine over time, and through the increased attention placed on the work of GLAM became visible to those outside of curatorial institutions, that they have become formalised within curatorial conventions.

As an example of how groups outside of GLAM are utilising the conventions of curation, and becoming curators themselves, the experience of WCI in organising the *Wiki Loves Monuments* photography competition will be examined.

7.3 Wiki Loves Monuments – conventionalising curatorial tradition

Wiki Loves Monuments (WLM) is an international photography competition which solicits uploads of photographs of national monuments to Wikimedia Commons each year during September. The first year that Ireland took part was 2014, seeing over 2,000 photographs uploaded of 503 publicly accessible national monuments. WCI ran the competition again in 2015 and 2016, with plans to continue to hold it annually for the foreseeable future. The main motivation to continue holding the competition is that the exact number of protected structures which include those that have historical, social, cultural, architectural, archaeological, artistic, scientific or technical significance in Ireland has not been ascertained. This is due to the fact that a large proportion of these structures have no easily accessible information about them, particularly online. This lack of information extends to usable location data, images or explanatory text obtainable by an interested audience. From the experience of WCI, the relevant information on a majority of these structures exists online in institutional repositories, and not in a format for widespread public consumption. Thus much of the work of the group was in preparing the available data on relevant structures to

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be reusable by the public. The organisers in 2014 were the four central founding members of WCI, Sabina Bonnici, Shannon Eichelberger, Eugene Eichelberger, and myself. This work then resulted in map, image and text data, which are now available under a Creative Commons (CC) licence. This moves the data from merely existing within a static archive solely focused on preservation, to transmission (Parikka, 2013) within a living archive that can grow and adapt over time (Appadurai, 2003) for a potentially international audience. It is a demonstration of citizen curation in action, taking something that was formerly within the purview of the government or institution, namely the organisation and utilisation of cultural data and associated sites, and seeing it used by a set of interested, self-motivated citizen curators. The following account follows the story of WCI and the use of WLM as a citizen-curated project to engage the public with Wikimedia and Irish built heritage.

WLM is a photography competition run by local chapters of Wikimedia in various countries. They organise the competition at the national level, utilising the nationally recognised monuments of protected structures from their county, with prizes then awarded to the top 10 eligible and tagged monument images uploaded to Wikimedia Commons during the month of September. Wikimedia Commons, or Commons as it is colloquially referred to, is the host for all the CC-licensed or copyright-free media that are used on the Wikimedia Foundation's sites such as the various language Wikipedias. WLM was started by the Dutch Wikimedia Chapter in 2010 with two overarching goals - to create more awareness of CC licensing of images, and to educate people about the ease of contributing images and other media to the Wikimedia projects (Wikimedia Commons, 2014b). An ancillary benefit to Wikimedia is the huge potential improvement in the amount, quality, and range of images uploaded to Commons, and thus made available for use on all Wikimedia projects. WLM's success in the Netherlands led the Dutch Chapter to promote the project to other Wikimedia Chapters and groups internationally (Posada et al., 2012). Two years later, in 2012, the competition had become international, with 39 countries subsequently participating in 2014 (Wikimedia Commons, 2014a), and 33 in 2015 (Wiki Loves Monuments, 2015). The eligible images are initially judged by a local panel selected by the organising group, with the top 10 national images receiving prizes and going forward to the international round. This is then judged by the international panel, again with 10 of the images awarded places and prizes.

Generally, each local Wikimedia group will begin the process of organising WLM by sourcing a list or database of national monuments, listed buildings, heritage sites, or protected structures from the relevant governmental department. A key feature of this use of official

lists is that any unique identifying numbers or categorising system can be incorporated into the metadata relating to any given monument. This aids in the administration of the lists of monuments for the competition, but also insures that the images are eligible and increases their possible utility in the future. Other data points can also be associated with the images as they are uploaded during the competition, such as GPS coordinates. As one of the largest events in the international Wikimedia calendar, WLM is also a critical element in the work of local Wikimedia groups in terms of outreach and publicity. WLM provides a unique and valuable vehicle for the documentation and archiving of photographic images of a large proportion of built heritage across the world. In doing so, it makes all of the images available for reuse for education, tourism, cultural industries, and artistic applications, as well as for personal use.

Taking on the organisation of WLM in 2014 was the first major project of the group that would later become WCI. For a small emerging group, it proved more challenging than we could have initially anticipated. Our group was founded following the first formal Wikipedia editing workshop to be held in Ireland in April 2014 (1014 Retold, 2014). The workshop, also known as an editathon, was focused on improving Wikipedia articles on the events and figures relating to the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, on its 1,000-year anniversary. The workshop was organised by Sabina Bonnici, who was one of the people behind the project celebrating the millennial anniversary of the Battle, 1014 Retold, with help from Wikimedia UK. I attended the event purely in my capacity as a PhD researcher, as the majority of the other participants were historians with relevant knowledge to the topic at hand. Partly based on that broad interest in Wikimedia activities in Ireland, a conversation began with other participants that day on creating an Irish Wikimedia group, with the four members then to meet on a weekly basis to discuss and plan events around Wikimedia in Ireland. As a group starting out, WLM was suggested to us from the UK and other groups as a potential project to use to promote our group and its work in Ireland, as well as CC licensing and built heritage in Ireland. From April 2014, the competition took up the vast majority of our time to prepare for and organise.

Our first major hurdle was finding a list of national monuments, or Records of Monuments and Places (RMPs) as they are referred to in Ireland (National Monuments Service, 2015), that could be used for the competition. We found that these lists were strictly only available through the National Monuments Service (NMS), a body which operates under the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. They are published in PDF lists on the

NMS website along with a searchable database of all RMPs associated with a map, but all under copyright to the Department. Our group contacted the Department, and negotiated permission to use the lists and to access the API (Access Programming Interface) of their database for use within the competition. There was one major condition attached, that only structures that were on publicly owned land would be used. This condition was to avoid structures on privately owned land, to which access could be restricted, or with which there could be danger of trespass or safety. It resulted in a list of 503 eligible, publicly accessible sites which are in the care of the Irish state. The majority of RMPs predate 1700, thus the listed monuments had a similar bias, and had an uneven geographical spread across the country. Basically, the list was composed almost entirely of prehistoric sites and early Christian sites, such as dolmens, stone circles, monastic sites, churches, and high crosses. In short there was not a visually diverse set of sites in that many consisted of stone ruins or basic structures within green fields. As soon as this became apparent, our group contacted local county councils in an attempt to address these shortcomings with the emerging list. However the compiling of this initial list was so time consuming that by the time we were exploring these other avenues, it was too late to work on the list to any great degree. Other tasks such as recruiting for the panel of judges, creating a website to house the list, promoting the competition, as well as creating the database for the list of monuments, meant that our resources were stretched very thinly. Other elements that we surveyed were the presence of existing images and articles on Commons and Wikipedia, and the quality of any images featured. This allowed us to gauge the success of the competition afterwards in regard to the representation of Irish built heritage on these sites.

A large proportion of the work was making the location data available and usable to the public through our website, and also to have the data to associate with the images on Commons. This turned out to be a laborious task, taken on by Shannon and Eugene. All of the information details supplied were in a copyright-protected, proprietary Irish grid system created and owned by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Not only is it a copywritten form of location information, it is also unusable in any location software, such as Google Maps or on GPS devices. One by one, the location points were changed by Shannon and Eugene, using a series of conversions, to usable GPS coordinates. These were then mapped on to a searchable map tool on our website, through which the public could search for and locate relevant monuments eligible to be photographed. Despite the issues surrounding the location information, and the time-consuming task of converting it, this feature received positive feedback from the public (Wikimedia Community Ireland, 2015). We sorted the lists and

maps by county, and as anticipated this was the manner in which people wanted the data presented. Simply, they were interested in taking photos of the monuments in their local area. This was demonstrated by one contributor in particular, "The Speckled Bird", who set herself the task of taking a photograph of all the monuments in her county of Cork. She was so diligent that she alerted us to errors in our mapping, as occasionally she could not find the monument listed. The website, with the lists and maps, was the portal through which participants uploaded their images. In this way, the issues or potential problems that new contributors to Commons might face in the uploading process were mitigated.

In spite of the issues encountered, the national competition solicited 2,015 photographs from 256 photographers. Of the participants, 217 were new users, and 46% of the images uploaded featured a monument that was previously not represented on Commons (Wikimedia Community Ireland, 2015). Much of my work in the run up to the competition was surrounding the promotion of the competition in the media. This was largely very successful and generated a significant amount of interest, with the launch of the competition by a government minister being featured on the Irish state television channel RTÉ One for the *Six One* and *Nine O'Clock* news bulletins and in the national newspaper *The Irish Times*. The awards ceremony, which was held in November 2014, received similar media attention, with many national and local news outlets carrying stories on the winning photographs. Based on these results, and the overall positive reception of WLM in Ireland locally and from the international Wikimedia community, we decided to hold the event again in 2015.

