

Laura M Menard. Information Atrocities: Records and Memory in Post-Dictatorship Latin America. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. November, 2011. 41 pages. Advisor: Richard Marciano

In the latter half of the twentieth century, many countries in Latin America experienced brutal dictatorships marked by state-sponsored violence, persecution of left-leaning individuals and institutions, and most pertinent to this paper, suppression of ideas and information. After the fall of these dictatorships, cultural institutions struggled to administer to the needs of a population looking for answers and a way to move forward. With many "official" records destroyed or altered fundamentally, cultural institutions were forced to employ alternate methods of collection building, assessment, and sharing. These three case studies speak to the efforts employed by these institutions to adjust their policies and service to accommodate a different political landscape and patron base to achieve the goals of recreating public trust and moving forward as a nation in the wake of a dictatorship.

#### Headings:

Museums/ Latin America

Archives/ Latin America

Freedom of information/ Latin America

Content Analysis

INFORMATION ATROCITIES: RECORDS AND MEMORY IN POST-DICTATORSHIP  
LATIN AMERICA

by  
Laura M Menard

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty  
of the School of Information and Library Science  
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in  
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

November 2011

Approved by

---

Richard Marciano

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	2
<a href="#">History</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Methodology</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Literature Review</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Case Study #1 – Museum of Memory and Human Rights (Chile)</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Mission &amp; Goals</a> .....	14
<a href="#">Collection &amp; Holdings</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Case Study #2: National Archive of Memory (Argentina)</a> .....	20
<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	20
<a href="#">Mission &amp; Goals</a> .....	21
<a href="#">Collection &amp; Holdings</a> .....	22
<a href="#">Case Study #3 – Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana (Dominican Republic)</a> .....	27
<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	27
<a href="#">Mission &amp; Goals</a> .....	27
<a href="#">Collection &amp; Holdings</a> .....	28
<a href="#">Analysis</a> .....	31
<a href="#">Conclusion</a> .....	35
<a href="#">Bibliography</a> .....	37
<a href="#">Appendix: Figures</a> .....	39

## Introduction

“The silent archivist is an archivist with no story to tell” (Harris 150). So says Verne Harris, an archivist integral in the process of democratizing the archives of South Africa after the fall of apartheid. Although he makes many other good points throughout his book Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective, this is one that in many cases doesn’t hold up to scrutiny. In the case of oppressive regimes, an archivist who speaks out against the state’s agenda either physically or through his or her record keeping will be silenced, and the story will be lost. In these cases, the silent record-keeper may be the one with the most to say.

After the fact of a violent dictatorship, it may be difficult for a country to reconcile its past with its present and future. This is where the museum, archive, or other cultural institution comes into play. Each of the cultural institutions detailed in the following examination deals in some way with the idea of national memory and righting the wrongs of past regimes. The ideas of memory and transparency of information are a direct response to the secrecy and censorship that often accompany a dictatorship. The issue then becomes how to remember events that, according to official records, never happened? Are the lives, records, and memories, once destroyed, impossible to retrieve? These three following case studies will examine three cultural institutions post-dictatorship to see how they deal with exactly this issue.

Latin America has historically been politically volatile – from colonization beginning in the fourteenth century to a series of brutal dictatorships that effected many countries during the late 1900s, the region has unfortunately been the location of oppressive regimes and political unrest for centuries. Originally inhabited by the indigenous people, Latin America began to experience changes beginning with the European exploration, subsequent attempted religious conversion, and repression of the native people by the colonizing populations. In the early 1900s, many Latin American nations finally were able to win their independence and be recognized formally as nations as opposed to colonies. However, from there the struggle for identity had just begun.

The list of Latin American nations that have been subjected to dictatorships over the last century is almost as long as the list of Latin American countries – Mexico, Guatemala, The Dominican Republic, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Ecuador, to name a few. Many of these dictatorships have been military in nature, and resulted in rampant censorship and destruction of many official records. This leaves cultural institutions in these countries in a difficult position: with a large portion of their history shrouded in shame, secrecy, and oppression, how can an atmosphere of both memory and reconciliation be fostered in order to help the nation heal and move on from its past?