One of our explicit goals for WLM in 2015 was to build on the success and momentum of 2014, and to increase the scope of structures included in our list. There are many regional differences in the inclusion of structures in WLM, but countries such as the UK have included listed buildings in their competitions. Although Irish people often use the term "listed building", from an official standpoint they are known as Protected Structures and are allocated numbers under the Records of Protected Structures (RPS) (NIAH, 2016). Managed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), there are 38,171 post-1700 structures of "conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest" (Heritage Council, 2011). Thus built heritage in Ireland is managed, catalogued, monitored, and protected by two different governmental bodies, with the relevant structures divided between them based on the build date. There are also distinct differences between how the NIAH and the NMS manage their data and engage with the public. In particular, the NIAH allows for their entire database to be downloaded in Microsoft Excel with no

restrictions on reuse. This is in stark contrast to the copywritten NMS datasets and lists. Even the fact that the lists can be downloaded in Excel from the NIAH, rather than the PDF lists from the NMS, implies that the data could be worked on, amended for reuse, or improved by whomever downloads them. PDF is a static format, implying the information is there to be read, not reused, remixed, or adapted. The incorporation of the NIAH sites was much easier, as strictly there were no permissions needed to use the relevant data. However, we made contact with the manager of the NIAH, primarily to confirm that this reuse was permissible, and secondly to inform them of the competition and allow them any input they wished. Much like the NMS, they were very positive about the project, as promoting built heritage is central to their work. They also had the same concerns around private property, as a number of the sites listed with the NIAH would be private residences. Again, this was worked around by only including structures which are publicly accessible within the 2015 list. The work on expanding the list resulted in a further 467 sites being included, bringing the total list for eligible sites to 970. In contrast to the 2014 list, which included many rural sites, the newly included sites were in more urban areas, and went some of the way to addressing the uneven geographical spread of the 2014 list. Alongside the structures from the NIAH, the group were able to contact local county councils in a more timely fashion in 2015. This meant that a number of other churches and graveyards within the care of these councils were included in the list. Often these areas included gravestones, markers or mausoleums of some significance, and thus were protected.

In 2015, there were 293 participants who uploaded 1,659 photographs to Commons (Wikimedia Community Ireland, 2016). 236 of the contributors were new users, although we did see some of the 2014 winners enter again. While we were initially disappointed with the decrease in the images uploaded from the previous year, the judges were of the opinion that the quality of the images overall was a vast improvement from 2014. There was a 15% increase in the number of participants, demonstrating that more people engaged. It also shows a lack of the bulk uploads that are seen in other WLM competitions, where Commons contributors may keep all of the images they have taken of monuments and delay uploading them until the beginning of the competition, consequently uploading hundreds or even thousands of images during September. We held our launch during a day-long festival, held as part of Ireland's Heritage Week, rather than the standalone event held in 2014. From a personal level, from the members of the group that took part on the day, it was a far more satisfying event, as we engaged directly with many more members of the public, allowing us to converse with a wide range of people whilst promoting the competition and the group.

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Our experience of citizen curation through WLM has led us to some surprising conclusions and revelations. Mainly, the ability to ascertain a definitive number of national monuments in Ireland is quite difficult. From our investigations, there are over 780 monuments in state care, publicly accessible, and primarily operated by the Office of Public Works, ranging from monastic sites to castles (Heritage Ireland, 2016). Other monuments, such as churches and historic houses, are operated by local heritage groups. However, from our experience with the NMS database, we know there are over 141,000 RMP records. These figures are inflated as some sites have more than one number, such as large monastic or ecclesiastical sites, where all the buildings, structures, or fragments, all receive separate numbers. Even with this taken into account, it suggests that there are thousands of national monuments that are not accessible to the public, are not publicised or locally recognised as monuments, and realistically will not be in the future. This is an unconfirmed conclusion, as there may be a level of local knowledge required about certain sites where access is not an issue for the landowner or visitor. As a group of citizen curators, we appear to be the only group who is concerned with this disparity, and who are posing questions about how it could be resolved. The reason that we have uncovered this issue can be linked with the motivation behind looking at the data. The NMS database is akin to storing a physical collection in a museum or gallery away from the public, as its primary focus is on "storage at the expense of access" (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014), choosing to favour recording the sites from an archaeological stance rather than a public access one. They are curating the data from the stance of the archaeological record, possibly only thinking of access to the database from an archaeological viewpoint. WCI, however, are interested in public engagement and knowledge of the sites and structures at hand. Like the public, we are not forearmed with the archaeological knowledge to navigate the database more successfully, though we have more motivation to attempt to do so.

A second striking thread to materialise from WLM is the gulf that appeared between the list we compiled from the Irish state agencies, and the public interpretation of what constitutes a monument. A large number of the queries we received from the public concerned the exclusion of sites that they interpreted as being eligible as Irish monuments. What emerged was a conflation of the concept of a monument with that of a public sculpture. One example in particular was that of the Spire (or An Túr Solais) which was erected to mark the passing of the millennium in Dublin, as well as memorials to participants in the World Wars or the Irish Rebellion of 1798. The inclusion of sites from the NIAH addressed much of the gaps concerning memorials, but not structures such as the Spire. These pieces of public art are

not protected in any way, and can be removed, amended, or moved by the relevant authorities without any recourse. Thus they do not fall into the purview of the NMS or NIAH. They are however interpreted as monuments by the Irish public, presumably as they are large or prominent features of the built landscape, and for many are the most iconic or noticeable features within that landscape. It shows the divide that we as citizen curators had to bridge, acknowledging and adhering to official definitions of protected structures, whilst also wanting to engage with and even play with the notion of the monument itself. As a group it is something we have identified as a centre around which to start conversations, debates, and issues around monuments and protected structures in Ireland.

As a volunteer group, we were surprised at the interest from the operators, managers and staff of some of the monuments listed. We received a number of emails or messages from such people during the competition which fell into two groups: correcting an error in relation to the site, or asking for inclusion in the list. The location data was an easy fix for us, once we had been alerted to it, and was a demonstration of how public engagement with data or knowledge allows for their improvement. However, the second posed more of an issue, and had to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. One particular issue, peculiar to the nature of Ireland, was the fact that the UK did not hold WLM in 2015, and thus sites in Northern Ireland were not included in any competition that year. Northern Irish monuments are managed by UK bodies, and are organised under different systems than those in Ireland. This meant that even though many of these sites are geographically close to the border with Ireland, administrative, volunteer, and time restrictions meant that Northern Ireland's monuments could not be included in any form in 2015. It demonstrated to us, as a group, that whilst both north and south of the island of Ireland are seen broadly as one cultural entity, at times there are many barriers to realising that unity within WLM. While some culture organisations such as the Irish Museums Association are cross-border, it is not always easy to operate in that way, despite a willingness of the part of those involved, such as WCI.

The assessment of WLM by the Wikimedia Foundation, and the local Wikimedia groups, has tended to focus on quantitative or metric data. As one of the major goals of the competition is to encourage participation in the Wikimedia projects, analysis can focus on the retention of new contributors after the initial engagement with WLM. In this respect, WLM has largely been a failure, with a huge drop-off in the retention of contributors, seeing most competition participants failing to upload any more images in the three months following the conclusion of the competition. In an evaluation of the competition over a number of years, only 2.4%

of new contributors recruited through WLM continued to upload images in the following three months (Wikimedia Meta-Wiki, 2016c). As this is seen as a failure in one of the stated goals of WLM, it has led to some criticism of the project, given the level of volunteer and staff time that is given over to the competition year after year. Being a late entrant into WLM, we were well aware of these issues within WCI, and we decided that these issues were minor when compared to the possible positive outcomes. The main motivator for us as a group was to provide the public with the beginnings of accessible, comprehensive lists of built heritage in Ireland. The competition not only allowed us to identify a problem with the availability of this information, but also allowed us to do something about it in a very practical and engaging manner. We also felt, that even though the individual contributor's interaction with Commons may be momentary, in that interaction there was the potential to demystify the process, to break down the initial perceived barriers for contribution in the future. In short, the brief interaction with a Wikimedia project in the moment of entering WLM, could lead to more interaction later on.

As a group, we still view WLM in Ireland as having huge potential as a vehicle to promote Irish built heritage. Recently, the centenary of 1916 has highlighted how WLM could offer an opportunity to document the historical sites relating the events leading up to and involved in the Easter Rising. As the rebellion took place in the urban centre of Dublin, and as that area was largely destroyed by those events, the ongoing debate over how and when to preserve, conserve or retain structures relating to the Easter Rising is something that WLM could contribute to. It is a possible vehicle through which the public could articulate their views on what, where, and why certain elements of the urban landscape are of importance to them and others. Many of the buildings are not protected as either RMPs or RPSs, with continuing debates and public demonstrations about the fate of sites such as the location of surrender of the 1916 leaders on Moore Street. The deteriorating condition and proposed demolition of many structures such as some of these buildings on Moore Street have sparked new public interest in built history and their protection. A WLM competition focused on these sites could serve as a timely record of endangered structures, as well as responding to public engagement in the debates surrounding them. This would be a shift away of the WLM framework from recognised and listed sites, to a more flexible and interpretative list produced by the participants in Ireland. It would require the use of a more open uploading mechanism, where there is greater onus on the participant to provide the context and justification for a site's inclusion. From our perspective, within the WCI, it would mean a shift in operation that moves the responsibility of generating lists of sites from the group

(and government agencies) to the public, in effect allowing us to redistribute or reorient our own duties within the project whilst drawing on "the expertise and enthusiasm" of the public (Hawkey, 2004). It could open up debates on the preservation of shopfronts, birthplaces, residences, and other structures relating to the figures and events of 1916 that have yet to be identified by governmental bodies. From our experience of the interpretation of the nature of a monument in Ireland, the public in Ireland are keen to have a more open-ended and user-generated list, rather than the predetermined one used in WLM up to this point. This poses a greater challenge in relation to the management of metadata, in particular as there will be no official monument or protected structure number relating to these sites. However it places more emphasis on citizen curation and engagement, and opens up the project from the small number of WCI volunteers, to the entirety of Ireland, and possibly beyond. It makes it even more of a true citizen curation project, moving it further along the spectrum of participation towards grass roots participation, away from institution- or government-controlled lists and systems. Within this evolution, there are echoes of the process envisaged by Weinberger: "Customers, patrons, users and citizens are not waiting for permission to take control of finding and organising information. And we're doing it not just as individuals. Knowledge – its content and its organisation – is becoming a social act." (2007 : 133).

2016 marked a midway point within Ireland's Decade of Centenaries, in which the commemoration of the Easter Rising was just one of many anniversaries. The use of WLM to help in crowdsourcing sites relating to the Rising, the ensuing War of Independence, and the establishment of the Irish Free State means that the public could be more involved. A series of smaller WLM competitions focused on these important moments in Irish history could speak to the local experience of these histories, and allow the public to put forward their own interpretation of sites of importance. In opening up this process to a crowdsourced or open model, the innate wisdom of the crowd can be garnered and used to the advantage of both openly licensed material and for further knowledge building. The harnessing of images and their use on Wikipedia can facilitate the incorporation of more elements of Irish heritage in this "global memory place [of] collective memory" (Kaltenbrunner and Laniado, 2012) on a global scale. The apparent lack of knowledge amongst the public about their built heritage, and the distinct under-representation of these sites on the Web in general, means that there is still a very valid case for WLM to continue in Ireland for a number of years to come as a citizen curation project. As has been noted by others, WLM offers a novel approach to the documentation and generation of information around sites of national importance (Posada et al., 2012). It has acted as a rallying point for Wikimedians in Ireland,

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in particular giving the core group of organising volunteers a substantial and demonstrably effective project each year, the effects of which are both inspiring and motivating. It moves the locus of the knowledge from institutional structures that are "hierarchical, closed, secretive, and insular" to a form that encourages "openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally" (Tapscott and Williams, 2008). It is both a challenge and an opportunity to shape a potential archive of built heritage for the future. In demonstrating how iterative this process can be, with one year building on the next, it is potentially a project with no defined end. With increasing openness comes increasing opportunity to share, redefine, and expand the relevant knowledge:

> Now we can see for ourselves that knowledge isn't in our heads: it is between us. It emerges from public and social thought and it stays there, because social knowing, like the global conversations that give rise to it, is never finished. (Weinberger, 2007 : 147).

In the Irish model the form of crowdsourcing that has emerged has been at a smaller scale and with slower progress than the term would usually imply. A small group of WCI volunteers have been instrumental in creating the lists used for the competition, and have led the expansion of the list. The rate of expansion has also been slow with the list developing over years. However, given the relatively small size of Ireland and the WCI, the resulting cultural data and imagery has not been insubstantial. It gives ample scope for the continuation of the WLM model, and its application to many more forms of Irish built heritage. This marks a departure from the deference given to tradition, here embodied by the government institutions, and a turn towards a more open system powered by the public. Here we see how WCI have taken the conventions of curation, in this instance the curation of cultural data relating to built heritage, and have been able to fill a curatorial gap, namely the easy access to such data. It embodies Appadurai's vision of an "active, interventionist and open-ended collective building of archives" (2003 : 17).

7.4   The Liquid Museum and the Long Tail of curators

When discussing the Web and the mutable nature of its contents, the narrative has been framed as a "liquid library" (Lovnik and Tkacz, 2011). This reflects on Web 2.0 in particular, and the ability to write and rewrite text-based content by anyone. It also refers to the use of hyperlinks, where reading is no longer a linear activity and readers can craft their reading journey as it unfolds, and no two reading experiences may be the same. As the Web has moved from being a purely text experience, towards a multimedia digital landscape populated with images, sounds, video, animation, and entire 3D landscapes, the notion of the Web

being described in terms of words alone becomes more archaic. As we have seen in the experience of WCI and WLM, the process of interaction online can be driven almost exclusively through more visual activity than textual activity – a "liquid museum" in our context.

Within this liquid museum there is a Long Tail of possible cultural objects and data, as explored within the literature review. What the account of the Irish experience of WLM shows is the possibility of a correlated Long Tail of curators, both citizen and professional. It begins with a set of overlapping citizen and professional curators, who are working on the same set of data relating to Irish built heritage. Here the beginning of the Tail, the "hits" or "blockbusters" (2006 : 1) as Anderson terms them, are the most obvious monuments on the list, the dolmens, ecclesiastical or monastic sites for which Ireland is so well known. These are the monuments that are in state care, perhaps get a large amount of attention from national and local tourist boards, and for which there is a high level of awareness through signage to the site and onsite interpretation. These are the sites that are easy to discover for the visitor or outsider, as there is more information available online, or they are promoted as sites of interest. As WLM develops and expands over time, the potential for others to engage on a curatorial level expands also. The projected development opens up the project to an exponential number of curators, a Long Tail, who have the opportunity to engage with the furthest ends of the Tail. These sites at the end of the Tail are more obscure, and perhaps require local or specialised knowledge to find or recognise. Like many of the monuments we discovered, there may be no information easily available online, and a low potential to be discovered by a visitor or casual observer. Alongside this end of the Tail of sites is the Tail of relevant curators, a few citizen curators who have access to or already have the knowledge of these sites. By creating a space, here within WLM, to nominate these sites or structures, there is a place to host this Long Tail of knowledge and a place where those at the end of the Long Tail of curators can demonstrate knowledge within "narrower and narrower communities of affinity, going deeper and deeper into their chosen subject matter" (Anderson, 2006 : 57). WLM, and other projects like it, are facilitated by "*democratizing the tools of production*" (ibid : 54 original emphasis), though here they are also the tools of curation: personal computers, cheap digital cameras, access to databases and other online resources to aid in the citizen curator's engagement with the project.

As highlighted by Nigel, larger museums have the luxury of maintaining specialised curatorial staff who can dedicate themselves to narrow sections of material culture and their related

history and knowledge. What we are witnessing on the Web now is a Long Tail of curators to match the Long Tail of digital objects. Just as Anderson argues for the possible discovery of all cultural items by the relevant audience, equally this allows for their curation by the relevant curator. The availability of digital objects and knowledge on the Web means that there is potentially a virtually unlimited number of curators. These curators could then work on more and more refined areas of knowledge, allowing for the possibility of all aspects of culture to be curated to some degree.

This liquid environment, with its equally "liquid collaboration" (Jemielniak and Raburski, 2014), allows for people to engage in more and more refined and readily findable forms of identity sense-making. Just as those who have collected material culture physically have used it to create, manifest, and communicate their identity and sense of self to themselves and others, this activity can now equally happen in the digital. In the digital, the barriers of cost, scarcity, or geographical boundary are broken, allowing anyone with an Internet connection to engage in some form of collection. The WLM contributor mentioned above, The Speckled Bird, engaged completely with her local area, County Cork, to better understand the area and to show the world what a monument or protected structure looks like in that particular area. She is taking the local, the highly specific, and communicating it and setting it free on the Web. As Bal would frame it, The Speckled Bird's first upload to the competition was most likely serendipitous; she happened to have a photograph of a monument or it was one local and familiar to her. However, there is a change in behaviour once it becomes more deliberate, when she seeks out new "objects", new places to photograph. In this way, she is collecting monuments much like the collector begins to collect: "Collection comes to mean collecting precisely when a series of haphazard purchases or gifts suddenly becomes a meaningful sequence" (1997 : 101). In collecting these sites, The Speckled Bird was accruing and improving her own knowledge of the world as it is immediate to her: "One cannot know everything about the world, but one can at least approach closed knowledge through the collection" (Stewart, 2007 : 161).

7.5 To participate is to curate: plotting the spectrum of curation

If we take the idea that "everyone knows something" and place it alongside the potential availability of digital objects, then the possibility of people engaging in curatorial acts appears to be inevitable. Liu (2012) and Rosenbaum (2011a) maintain that curation happens regardless of the intention or awareness of the curator, particularly on social media. From the interviews, we can see that this bears out even when the actions can easily be framed as

curation. Curation happens, be it through institutional projects like the *Letters of 1916* or the NLI on Flickr, or through groups of individuals who congregate around shared goals and interests such as with WLM, WCI or the WMI.

As Gauntlett points out "media have changed from being primarily about watching, listening, and reading" to "about creating, and discussing, and so bringing about change in people, ideas, and culture, and how these things are valued and developed" (2015 : 9). If we take the modes of watching, listening, and reading, these are all attributes of the traditional exhibition in which the visitor is expected to passively absorb and view the product of curation. As media move towards this more active stance that Gauntlett expounds, then the exhibitionary experience, as well as all interactions with GLAM-sector institutions both online and offline, need to become vehicles of creation, discussion, as well as change. These activities are taking place for the audience and those who work within the institution equally. The Web allows for everyone to create, disseminate, and collaborate on a scale that has never been seen before, as Gauntlett (2013) explored in the hacking and crafting communities of the past number of years online. This builds on the idea that everyone can be an artist, first proposed in the 1960s:

> "Everyone is an artist' simply means that the human being is a creative being, that he is creator, and what's more, that he can be productive in different ways. To Beuys, it's irrelevant whether a product comes from a painter, from a sculptor, or from a physicist. (Tate Liverpool, 1993)

It is easy to envisage how on the Web everyone can also be a curator, purely through the act of participation. In this way, we can see how people are "playing, sharing, making and thinking" together and as individuals to create meaning in what Gauntlett frames as a "windmill of continuous cultural creation" (2015 : 104). This is obvious within the experience of WLM, where each year has contained opportunities for those within WCI and the participants to play with the idea of the competition, share their work, make more images and more opportunities, and create a space in which anyone interested can think about the concept of Irish monuments as a whole.