As has been observed before, dictatorships have never been the ideal circumstances for cultural repositories such as museums and archives to flourish and grow. From the systematic destruction of many priceless records and works of art

during the Nazi regime's time in power in Europe to the suppression and withholding of records from the public during South African apartheid, the practice and ethics of good record-keeping have been challenged by power dynamics and political interests. This paper seeks to examine not only the difficulties faced by record keepers in three of the South American dictatorships, but also how the process of reconciliation and transition was handled in the years following the fall of these regimes.

## History

The Museo de Memoria y los Derechos Humanos or *Museum of Memory and Human Rights* in Chile is the first of several cultural institutions that will be detailed in these case studies. Located in Santiago, the museum pays homage to those who were victims of the military dictatorship and the human rights violations that occurred during the regime. The dictatorship in Chile lasted from 1973 to 1990, and was characterized by neoliberal economic strategies, a large military power, and some of the most brutal human rights violations any country has seen.

The dictatorship began in 1973, when a military coup led by Augusto Pinochet overthrew Salvador Allende and established an authoritarian military government. This regime cut back on economic regulations and introduced drastic measures to support free market economics, reversing many policies of the former administration. Where the Chilean market was free to do what it would under Pinochet's rule, the people of Chile were left to languish and be persecuted under harsh restrictions. Book burning and forced "disappearances" were commonplace under Pinochet's intellectual crackdown, and the public is still trying to solve the mysteries of friends and family who simply vanished.

During this time, innumerable records were lost or destroyed. Book burning is one well-documented information atrocity committed by the Pinochet regime, and there are undoubtedly many other instances of destruction, alteration, or political pressure interfering with the process of recording information. Book burning occurred at the beginning of the junta, but was dismissed as “counterrevolutionary zeal” (Anderson 5). However, as the *Modesto Bee* reports in 1975, “Two years after the coup...we have established that books are still being systematically destroyed” (Anderson 5). Most of the books destroyed contained information pertaining to economics; however, many more were also subject to the whims of the regime.

Argentina is the site of the second cultural institution examined in this paper, El Archivo Nacional de la Memoria, *The National Archive of Memory*. Located in what was known pre-dictatorship as La Escuela de Suboficiales de Mecánica de la Armada, or ESMA, *The Army Officers’ School of Mechanics*, the archive is a memorial to the roughly thirty thousand political prisoners who passed through its doors during what was then called the “Proceso de Reorganización Nacional” or *Process of National Reorganization*.

This Argentinian dictatorship lasted from 1976 to 1983, beginning with a military coup that filled the vacuum of power left in the wake of the death of Juan Domingo Perón, the previous president. This vacuum of power was caused by Argentina’s history of military rule and issues with discord between different political factions, which came to head when Perón, a president with a military history himself, died suddenly and left no clear successor. Because of the violent unrest, the Argentinian military implemented the Process of National Organization. Originally intended to convey a feeling of order



and stability, the Process in actuality led to unsubstantiated arrests, forced disappearances, and an ideological crackdown highly disproportionate to the sociopolitical unrest to which it purported to be responding.

The military regime was characterized by a complete and total censorship of media, press, and speech. The legislative branch of the Argentinian government was effectively shut down, and the military police tasked with using whatever methods necessary to discourage anti-government sentiment. Like Chile's military dictatorship, Argentina's included a strong inclination toward neoliberal economic policies. The hope was that once economic stability was imposed on the nation, social order would be restored as well. Unfortunately, corruption and personal interests within the military government blocked efforts to bolster the economy with deregulation, and coupled with a demoralizing defeat in the Falklands war, led to the downfall of the regime in 1983.

For the final cultural institution, we head to the Dominican Republic to investigate the Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana *Dominican Resistance Memorial Museum* in Santo Domingo. This museum is singular in that many of its contents have been digitized, and it also boasts an easily accessible and fairly comprehensive list of victims of the regime. A tribute to all those who suffered from brutal dictator Rafael Trujillo's thirty year reign, this institution invites both memory and reconciliation for the people of the Dominican Republic.

Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molino, known simply as "Trujillo," seized power in the Dominican Republic in 1930 following a military rebellion against the president of six

years, Horacio Vásquez Lajara. After a brief period of military intimidation, elections were held in which Trujillo ran unopposed. He went on to be the de facto leader of the Dominican Republic for the next thirty years, implementing iron-fisted policies economically and violently eliminating anyone who stood in opposition to his rule.

The Dominican Republic actually did benefit economically under Trujillo's rule and fierce support of capitalism, expanding trade and eliminating the national debt. However, Trujillo's complete brutality, egomania, and sense of nationalistic pride eventually got the better of him. After a series of assassinations intended to eliminate opposition that culminated in a definite overstepping of boundaries when Trujillo ordered the killing of the Venezuelan president, the United States was forced to withdraw the dictator's support. Although the U.S. saw the regime as a better alternative to Communism, the genocide perpetuated against Haitians and repeated assassinations under Trujillo's regime proved too much. Trujillo himself was assassinated not long after, ending the dictatorship in 1961.

Trujillo's extreme megalomania and history of brutality towards Haitians and his opposition ensured that the country would remember him; he named streets, provinces, and cities after himself and members of his family and ordered the killing of tens of thousands of people during his thirty years in power. However, the Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana is not intended to memorialize the Trujillo years. Rather, it is a collection celebrating the individuals and organizations that resisted the rule and bloody policies of the tyrant, many of whom lost their lives in the process.

## **Methodology**

For these case studies, since a trip to three different Latin American countries was not entirely feasible given the time constraints of the paper, it was necessary to find cultural institutions that had a strong online presence for the purpose of analyzing their mission statements, collection policies, and if possible the digitized selections from the collections. The regimes memorialized by the archives and museums in the case studies can all be classified as dictatorships, and all involved a large degree of state-sponsored violence, censorship, and secrecy. Given this, out of all the cultural institutions dealing with dictatorships in Latin America, the three that seemed like the best choice for case studies were The Archive of Memory and Human Rights in Chile, The National Archive of Memory in Argentina, and The Dominican Resistance Memorial Museum in the Dominican Republic.

My interest in this topic arose from an involvement in the Spanish program during my undergraduate studies. Because of my educational background in Spanish, I was able to locate, read, and analyze the web sites and documents of each cultural institution in these case studies. Translations will appear in italics after any quotes or place names in Spanish. For clarity's sake, all institutions and concepts will be referred to in English after they are initially introduced in both Spanish and English. All

translations in these case studies are my own and are not endorsed by the institutions themselves.

Because the purpose of this paper is to analyze the ways in which cultural institutions deal with the idea of national memory when so many records have been destroyed or simply never existed, it was necessary to be able to determine at least to some extent what the collection development policy and mission statement of each of these institutions entails. In addition to physical documentation, some things that I was anticipating to find as part of these collections were oral histories, memorials, and other “alternate” types of records. With an idea of the mission of the institution and the scope of its collection, it was feasible to speak to the ways in which each institution handled the issues of record loss, violence, and national memory.

### **Literature Review**

Literature directly related to the subject of museums and archives in post-dictatorship Latin America is relatively difficult to find. However, there are a few very good resources on the topic of archives and museums and difficult political situations. Verne Harris in particular writes on the subject of re-forming an archive after the fall of a controversial regime. In his collection of essays *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*, Harris speaks to the challenges of revisiting the archives of the apartheid regime. He discusses issues of archival appraisal, accessibility, and service to the public. The methodology described in his book for evaluating the challenges of an archive in this political situation helped shaped the methodology of the following case studies.

Another book that was very influential in the investigation of archives, politics, and power imbalances was Jeannette Allis Bastian's *Owning Memory : How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*. This book discusses archives and records in a post-colonialism community. This community had literally lost its archives; all the records had been taken by the colonizing forces when they left the colony to its independence. As a result, the community had to employ some non-traditional methods of gathering history and forming records. This book was helpful in highlighting the importance of community participation and oral histories in a situation such as this one.