Framing this activity by drawing on the exploration of the ladder continuum of curation, and how it is bound to a linear axis when thinking about individual curatorial work, we then examined my own personal experience and how all elements of activity, work, play, and leisure can bleed into and manifest in curation, how does this manifest more broadly. If all of this activity is curation, how can we think about the different issues we have encountered of institutional definitions, motivations, professional versus hobbyist, or digital versus

physical? To solve this issue, I propose the spectrum of curation (Fig. 7-1), drawing on the circular, interlocking, and overlapping model of my own curatorial activity. The nested circles depict how one term houses the following term, much like a set of Matryoshka dolls, becoming more concentrated and refined as we travel to the centre. Curation is the overarching term, as it is the one most commonly used and appears to invoke the most potent imagery of cultural work, the activities of a GLAM-sector institution, and work with culturally significant objects. We have seen broad agreement that those who engage in curation are curators. There is some confusion as to whether all those who curate are curators, but it appears certain the curators are defined by their curation, however it manifests. These curator engage in the curatorial, a set of conventions that were previously more mysterious and enigmatic traditions. The curatorial is now codified, teachable, and accessible to both those working within GLAM and the interested public on the outside.
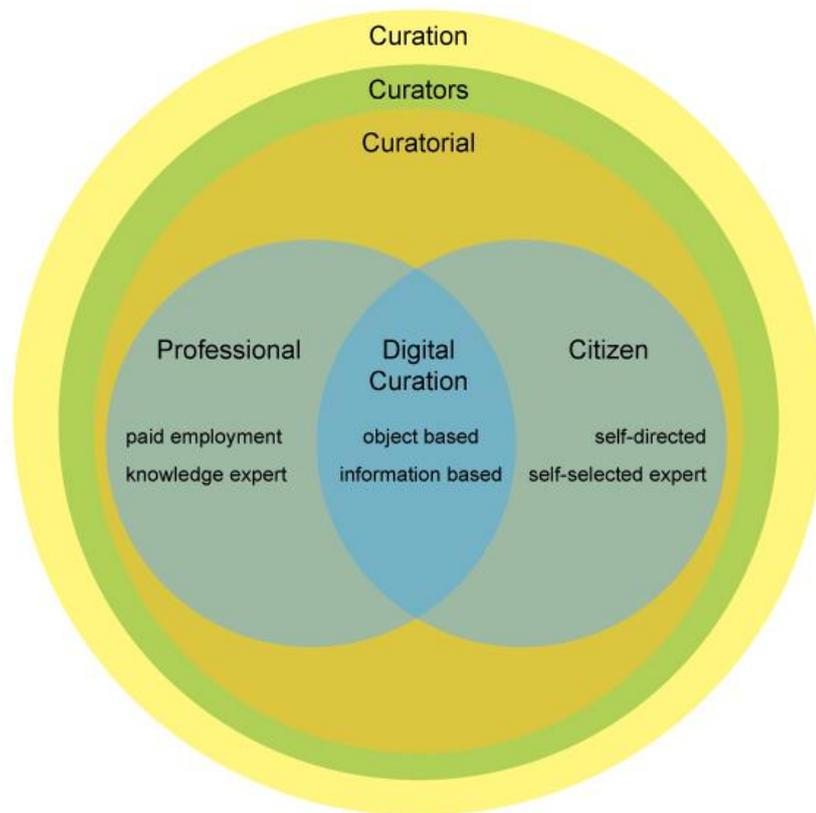
Figure 7-1 The spectrum of curation

At the centre of the diagram, we see the activities of those who are deemed to be curators, either through their casual activity, or who are deemed curators by their profession. In this spectrum, much like my own personal spectrum, we can see how a person like Brenda can be both employed as a curator and be a citizen curator. She is both a knowledge expert, in

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that she holds specialised knowledge on the collections of the NMI, but she is also self-selecting in choosing to apply that knowledge in her own self-directed blog project.

The most critical element here is that there is more that unites curators than divides them. They draw on the material world, whether in their professional practice or within their own personal projects, they bring in representations of the three-dimensional world to make sense of and communicate to others. For those within GLAM this may feel less personal and more institutionally driven, but there is still the passion for the collections, their importance and relevance, that is felt by citizen curators as articulated by Shirky in doing something for the love of it (2010 : 82). The work of those involved in WLM both in Ireland and abroad is a firm demonstration of how these areas of curation meet, overlap, and mirror each other. Curating objects, much like collecting them (Bal, 1997), allows the curator to form a visual representation of what it means to be, in this case, Irish and to experience the Irish built landscape. The ambiguity between collecting and curating, particularly in the digital context, is a pronounced one, with a distinct difficulty pulling these activities apart particularly on platforms such as Pinterest (Scolere and Humphreys, 2016 : 2). As members of WCI, we are articulating what engaging with built heritage means in the Irish context to the entire world. This articulates the differences, but also the many similarities in experience and context that exist between Ireland and the world. It lays these bare to anyone in the world to see, and most importantly allows them to build upon, re-use, re-distribute, and re-interpret those points of difference and sameness of experience and encounter with these monuments.

Curators, both professional and hobbyist, can engage with the same objects once they are placed in the digital frame. WCI are working with traditional curatorial institutions to facilitate this potential further curation of the sites of WLM, faced and frustrated by the same limitations and frustrations that many of the curators voiced in the interviews. These are lack of resources, shortage of sufficient people to take on the work, and a struggle to make the work visible and be acknowledged as relevant by the world. The work of WCI shows that whilst much of the online or non-professional curation that is spoken about by commentators such as Liu (2012) and Rosenbaum (2011a) is transitory, fleeting, or "fragile" (Jemielniak and Raburski, 2014 : 86) on platforms such as Facebook and Pinterest, there are many citizen curators whose work is far more in-depth and akin to those professional curators. In the case of WCI this is shown by promoting, raising awareness, and attempting to better disseminate information about protected structures to those in Ireland and beyond. This curation, however, allows for the more casual encounter by other citizen curators, such

as by creating a Pinterest Board of places they want to visit, or giving someone an image to share on Twitter or Facebook when talking about sites of beauty.

The citizen curators of WCI, alongside the professionals of the Monument Service and the NIAH, are telling the story of the built heritage of Ireland, whilst explicitly looking for others to add to that narrative in a visual manner. Here, in collating lists, GPS coordinates, and refining information, we are collecting the monuments and fulfilling the most essential criteria of collecting, which is narrative storytelling: "collecting is an essential human feature that originates in the need to tell stories" (Bal, 1997 : 103). As Stewart articulates it:

> The souvenir reduces the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature, that which can be enveloped by the body, or into the two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated with the privatised view of the individual subject. (2007 : 137-138)

Here, rather than miniaturising a monument to allow for this enveloping, the monument is digitised and rendered portable. The digitising allows for the same drawing in of the monument into the personal narrative, making the immovable public structure something which can exist anywhere and on numerous digital devices, as well as creating physical copies or objects from that image. Reflecting back on my own experience of *100wikidays*, it is easy to see how the selection of Irish articles was allowing me to tell the larger historical story of female lived Irish experience through these biographies. While it is possible to frame my 100 'collected' or curated articles with a national and international importance which was seen by others in the project, and this adds extra value or relevance to the work, ultimately while "the collection may speak to other people, it is always first and foremost a discourse directed towards oneself" (Baudrillard, 1997 : 22). This curatorial conversation, much like a collection, is primarily internal; then, once made manifest through collected objects whether physical or digital, follows the secondary outward conversation.

This view of the personal becoming the general as it moves outwards is the opposite reading of the spectrum of curation. Held in the centre are individual acts of curation, small curatorial acts either simple or complex, but motivated by very personal sense-making activity. In these moments, the curator is drawing on their own knowledge, experience, and judgement to assess and utilise an object within a narrative which is relevant or true for them. Moving outwards, when these curated objects are exhibited, presented, or disseminated, the audience has the potential to grow, and the narratives into which those objects can be drawn grows with it. In the parlance of the museum, the centre of the spectrum is the cabinet of curiosity or *Wunderkammer*, the seed from which the modern museum germinated (Macdonald, 2009 : 156

180-181). An assorted collection of curios, antiquities, oddities, and other material objects which were collected by the individual, these cabinets went on to become the bedrock of many of modern museums, such as that of Sir Hans Sloan and the British Museum (Pearce, 2006 : 235) or the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford (Macdonald, 2009 : 184). What was personal, over time, becomes communal, and eventually international. It demonstrates how curation, as with collecting, "acts out the continuing interrelationship between the individual and the community" where "collections achieve a community value and are absorbed into the explaining narratives" (Pearce, 2006 : 372).

Previously, the cabinet was the purview of the wealthy or the elite, primarily as they had both the means and the leisure time in which to pursue such activities (Bal, 1997 : 103). Now, a Pinterest Board or personal website can fulfil the space that the physical cabinet once occupied. Without the boundaries of money or geography, the personal cabinet at the centre of the spectrum can be populated with objects one owns both physically and digitally: "On Pinterest, for instance, users curate collections displayed on 'pin-boards' – a kind of online exhibition – of images or videos relating to themes of art, design, history, or anything else which can be represented visually" (Gauntlett, 2015 : 126). Not only that, this cabinet can exist outside of time. A cabinet can be created of objects that were once owned in childhood, that have been lost, or objects that were owned by a family member long gone, carefully reassembled using the potentially infinite liquid museum of the Web. Cabinets can be assembled, reassembled and broken apart in the digital realm as interests and moods take the collector. The main difference here, is that these cabinets are largely open for consumption, re-use, and re-mix by the rest of the world as what has been termed "social curation" (Scolere and Humphreys, 2016: 2). As with Anderson's Long Tail seeing objects freed from the physical (2006) and Weinberger's third order where an object can exist in multiple places and systems of organisation simultaneously (2007), these objects can live in an infinite amount of cabinets indefinitely. They can hop from platform to platform, be downloaded, edited, re-uploaded, and re-presented endlessly.