Some articles that proved helpful in laying a groundwork for the investigation of cultural institutions post-dictatorship were the ones that spoke to other cultural institutions in similar political situations. By examining the archives of a country like France post-revolution, it was possible to discover some common themes throughout different histories and cultures when it came to struggle, conflict, and records. These articles helped frame the topic of the particular struggles with dictatorships in Latin America in a larger context.

## **Case Study #1 – Museum of Memory and Human Rights (Chile)**

### **Introduction**

The Museum of Memory and Human Rights is located in Chile's capital city of Santiago. Construction began in 2007 at the behest of the president, Michelle Bachelet. The museum was completed and opened to the public in 2009, almost twenty years after the fall of the dictatorship. An impressive structure, the building is made of mostly glass to symbolize transparency of information, and includes a large outdoor pool to symbolize reflection. On the web page explaining the history and construction of the museum, the following is offered as the reasoning behind the necessity for a space for remembering and reflection:

El Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos nace como un espacio destinado a dar visibilidad a las violaciones a los derechos humanos cometidas por el Estado de Chile entre 1973 y 1990; a dignificar a las víctimas y a sus familias; y a estimular la reflexión y el debate sobre la importancia del respeto y la tolerancia, para que estos hechos no se repitan nunca más.

Fue concebido como un lugar que, desde la revisión del pasado, busca instalar el tema de los derechos humanos en el presente y proyectarlo hacia el futuro, en temas tan contingentes como la violencia intrafamiliar, la situación de los refugiados en el mundo o la discriminación por género.

El objetivo fundamental de esta iniciativa es el rescate de la memoria de nuestro país, desde los primeros años de la dictadura, cuando venciendo el miedo a la represión, la gente comenzó a esconder y preservar documentos, afiches, fotografías, objetos y a construir memoriales para no rendirse frente al olvido. Con el correr de los años, algunos de estos materiales comenzaron a extraviarse

y deteriorarse. Entonces se hacía necesario rescatarlos. (Museo de la Memoria, online)

*The Museum of Memory and Human Rights originated as a space dedicated to giving visibility to the violations of human rights committed by the State of Chile between 1973 and 1990; to dignify the victims and their families; and to encourage reflection and debate about the importance of respect and tolerance, so that these events will never again be repeated.*

*The concept was of a place that, through the revisiting of the past, seeks to instill the idea of human rights in the present and protect that idea for the future, using themes such as violence, the situation of refugees, or gender discrimination.*

*The fundamental goal of this initiative is to rescue the memory of our country, from the first years of the dictatorship, when, conquering fear of repression, the people began to hide and preserve documents, posters, photographs, objects, and memorials so that these things not be lost to memory. With the passing of time, some of these materials began to deteriorate, and it became necessary that they be preserved. (Museum of Memory, online)*

This statement is fascinating in the context of the dictatorship and the state of Chile in the years following. With the fall of the military government and the implementation of democracy, clemency was granted to many who served the dictator Pinochet. In fact, Pinochet himself was granted a position in the government and served until 2004, when charges were brought against him and he was placed under house arrest. He died in 2006 without ever having had to account for his crimes against his people.

In this instance, the lines between past and present are blurred. With so many of the individuals who previously held positions in the dictatorship still involved in Chile's political life, it is no wonder that it took over fifteen years for the idea of a space for memory and reconciliation to materialize. The statement of the museum makes a strong stand against the human rights abuses of the dictatorship; however, the policy of the Chilean government did not make the same stand for years. This led to some resentment among the people of Chile and for years influenced records keeping

towards the conciliatory and away from documenting the full extent of the human rights abuses perpetrated by individuals who were still involved in Chile's politics.

### **Mission & Goals**

The official mission statement of the museum appears on its web page as follows:

Dar a conocer las violaciones sistemáticas de los derechos humanos por parte del Estado de Chile entre los años 1973 y 1990, para que a través de la reflexión ética sobre la memoria, la solidaridad y la importancia de los derechos humanos, se fortalezca la voluntad nacional para que Nunca Más se repitan hechos que afecten la dignidad del ser humano.