The reason that curation has become the most relevant term for describing this behaviour, as we have seen, is that it encompasses many actions and tool usage that previously would have been striated. Rather than using isolating terms such as editing, writing, uploading, collating, cataloguing, tagging, filtering, or presenting, curating can be used as an umbrella term to encompass this mode of behaviour in general. Scolere and Humphreys (2016: 10) put it most succinctly by stating that before the current digital moment "the final product of

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curation (the exhibit) is always public, but historically the process of curating an exhibit –
selecting works of art and arranging them – has not typically been public." The reason that
curation has become a more relevant term, is that this process is continuously unfolding
around us digitally. Curation is occurring consciously and unconsciously, in great depth and
in fleeting interactions, as well as individually and communally.

7.6   Conclusion

The further development of the spectrum has been facilitated by examination of the
experiences of the members of WCI as they navigate the landscape of curation-occupying
spaces of both the professional and citizen curator. In doing so, it demonstrates how the
conventions of curation have been liberated from traditional curatorial institutions. This is
due not only to the willingness of the relevant institutions to work with citizen curators, but
also as the tools of curation are now open for use by all, in this case Wikipedia, Wiki
Commons, and the various tools developed by Wikipedians across the world. In the
democratisation of the tools and pathways of curation through the Web, the activity of those
online can be better framed through this lens of citizen curation.

The Web has moved from a space dominated by text, acting as a liquid library, to one that
can easily host and disseminate more complicated objects with a large ever-expanding liquid
museum. As the Web continues to develop, less dependent and driven by text, bringing in
more elements of media which are more visually and auditorily complex, curation is emerging
as the most succinct and salient way of communicating the behaviour of those online. Those
emerging curators, both citizen and otherwise, are either selected as knowledge experts or
are those who have selected themselves. Whilst this Long Tail of curators has possibly always
existed, it is the Web and the easy access and share-ability of digital objects that can allow us
to begin to examine these curators in detail. It is not only the tools of curation that have
allowed for more citizen curators to find their niche along this Tail, but the panoptical nature
of the Web that allows these acts to be seen.

In this emerging environment, in which the varying curators can adopt these democratised
conventions of curation and be observed engaging in curatorial activities, a spectrum of
curation can be devised. In my own critical self-reflection, complemented by other
observational work, this spectrum can allow us to begin to understand and articulate how
relevant the language of curation is in examining online behaviour. The spectrum marks an
initial method of understanding the mechanics of curation in any sphere, with the activities
of any given curator inhabiting the epicentre.

8   Conclusion

8.1   Introduction

The following chapter is a conclusion to the preceding body of research. As demonstrated in the earlier chapters, the utilisation and expansion of the terms *curator*, *curation* and *curatorial* is a prescient one for the current digital landscape. Overall, what has been highlighted in this study is that the urge to curate, or organise, filter, arrange, exhibit etc. is a common human activity, one in which everyone engages both physically and now digitally: "We are natural editors. Without any conscious thought we pick and choose the bits we want (or at least the bits we think we want) and we ignore the rest" (Gorman, 2015 : 331). As the deluge of information that is now available to us increases with no prospect of abating, curating is becoming a more useful skill that everyone can and will use, personally and collectively, to navigate the informational onslaught. As the amount of information and digital objects increases however, so do the individuals and communities who can curate them: "Increases in community size, decreases in cost of sharing, and increases in clarity all make knowledge more combinable" (Shirky, 2010 : 142).

8.2   Novel contributions to research

There are four main areas to which this work has novel contributions:

- This work maps what it means to be a contemporary curator and/or curate in Ireland, in a method that is not contingent upon a particular form of curation, such as art curation.

- The work has tracked the recent progress of curation from a traditional structure to one of conventions, thus creating a definition of curation which can stand independent of particular disciplines.

- It demonstrates how the Web and digital objects have the potential to disrupt how curators think about collections, storage, access, and usability by applying the construct of the Long Tail to all forms of digital or digitised objects.

- Finally, this work has generated a continuum of curation in which the participatory or *Do It With Others* creative potential of the curatorial is foregrounded.

8.3   Defining curation now: tradition to convention

As the work of the curator moved from the realm of tradition into convention, the elements of their work have become more apparent and recognisable to those outside of the profession. We have seen how those who engage in citizen curation can readily identify the

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defining traits of curation, and can even extend the use of curatorial language outside of what is viewed as the traditional curatorial institution. This visibility of the curator and their work has led to those outside of the museum being able to adopt and adapt the language of curation for contemporaneous use. From the study a number of defining elements of curation as it manifests now can be drawn out, as seen from the different viewpoints of curation as an abstract and then a pragmatic construct. These traits can be placed into four groups: the use of digital or physical objects or collections; the ability to gather knowledge for dissemination; acting as mediator and facilitator for a body of knowledge or collection; and finally, making previously unknown objects or knowledge visible.

The overall defining trait of curation identified by the majority of those involved in this study is that curation involves the use of objects or material culture, either in its digital or physical form. In particular, it is the usage of these objects to impart knowledge to others that defines curation as different to other work involving such objects. This knowledge or information can be used to educate the viewer, to confront them with something previously unknown, or to invoke an emotional response in the viewer to form some connection with a historical or contemporary moment. The ability to use objects in such a way is possible due to the curator's deep knowledge of the relevant material. They have knowledge of a body of objects that enables them to mine those pieces of material to find those which impart knowledge or connection in the most effective or powerful way. Access to these objects, and the ability to display them to a public has been a defining feature of GLAM-sector institutions since their inception, however it is no longer a trait that is singular to them:

> Traditionally, cultural institutions tried to control and organise information contained in objects and collected in physical spaces, while now information is a-material and not tied to physical spaces which moves the institutions to new partnerships with dynamic objects that follow infinite hypertextual paths. (Tammaro, 2016 : 38)

Now that objects can exist as these digitised "democratic multiples" (Drucker, 2004 : 69), unbound from their physical or temporal nature, they are open to being curated in infinite ways, across the world simultaneously. Not only can they exist in this manner, particular curatorial presentations of objects can themselves become the object of examination and further curation.

Inextricably linked with this gathering and presentation of material culture as a central attribute of the curator is the ability to use these objects to disseminate knowledge. In doing so the curator is not only displaying a particular understanding relating to the relevant collections, but also the information that these objects are being used to convey. For

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Gauntlett, drawing on William Morris, the communication, creation and sharing of knowledge through expressive material, here the curated object, is a defining feature of the current Web:

> Morris argued that the route to pleasure and fulfilment was through the collection and dissemination of knowledge; communication between people; and creating and sharing expressive material. That's like a manifesto for Web 2.0 right there. (2015 : 48)

As Gauntlett notes, people have always created, collected, and endeavoured to work together, however it is the Web that allows for all of these things to happen with more ease, more readily, and more frequently. In particular, it is the "*cutting the costs of consumption by democratizing distribution*" (original emphasis) that is a key factor in the current Web, where "The Internet that made everyone a distributor" (Anderson, 2006 : 54). The ever decreasing cost of hosting content on the Web means that the uploading, storage, and sharing of digital objects is decreasing with it. In previous decades, the cost of digitising an object, be it visual, sound, movie, or 3D rendering would have been such that only a handful of individuals or institutions could entertain engaging with it intensively. Now, platforms exist for nearly all forms of media to be easily uploaded and distributed, at much more economically viable levels for the interested or motivated public at large, as well as GLAM-sector institutions.

One of the strongest aspects of the curator, which has come through in the literature review, is the curator as a mediator or facilitator. In this capacity, the curator not only works within a larger team or ecosystem to create exhibitions and to communicate with the public, but they also facilitate the use of collections by and for the wider community. Whilst the role of curator as mediator within a GLAM setting pertains more to the other associated traits of the institutional curator as author and authority, within the realm of the digital citizen curator it is less about the individual and more about their participation. Weinberger draws this out in his summation of how Wikipedians view each other, where: "credibility isn't about an author's credentials; it's about an author's contributions" (2007 : 135). In such projects, it is less about who you are offline, and more about what you bring to Wikipedia, in particular this manifests in your ability to take a body of knowledge, numerous and disparate sources, and use them to create a useful and informative article. Much like a curator in a museum, a Wikipedian facilitates others' understanding of the topic at hand, giving them the tools to comprehend and to find associated materials through diligent referencing, footnotes, further readings, and links to more articles.

The need for more, and skilled, mediators to help others navigate the ever increasing amount of information on the Web was a recurring theme in relation to contemporary curation. This pertained to both institutional and physical curation as well as curation as filtering activity seen online. GLAM-sector organisations have long been in the business of exploring rich or difficult topics through carefully selected objects, facilitating conversations or explorations by the public. As highlighted by a number of the interviewees, this place within society, to be a space in which these conversations can be conducted and mediated, is an important role for GLAM going forward. However, a more diverse and numerous amount of curators are required to apply the same mediation to information and objects that exist on the Web. As both Anderson (2006) and Weinberger (2007) explore, filtering of content now happens *after* it is "published" online, rather than the traditional analogue method of filtering *before*. As Shirky states:

> Mass amateurization of publishing makes mass amateurization of filtering a forced move. Filter-then-publish, whatever its advantages, rested on scarcity of media that is a thing of the past. The expansion of social media means that the only working system is publish-then-filter. (2009 : 98)

The final attribute of the curator is the unveiling of previously hidden or invisible objects, and their stories, histories, or narratives. This ability can stem from two distinct and binary positions as a curator. The ability either comes from the intimate knowledge of a collection or body of information, which equips the curator with the knowledge of the lesser known histories, previously un-exhibited objects, or subtle unspoken narratives. Or, there is the fresh perspective which Shannon spoke of, where coming to a collection or set of information with no previous knowledge or experience allows for a hitherto unexplored curatorial intervention to emerge. From my own experiences on Wikipedia, there was a mix of these two perspectives. I began with writing about Irish figures in STEM whom I had tried to study and garner more information about for a long period of time. This led me to writing about other Irish people, about whom I knew far less, but felt that their omission from Wikipedia was something that needed to be remedied. My experience on Wikipedia demonstrates one of its main attributes, as expounded by Weinberger: "One of the lessons of Wikipedia is that conversation improves expertise by exposing weaknesses, introducing new viewpoints, and pushing ideas into accessible form" (2007 : 145). Projects such as the *Women in Red* have highlighted and exposed a systematic exclusion of female history and topics, not only on Wikipedia, but in general. The format of Wikipedia as a project however, empowers anyone to change that. A citizen curator does not need to have access to a physical

exhibition space, or endeavour to get a book published on a woman's biography to improve the coverage of a female-centric topic.