*To bring to light the systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the State of Chile between the years 1973 and 1990, so that by way of ethical reflection on memory, solidarity, and the importance of human rights, we may strengthen the national will so that the occurrences that so effected the dignity of these human beings may never again be repeated.*

This mission statement very clearly lays out the fact that the museum intends to remember the dictatorship and its atrocities utilizing transparency of records and ethical record-keeping. In a departure from previous national policy, the museum, endorsed by the Chilean president, seeks to bring to light proof of the acts of the military government during the seventeen years in which Pinochet held power in the spirit of fostering a culture that confronts its past and, through that confrontation, is able to discuss and reconcile.

The museum's collections are broken up into two categories which are then further subdivided: the collection of objects and the collection of archival documents. The collection as a whole shows the struggle of Chile and its people to deal with an



oppressive regime and many human rights violations. Taken piece by piece, each part of the collection tells a story of an individual or an organization in the context of the dictatorship.

### **Collection & Holdings**

The archival collection at The Museum of Memory and Human Rights is intended to provide primary source documents that are a testament to the occurrences of the dictatorship years. The collection “es testimonio de hechos, hitos históricos, la vida y acontecer de personas y organismos que actuaron en la defensa y protección de los derechos humanos/ *is a factual testament of acts, dates, and the lives and accounts of people and organizations that acted in the defense and protection of human rights*” (Colecciones de archivos). The archival collection is comprised of the following types of materials:

- Testimonies orales y escritos / *Oral and written testimony*
- Cartas / *Letters*
- Producción literaria y ensayística / *Literature and essays*
- Afiches, dibujos, pancartas / *Posters, drawings, banners*
- Material audiovisual / *Audiovisual materials*
- Fotografías / *Photographs*

Obviously, the archival collection has had to search outside of official documentation in order to find material. Types of material such as oral or written testimony are especially important for representing a population that has previously not had an official voice in a

collection, such as minority populations or individuals or groups who were historically or systematically silenced in one way or another. Verne Harris states that “A liberatory standard would encourage archivists to get in under the dominant voices in the process of recordmaking...it would require engagement with the marginalized and the silenced” (Harris 152). Including archival records in non-standard formats such as oral testimony, personal photographs, and essays, the archival collection allows the previously silenced or marginalized population to find its voice and tell a story in its own words.

The archival collection is further broken up into eleven subgroups, a selection of which are described as follows:

1. Archivos Documentales de la Memoria / *Document Archives of Memory* – This collection is comprised of as many official government documents as are available, and includes propaganda for the dictatorship, copies of denunciations used against individuals and organizations, and educational material used to support the military government.
2. Archivos de Instituciones de la Administración del Estado / *Archives of State Administration Institutions* – Documents produced by specific branches of government or government administration restricting human rights, freedom of expression, or basic liberties. Includes bills restricting speech, banned materials lists, and administrative decrees.
3. Publicaciones Generadas en Chile o en el Extranjero / *Publications Produced in Chile or Elsewhere* – Materials documenting concerns about the military government and its human rights abuses. Includes newspaper articles, magazine excerpts, and investigative documents.
4. Colecciones de Archivos Sonoros / *Sound Archives* – This is a collection of auditory documentation of the dictatorship years. It contains interviews of reporters, victims of the regime, officials, and many others.
5. Colecciones de Archivos de Fotografías, Audiovisuales, y Documentos Gráficos, / *Photograph, Audiovisual, and Graphical Material Collection* – Any documentation of protests, places of detention, victims, rallies, government officials, or other items of interest in formats other than sound or document.

Includes photography, A/V material, videos, pamphlets, posters, and other mediums.

6. *Colección 100 Entrevistas / 100 Interview Collection* – An audiovisual collection of interviews from individuals relating their experiences during the Pinochet years.

Obviously, the archive has gone out of its way to collect a selection of items that provide a full and rich contextual story of the years under the dictatorship. The collection is very comprehensive when it comes to medium, and because of this is able to encapsulate many individual voices within the larger context of the archive.