What this further demonstrates is that even though for the majority of topics most people are interested in "blockbusters", the Mona Lisa, the Rosetta Stone, or the Books of Kells, there is an element within all of us that is niche: "Every one of us – no matter how mainstream we might think we are – actually goes super-niche in some part of our lives" (Anderson, 2006 : 184). Physical exhibitions can often cater to the general, to the blockbuster, it is more challenging to cater for all potential niches. The digital, as we have encountered, can allow for any and all interpretations, explanations, and conversations to happen about human, material culture simultaneously. These conversations can also occur between just two people, or between a huge multitude, with or without a relevant institution's knowledge or input. Whilst previously, when objects, people, and narratives were bound to the physical, "Each standard and each category valorizes some point of view and silences another" (Bowker and Star, 1999 : 5), setting an object free in a digital sense, frees the narratives and interpretations from this polar, binary view. As Weinberger frames it, if all objects or pieces of knowledge are viewed as leaves on a tree, once they exist on the Web, they do not have to be bound to one classification, "each leaf on as many branches as possible" (2007 : 103). In this state, freed from the physical and temporal bounds of a collection or exhibition, an object can address the themes, narratives, and stories which are of importance to citizen curators as individuals or as communities. This is of great import given that these stories and forms of storytelling can be not only divergent, but even ones that conventional GLAM may never consider telling: "there may be those outside the museum now have feelings about what information is important to curate and present, which may by no means relate to the information that the museum finds important to curate" (Romanek, 2008 : 12). It highlights that it is not only the objects that are democratised, but the act of storytelling using these objects that is freed also. There is the possibility of such stories being found, uncovered, or rediscovered, whilst it also allows for stories that a traditional curatorial GLAM-sector institution may never have known were there too be told.

The four attributes of curation and citizen curation, as revealed in this study, demonstrate how important it is that GLAM-sector institutions do not ignore how curation has changed and continues to change. In particular it is the elements of the Long Tail and creative digital media production that are central to the institutions' understanding of how important citizen curation can be in keeping GLAM relevant in the digital world.

8.4   Citizen curation within institutions: the Long Tail of curation

One of the main conclusions that can be drawn from the examination of citizen engagement with GLAM in Ireland is that it would most often fall into the tokenistic end of the Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969). As we saw in Chapter 2, these forms of engagement can be seen as mirroring the traits of citizen science, in which the individual's participation is tightly regulated and is defined within a rigid overall institution-led structure. This is not surprising given that to engage with citizens in a less controlled or rigid way demands that GLAM-sector institutions move away from the traditional constructs of curatorial or institutional authority and its public, as well as some remaining didactic forms of communication with audiences. The inability to move on from older forms of authority and knowledge generation and communication is not unique to cultural institutions, as it also affects academia, media, and publishing sectors as well: "Depending on your perspective, digital media threatens to either destroy or revolutionize millennia-old scholarly practices" (White, 2014 : 3).

As Shirky and others point out, it was largely scarcity that created and maintained the traditional forms of knowledge creation, assessment, and dissemination. In particular, when all forms of communication and other work around knowledge were costly, in time and difficulty, in created the need for professionals to aid the public:

> When reproduction, distribution, and categorization were all difficult, as they were for the past five hundred years, we needed professionals to undertake these jobs, and we properly venerated those people for the service they performed. Now those tasks are simpler, and the earlier rules have in many cases become optional, and are sometimes obstacles to direct access, often putting the providers of the older services at odds with their erstwhile patrons. (Shirky, 2009 : 78)

Weinberger frames the work of these authorities as time-saving for the public at large:

> Authorities have long filtered and organised information for us, protecting us from what isn't worth our time and helping us find what we need to give our beliefs a sturdy foundation. But with the miscellaneous, it's all available to us, unfiltered. (2007 : 132)

The professional and the citizen need not continue to be at odds, the relationship and roles simply need to be re-evaluated within the new model of the digital. What we saw from the interviews with curators in GLAM was that there is an acute awareness that this re-evaluation needs to happen quickly, lest cultural institutions become obsolete (Cooke, 2005). A potential structure for facilitating such engagement and one that gives a framework to the general

issues facing traditional informational, cultural, or creative disciplines in the modern digital world, is outlined by Gauntlett:

> "1. Embrace 'because we want to.'
>
> 2. Set no limits on participation.
>
> 3. Celebrate the participations, not the platform.
>
> 4. Support storytelling.
>
> 5. Some gifts, some theatre, some recognition.
>
> 6. Online to offline is a continuum.
>
> 7. Reinvent learning.
>
> 8. Foster genuine communities." (2015 : 89)

One of the most critical elements in understanding, and then wanting to foster engagement with interested and motivated citizen curators, is that they do this work because they want to. As explored in this study, motivated citizen curators will not wait for institutional approval or even cooperation to begin to engage with material culture or objects. This is because they believe the work is so important, that it warrants attempting to begin, even if the relevant institution is not 'ready.' As Weinberger contends, "Put simply, the owners of information no longer own the organisation of that information" (2007 : 106). As witnessed through the examination of the Ladder of Participation, one of the critical mistakes that GLAM-sector institutions often make is attempting to control the levels or scope of participation by the public too tightly. Projects like *Ireland's Favourite Painting* offer a veneer of citizen control, but are in fact only offering a superficial level of engagement, controlled by the organising institutions, and institutional curators are aware of this.

Very much linked to this is the concept of lauding participation and not the platform. Many institutions can spend a great deal of time and resources crafting a platform on which to foster engagement from the public, such as *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. Whilst these projects can be very successful in their own right, they are restrictive. Only the institution that has the financial and staff resources to create and support such an endeavour can do so. These barriers for smaller or less well supported GLAM-sector institutions then generate the perception that such engagement is impossible on a smaller scale. However, this obsession with platform and not the participation is the problem. If an institution is willing to go to where the participation is happening, be it on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, or Wikipedia, rather than trying to create a rival platform then the problem evaporates. This has been

demonstrated quite effectively by Carol's experience of the NLI on Flickr. Once again, it is the letting go of the need to control, here the environment in which the institution allows itself and its staff to actively participate with the public, which is the key to overcoming an element of the challenges the digital presents to cultural institutions.

It is important to acknowledge the relevance of both the physical and the digital, as well as their curation and interaction with each other. Neither makes the other irrelevant, and Gauntlett's framing of offline and online as a continuum is important for the future of cultural institutions in general. Some curators and museum professionals are not only thinking about, but actively seeking out interventions, collaborations, and exhibitions which can address, bridge, or even play with this continuum. From the literature review in Chapter 3, it is clear that it is art institutions that have been thinking about and playing with this concept for the longest amount of time, particularly in light of Web and Internet Art (Graham and Cook, 2010, Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014). They have begun to navigate these waters, and from what we have seen from this study it is time for other GLAM to do the same. It mirrors the similar continuum that has been identified within the categorisation of individual curators as professional or amateur. Once again this divide is less about two opposing positions, but rather a scale where "The distinction between 'professional' producers and 'amateurs' is blurring and may, in fact, ultimately becomes irrelevant" (Anderson, 2006 : 78).

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the ability for people to own and tell their own stories is a potent driver of citizen curators. Individuals collect, curate, and present objects to understand themselves, their communities, their nations, and the world. In the digital realm they do this, and then can exhibit these creations to other interested individuals or audiences. When institutions support and encourage storytelling, they are telling the public that their stories are important, relevant, and should be heard. These "meanwhiles" of history, as Pat Cooke coined it, allow for people to see themselves and their own stories within the vast continuum of history, whether local, national or international. This acknowledgement of the importance and relevance of individual storytelling is inextricably linked with the next pillar of participation: recognition.

Another theme which emerged from the study is that of curation as a tool for learning. From Oliver's idea of "active reading" on Wikipedia to Philip's use of his experience with the *Letters of 1916* to then study to be a tour guide, it is clear that curation is being used as a tool for learning and personal development. Again, it is the continuation of the greater participation

seen in forms of media that previously would have been one-directional, with the public being recipients of knowledge from books, film, exhibitions, and even static computer learning stations within cultural institutions. The individual is then active within the curatorial process with "curation as a learning activity", and not only that, it is a personal and social activity as well: "It is a process that combines personalization and socialization whose essence is creating knowledge by selecting, arranging, combining and collecting digital content based on cooperation between participants." (Gadot and Levin, 2014 : 636). Citizen curators not only craft their own learning pathways while they curate, but they also help inform and can be informed by the curatorial activity of others. This sort of journey is typified by my experience of *100wikidays*, where the community of participants were heavily involved in shaping and crafting each other's selected and created articles.

Lastly, in Gauntlett's schema, what is demanded of GLAM or curatorial institutions today is to be a hub for open communities; communities like that of Carol in the NLI and her "Flickroonies", all passionately working on a joint goal, to improve the knowledge and understanding of the photographic collections. A key element of these interactions was the parity on which the staff and the public existed, a true collaboration which generated and maintained a meaningful and productive community; and not only that, the work they did fed directly back into that most institutional of items – the Library's catalogue. Such archives and catalogues are no longer seen as edifices to be only read by the public, but much like memory it "becomes less of what we *have* assembled and locked away and more what we *can* assemble and share" (Weinberger, 2007 : 15). It acknowledges that "There is no patron saint of data entry who whispers the truth into the ears of registrars as they fill out collection records" (Rinehart and Ippolito, 2014 : 83). Thus:

> When knowledge is considered a public good, rather than a precious resource to be guarded from looters, people are eager to exchange it and are driven by community interest and their moral obligation to others, rather than by self-interest. (Jemielniak, 2014 : 59)

Just as citizen curation can be viewed as a fully formed realisation of the principle of the freedom of speech, citizen curation is the ultimate embracing of state-owned cultural collections by the public, this being a prime example of the public taking control of one such collection. Such collections are deemed to be held "in trust" for the people, there for the benefit, enjoyment, and education of the citizenry. In "turning over" the digital iterations of these objects for public use it is pubic engagement fully formed (Riaz and Pasha, 2011 : 93). As Tapscott and William explain, in this participatory and open digital landscape, the focus

should be on creating "vibrant communities" which can only happen in digital "public squares", not controlled and curtailed "walled gardens" (2008 : 39).

When institutions can take on and implement this sevenfold structure laid out by Gauntlett, it creates a system in which GLAM and their staff participate in what he terms the windmill of culture, where:

> These four dimensions are driven by *playing, sharing, making and thinking* – the active processes through which people learn and form meaning together … driving this windmill of continuous cultural creation. (2015 : 104)

The most important element of this is the collaborative and iterative form this windmill takes, not unlike the spectrum of curation proposed in this study - it is not a structure of binaries, oppositions, or authorities, but rather fundamentally about participation. For the future of GLAM it is critical to acknowledge that by participating in a more open, social, and collaborative space, their own position does not become obsolete, as Shirky notes: "Social production is not a panacea; it is just an alternative" (Shirky, 2010 : 129). However participation now forms the central, and most important element of curation as it manifests today. These collaborative, participatory spaces foster what has been termed as a "Pro-Am" environment, a place and "a time when professionals and amateurs work side by side" (Anderson, 2006 : 60) on joint goals as well as shared passions.

The most exciting part for GLAM is the potential, not only within the collaborative work, but in what the knock-on effects could be: "When old costs are shed, the time and money saved can be applied to new things, things that were unpredictable in the old regime" (Shirky, 2009 : 304). The Long Tail for cultural objects removes the physical institutional exhibition as the "bottleneck" on discovery of niche objects, creating space for new and exciting discoveries for both GLAM and their public alike (Anderson, 2006 : 117). As has been noted, both by interviewees and in the literature, the space that a museum or other institution provides is something of great value, and whilst "new technologies are both products and agents of cultural change … that 'space' is one of the enduring currencies of museums" (Parry and Hopwood, 2004 : 69).

8.5   To participate is to curate – Do It With Others

What has been witnessed here is a particular moment in the increased visibility of the citizen curator. As noted before, the urge to curate is not born of the Web or the digital, but is rather made visible by them. Curation no longer takes place in geographically, culturally, or socially isolated places, such as in scrapbooks, local museums, personal object collections, or in ad

hoc societies, but rather in the open spaces of the Web. At this point there is a recognition of the utility and applicability of the term *curation*, but a noted discomfort at its use outside of cultural institutions. In viewing the spectrum of curation, we can see that much of the work of the public in varying projects can be identified as that of the curator, but that the public themselves are not always prepared to take on curatorial language. What is evident is that regardless of whether or not individual citizen curators identify as such, they continue to curate, personally and collectively within their everyday activity online.

The landscape in which people engage in production and curation is no longer cut off from the world at large. Increasingly, creative and curatorial work is happening and being documented so that it can be published, shared, and exhibited online. The fundamental difference in curation, as well as many other forms of cultural production, is that there has been a "switch from receiving to creating, from passive to active. It's the switch to DIY media as viable, easy, and expected" (Gauntlett, 2015 : 26). Individuals will continue to create, modify, publish, and curate, and more often than not the digital can push or inspire them to not only "Do It Themselves" but to "Do It With Others" (Garrett, 2012). Just as with Wikipedia, many forms of social and cultural production and curation now share a similar promise: "The implicit promise is simpler: if you help, this will get better" (Shirky, 2009 : 278). Or as Gauntlett states:

> Having easy access to people who share their passions means that individuals can be inspired by each other's work and ideas – which can lead to a positive spiral of people doing better and better things and inspiring more and more activity by others. (2015 : 43)

The difference which marks out curation now as altered from all understandings and manifestations of curation at any point in the pre-Internet past, is that curation can and should be a collective, collaborative, iterative, and democratic process. Curatorial input into knowledge or cultural endeavours such as Wikipedia is not necessarily dictated by education, geographical location, or economic circumstances, but by the ability to participate.

In the digital, publishing, producing, creating, and curating are no longer about static, immovable objects, but about living objects which can be downloaded, re-interpreted, re-mixed, and redistributed to new and unexpected place or audiences. Just as Anderson frames Wikipedia, contemporary digital spaces for knowledge and object curation such as Wikipedia are about a "living community rather than a static reference work" (2006 : 71). These living communities are populated with interested and passionate individuals who find others who share in their passion, and their human touch offers "more than stainless steel shelves and

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solander boxes" of physical GLAM storage, in what Rinehart and Ippolito coin as the "human archivist" who is equally a citizen curator, enthusiast, or hobbyist (2014 : 82). These citizen curators then can find each other and gather around their shared areas of interest: "Their interests splinter into narrower and narrower communities of affinity, going deeper and deeper into their chosen subject matter, as is always the case when like minds gather" (Anderson, 2006 : 57). To engage, participate, and curate "all one needs is a computer, a network connection, and a bright spark of initiative and[/or] creativity to join in" (Tapscott and Williams, 2008 : 12). Curation on this scale becomes a powerful form of iterative creativity and collaboration, exemplified by the emergence of the spectrum of curation in a circular, layered form.

As we have explored, the notion of curation and the curator is inexorably linked with objects, physical or digital. If we take Balzer's assertion that "the curator remains in charge of *stuff* and since the turn of the millennium, it's more stuff than ever" (2014 : 61), then the curator, citizen and otherwise, is set to become a more important figure. As more objects are born to the Web, purely digital, and others are committed to the Web in their digitised form, this potentially unending stream of objects will need its equally unending cohort of curators. Anderson's Long Tail of objects, matched with their curators, means that the conventional wisdom around not making objects available as there may not be an audience for them becomes less relevant: "Enormous databases of images, text, videos, and so on include many items that have never been looked at or read, but it costs little to keep those things available, and they may be useful to one person, years from now." (Shirky, 2010 : 174)

Just as we saw that archives have come to be seen as vehicles for transmission, not only for storage or preservation (Parikka, 2013 : 123), now when that transmission happens is less relevant. Objects are being digitised, not with an express concept of how they will be used, but to ensure that they at least have the potential to be discovered by that interested and motivated public of citizen curators.

8.6   Opportunities for further study

8.6.1   Emergent

As suggested by the title of this study, the citizen curator has only recently become visible enough to be studied in any great depth. Increasing access to high-speed Internet connections, the uptake of large-scale digitisation projects, cheaper hosting and domain costs, and readily available social networks have all precipitated an environment in which curation can flourish for the most ardent and fleeting citizen curator alike. Due to the

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emerging nature of this area of study, this research is very much an initial attempt to capture the nascent topic. As such, this research acts as an initial jumping off point to study the phenomenon of the citizen curator further, and the spectrum of curation in particular. The work presented here is very much a snapshot of what it means to engage in curation in 2015. As time passes, the study can take its place within a larger breath of understanding. We have seen that curation can emerge anywhere on the Web, and it will continue to do so as both the Web and its technologies develop. To restate an obvious point, "the digital world does not 'cause' more activity to happen, but it does *enable* people to make and – in particular – connect, in efficient and diverse ways which were not previously possible" (Gauntlett, 2015 : 115).

8.6.2   History from below

One of the elements of citizen curation and its manifestation online is its implications for other fields of study, in particular history. Over the past 30 years much museological thought has been given over to the concept of diversifying the historical narratives to which GLAM present and subscribe. Phenomena such as Black History Month, Pride, as well as Women's History initiatives, all strive to move GLAM-sector historical narratives away from the white, global north, Euro-centric, or male dominated stories that they are perceived to be. The ability for digital platforms to host more divergent narratives, ahead of their physical GLAM contemporaries, not only allows for these forms of storytelling to find an outlet but also can provide GLAM with material to inform curatorial thought and strategy. Broadly speaking this can be described as a method of writing "history from below" which accounts for the collective and individual nature of narrative with both human and computer elements (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 9), as discussed within the literature review.

This has two broad potential outcomes, which are then also areas for further investigation. These are firstly, the impact of these digital, exhibitionary narratives on the documenting of history, and secondly how these emergent histories from below affect the collecting patterns of GLAM. A natural progression from some of the examples encountered in this study would be the impact initiatives such as the *Letters of 1916* have on the crafting of history relating to the revolutionary period in Ireland. Such an examination of the impact of crowdsourced or citizen-curated information, objects, and stories could be interrogated from a historical perspective, charting the change in attitudes and forms of storytelling around 1916, or in the collecting patterns of relevant GLAM such as the NMI, NLI, or NGI.

Further examination is warranted of the role of "para-human" (Appadurai, 2003 : 14), "prosthetic memory" (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009 : 11) that can evolve when individuals collaborate in curatorial activities centred on documenting or archiving historical events in a digital, social format. These socially or collectively constructed histories and narratives can be formed with a "blend of human and computer meanings" (ibid : 16), making them the malleable "archives in motion" (Parikka, 2013 : 120) that we have seen beginning to emerge within this work.