As far as the Museum's collection of objects is concerned, there are fewer subdivisions but just as much depth to the collection, which tells the story of individuals, families, and organizations in the context of their struggles under the dictatorship.

These subdivisions are as follows:

1. *Objetos que Conmemoran a las Víctimas / Objects Commemorating Victims* – Objects made by the victims of state-sponsored violence, including art, writing, and even sculpture, most of which was created while in captivity. Also includes objects made by friends or family in memory of deceased victims, including missing persons posters or commemorative drawings.
2. *Objetos Representativos de Lugares / Objects Representative of Places* – Mostly objects dealing with the physical realities of the detention and torture of many Chileans during the dictatorship. Recreations of detention centers, torture mechanisms, and similar.
3. *Otros Objetos / Other Objects* – Objects commemorating the fall of the dictatorship, objects pertaining to human rights, and anything else that supports the mission statement of the museum.

Taken together, the archival collection and the collection of objects form the bulk of the Museum's displays and exhibits. Many of these exhibits are interactive; allowing the

visitor to listen to interviews, enter a recreation of a detention cell, or otherwise place him or herself in the context of the recent dictatorship.

Because of the multimedia and immersive nature of the museum, it has been a huge success with the Chilean public and has been applauded by international human rights organizations. Says one visitor, the widow of one of the victims of state-sponsored killings, “Es una labor hermosa. Están haciendo algo por personas que han sufrido mucho, se sienten apoyados y comprendidos / *[The Museum] is a wonderful work. They are doing something for people who have suffered so much, who now feel supported and understood*” (Relatos y Testimonios). Another visitor, Víctor Millan, says:

Quiero agradecer infinitamente la posibilidad que es Museo nos brinda a las nuevas generaciones que afortunadamente no vivimos la dictadura. Este espacio de reflexión, recuerdos y recuperación de nuestra Memoria... gracias por recordarnos que por sobre las ideas políticas y partidistas, existen elementos superiores... que deben prevalecer, como el respeto por la vida.  
*I am infinitely grateful for the possibility that the Museum gives the new generation that fortunately did not live under the dictatorship. This is a space of reflection, memories, and healing...thank you for reminding us that beyond political ideas, there are some elements that should always prevail, such as respect for human life.* (Comentarios de Visitantes)

The visitors to the museum are obviously affected by the experience, whether they had a personal stake in the dictatorship or are a new generation learning from the mistakes of the past.

One of the sayings that appears often throughout the museum’s web site, exhibits, and mission is the idea “Nunca Más” or Never Again. The idea behind this mantra is that the human rights abuses perpetuated by the Chilean government during the dictatorship were inexcusable, and that by remembering and honoring the victims

and examining the events that led to the dictatorship, the nation can be able to prevent future abuse of power.

## **Case Study #2: National Archive of Memory (Argentina)**

### **Introduction**

El Archivo Nacional de la Memoria or *The National Archive of Memory*, located in Buenos Aires, is first and foremost a state-sponsored archive and a direct response to the national sentiment post-dictatorship. Created in 2003 by a national order, the Archive is a testament to how far the country has come since the fall of the dictatorship in 1983. With a long history of military rule and dictatorships, the Argentinian government was ready to take steps to ensure democracy, and the people of Argentina have taken to referring to the years spanning from 1976 to 1983 as “The Last Dictatorship.”

Argentina’s National Archive of Memory is devoted mainly to remembering those who “disappeared” during the dictatorship and bringing closure to their friends, families, and loved ones. During and after this dictatorship more than many others, attention was brought to the plight of the people through activism. The most well-known group of activists are the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, mainly comprised of women who lost someone close to them as a result of state-sponsored violence during the dictatorship. Their marches, protests, and demands of justice and answers were instrumental in bringing attention to the human rights violations carried out by the

regime, and their questions about the whereabouts of their friends and family are one of the issues that the Archive tries to address.