8.6.3   The future of museums

A question which arose in this research, particularly in the interviews, but that could not be addressed within the scope of the study, is that of the future of museums. For those within institutions it appeared to be something to consider with both trepidation and excitement. There was a sense that museums could potentially become more relevant, but that the key was that museums and those who work within them need to clearly and passionately articulate that relevance. There was a pervading sense that the idea that the museum and its collections are inherently important and worthy of support, both notionally and financially, is something that cannot be taken for granted.

Thus an ample area of study, and one which would fall into a long tradition of critical museological thinking and reflection, is the future of museums when set against this emergence of the citizen curator or emancipated curation. If curation is no longer strictly a task undertaken by those within museums, what other elements make museums an important feature of the cultural landscape now and into the future? As GLAM continue to embark on more collaborative and experimental forms of curation, as we have begun to see in this study, there will be a larger and more nuanced corpus of examples and critical reflection to draw upon.

Secondly, the tension that emerged repeatedly between the physical and the digital in relation to the place of the museum within the larger cultural landscape bears further investigation. Whilst the digital is no longer novel, but an expected and sought after experience by the public when encountering material heritage, it is forever contingent on the physical. Since the dawn of the digital or the virtual, there have been objects that exist in that realm, but our experience and encounters with these objects is forever bound to our own physicality. In this way, could museums play a role in aiding in the more nuanced and complex human encounters with the digital, how we relate them to ourselves and to others? The future of the museum may not lie as mundane vaults of the physical, as proffered by Pat Cooke, but as

complex "hybrid virtual-physical" (Ruhleder, 2000 : 5) spaces in which the public and the institution can ask questions about the nature of objects, and their relationship to us.

8.6.4   Comparative study

This research, as a piece of autoethnography, is a highly specific one tied not only to the personal experiences of myself and those I have worked with, but also to Ireland. It is a peculiarly Irish experience of curation that was a theme that was picked up on by interviewees, who were concerned that curation in Ireland may not be analogous to current or progressive forms of curation elsewhere in the world. However to ascertain if this is indeed true, comparable research would need to be undertaken in other parts of the world, with other institutions and their groups of curators, both institutional and citizen. It is my suspicion that there may be more similarities than differences if such work was to be undertaken, as there may be an element of thinking the curatorial grass is greener in the United Kingdom or United States in particular.

8.6.5   The curator in abstract

Finally, the last and possibly most complex element which requires study is the philosophical construct of the curator. As seen in the literature review, this is something which has been undertaken by a number of academics numerous times, however, they are almost all confined to particular applications. The more developed and abstract reflections on the curator are focused solely on the art curator, whilst the more digitally orientated work draws purely on more recent and fluid applications of the term curator. Much time has been given to the study of the history and development of the museum, as well as the philosophical implications of that development, but the curator has remained a neglected figure. In stark contrast to the emergence of the superstar art curator, the curator within history or science museums has remained an unexamined figure. One of the great difficulties of this study was in finding definitions and applications of curator and curation that were not bound or drew explicitly on the art world. The art curator has been interrogated as a philosophical construct by those such as Martinon (2013a) and O'Neill (2012), and as individuals by Obrist (2011) and Thea (2009). However, the archaeological, natural history, decorative arts, or any number of other fields, curator remains an under-examined and literally unquestioned figure within the critical examination of being a curator. This vacuum in the construction of curation as a philosophical activity results in a picture of the curator which is incomplete. The proceeding study offers a starting point in beginning to identify the gaps in our knowledge about curators and their work, taking in all forms of curation equally.

As well as addressing this gap in curators who have been the object of study, taking in the notion of the curation of self, or the self as expressed through curation, is a logical step in explicating and expanding the understanding of what it means to curate. Akin to studies on what it means to collect (Muensterberger, 1993), archive (Derrida, 1996), create historical narratives (Lowenthal, 1985) or use material objects in storytelling (Stewart, 2007), we are beginning to see a larger, broader, more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a curator. Such a study would take in the notion of constructing personal identity through curation, touched upon in my own reflection of my work, and drawing on studies such as that of Stewart on collecting. Furthermore, following the spontaneous and deliberate creation of communities around such curation, a further drawing-out of the premise of curation as a participatory activity could follow. This generation of communities of likeminded individual curators around shared interests or goals, as we have witnessed on Wikipedia, deserves further examination.

9   Appendix 1

Preliminary questions for selected interviewees from cultural organisations, or those engaged in curation professionally:

- What is your understanding of the term curation?

- How would you describe the role of a curator?

- Do you consider yourself to be a curator or your duties to include curation? (regardless of your specific job title)

- Do you think the role of the curator has changed over time?

- Have you engaged in any outreach projects to work collaboratively with the public on a project (such as an editathon)?

- If so why? If not, what are the reasons? (lack of facilities, interest, suitable project area)

- What do you see as the main advantages or disadvantages to working with the public on a collaborative project?

- Would such events encourage you to engage more with projects such as Wikipedia in general or in your own spare time?

- Do you have any comments, questions or other remarks?

Preliminary questions for selected interviewees who engage in citizen curation, have initiated their own curation projects, or members of WCI:

- How would you describe the work you did as part of [specific event or WCI]?

- What was your motivation to participate in [the event or WCI]?

- What is your understanding of the term curation?

- How would you describe the role of a curator?

- Would you consider your participation in [the event or WCI] as a form of curation?

- Why/why not?

- Would you be encouraged by your experience to continue to participate in similar events [or as a more involved member of WCI]?

- Would such events encourage you to engage more with projects such as Wikipedia in general?

- Do you have any comments, questions or other remarks?

10 Appendix 2

Refined questions for selected interviewees from cultural organisations, or those engaged in curation professionally:

- What is your understanding of the word curation?

- How would you describe the role of the curator?

- Do you think that the role of the curator has changed over time?

- Do you think that the public have a role in curation?

- Have you engaged in any outreach projects to work with the public in curation?

- If so, why and how? If not, what are the reasons? (lack of facilities, interest, funding, staff)

- What do you see as the advantages or disadvantages to working with the public in such an outreach or collaborative project?

- If resources were no barrier, what would your dream outreach or collaborative project be?

- Do you have any comments, questions or other remarks?

Refined questions for selected interviewees who engage in citizen curation, have initiated their own curation projects, or members of WCI:

- How would you describe the work that you engage in [insert project/Wikipedia]?

- What was your motivation to participate in [insert project/Wikipedia]?

- What is your understanding of the term curation?

- How would you describe the role of a curator?

- Would you consider your participation in [insert project/Wikipedia] as a form of curation?

- Why/why not?

- How would you describe the work of others you have collaborated with during [insert project/Wikipedia]?

- Do you have any comments, questions or other remarks?

11 Appendix 3

CONSENT FORM: Rise of the Citizen Curator

Investigators: Rebecca O'Neill

　　　　　　　Dr Toni Sant (supervisor)

School of Drama, Music and Screen, University of Hull

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself. Please cross out as necessary:

- Have you read and understood the participant information sheet
    YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study
    YES/NO
- Have all the questions been answered satisfactorily
    YES/NO
- Have you received enough information about the study
    YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason
    YES/NO
- Do you agree to take part in the study
    YES/NO

This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Signature of the Participant. . . . .

Date. . . . .

Name (in block capitals) . . . .

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher. . . . .

Date. . . . .

12 Appendix 4

Participant Information Sheet

Title: Rise of the Citizen Curator

Researcher name: Rebecca O'Neill

Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to understand how the role of curation has changed in recent years. In particular, the study looks at the role of the general public in curation of digital knowledge through projects such as Wikipedia. This study focuses on the understandings of the terms curator and curation by looking at the relationship between those who are employed as professional curators and those who contribute to digital curation in their spare time.

Procedures

In participating in this study you will be interviewed on the topic of curation and your understanding of the role of the curator today. It will be a semi-structured informal interview, meaning that it will take the form of a conversation rather than a rigid question and answer format.

The interview will be recorded via dictaphone. These recordings will be stored digitally by me, with the files password protected and the file names anonymised. They will be retained for five years following my graduation (approximately 2022).

How much of your time will participation involve?

As it is an informal semi-structured interview, it can take anything from a half an hour to 1 hour, depending on your availability and the development of the interview.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

You may be named in this study. If you wish to remain anonymous, the researcher will assign you a pseudonym and omit any references which may lead to your identification. You may also decline to make a decision until the interview is completed or change your mind after the interview.

> I am willing to be named in this study (please delete as appropriate)
>
> I wish to remain anonymous in this study (please delete as appropriate)

Payment

There is no payment or reward for participating in this study.

Potential Risks and Ethical Consideration

For participants that wish to remain anonymous a pseudonym will be granted. However it cannot be guaranteed that participants will remain completely unidentifiable through other distinguishing characteristics, though these will be omitted or anonymised as possible. I will consult with you in how the interviews are incorporated into the written study and address any potential issues at that point. There are no other risks known to the investigator at present.

Benefits

There is no assurance that you will benefit from this study. However your participation will contribute to a neglected area of knowledge.

What happens now?

If you are interested in participating in the study, please compete and sign the accompanying consent form. The interview can then proceed, please do not sign if you do not wish to take part. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time. If you wish to withdraw consent please contact the researcher ASAP. If you have any questions about this project please address them to the researcher before signing the document.

Contact for Further Information

My contact details are: rebeccanineil@gmail.com / R.ONeill@2013.hull.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the School of Drama, Music and Screen Ethics Committee

(sdms-ethics@hull.ac.uk)

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