The Archive also works with the project Memoria Abierta (Open Memory,) a digitization initiative formed across a number of Latin American nations. The Open Memory project contains many documents, news clippings, and lists of memorial sites and individual records, many digitized in collaboration with the Archive. This project has surprising ties to Duke's Archives, where a collection of Rabbi Marshal Meyer's papers has recently been digitized. Rabbi Marshal Meyer was a U.S. citizen who, with his wife, moved to Buenos Aires before the rise of the military government. While he was there, he worked to support religious freedom and end oppression by the dictatorial regime. The collection at Duke is complimented by Argentina's Open Memory digital initiative entitled "I Have No Right to Be Silent: The Human Rights Legacy of the Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer." (Marshall Meyer).

### **Mission & Goals**

This mission statement of the archives is very clear and lays out three main goals:

1. Relevar archivos y documentación relacionada con el terrorismo de Estado en la Argentina / *Share archival materials and documents related to terrorism in the state of Argentina.*
2. Clasificar y preservar la documentación que ingresa al Archivo Nacional de la Memoria / *Classify and preserve the archival materials that are accessioned into the National Archive of Memory.*
3. Articular los objetivos de Memoria, Verdad y Justicia mediante la generación de acciones conjuntas entre las diferentes jurisdicciones a nivel nacional, entre los países del MERCOSUR y en el plano internacional / *Share the objectives of*

*memory, truth, and justice through the encouragement of collaboration between the different areas of the country, between South American countries, and in an international venue.*

Although these goals do not specifically speak to the Archive's mission in collecting and preserving these records, the main "about the institution" statement does seem to take a stand against the repetition of the human rights violations documented:

[El Archivo] debe tenerse presente los consiguientes deberes del Estado de promover, respetar y garantizar los derechos humanos, incluidos los derechos a la verdad, la justicia y la reparación, rehabilitar a las víctimas y asegurar los beneficios del Estado democrático de derecho para las generaciones actuales y futuras. / *The Archive should keep in mind the following rights that the state must provide: to respect and guarantee human rights, including the right to truth, justice, and reconciliation, rehabilitation for victims, assurance of the benefits of a democratic state and rights for present and future generations.*" (Decreto N° 1259/2003)

The state ruling that created the Archives and established its ideological goals is a far cry from the state-sponsored terrorism of the past. Although not explicitly stated in the written goals of the Archives, education and remembrance are a large part of the function of the institution.

### **Collection & Holdings**

The archival collection is divided into three main parts: documents, audiovisual materials, and digital materials. Many items in the former two categories have been digitized and are available online, including some of the most important parts of the collection: official correspondence and a list of those believed to be victims of the forced "disappearances" that claimed tens of thousands of Argentinian lives. Although this list will probably never be comprehensive and the people of Argentina may never



know the exact toll of the dictatorship, is it part of the goal of the Archives to “continúa recibiendo testimonios de quienes han sufrido secuestros y detenciones ilegales y también denuncias sobre desaparición forzada de personas / *continue receiving testimonies of persons who have suffered illegal detention in addition to information about the forced disappearance of citizens*” (Área Fondos Documentales).

Some highlights of the documents collection are a digitized version of the publication “Nunca Más,” a multinational effort published in order to examine the causes of the rash of dictatorships throughout Latin America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This document was published by CONADEP, an organization dedicated to achieving justice for the victims of oppressive or dictatorial regimes throughout Latin America and their families. The Archives digitized a special edition of this report for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coup that led to Argentina’s years of dictatorship in order to foster a sense of transparency.

Another notable holding of the Archives is the most comprehensive and up-to-date list of those who disappeared during the dictatorship and their fate if known. For each individual, the document lists name, manner of disappearance, date of disappearance, age, fate (if known), and information about whether or not the victim was pregnant at the time of her disappearance (if so, fate of the child is also mentioned) (See Fig. 1). The list would not fit on a single PDF file when digitized; instead, it is divided alphabetically with the names beginning in A-N on one document and names from O-Z on another (Victimas de Desaparición Forzada y Ejecución Sumaria). The list is updated regularly with new victims or updates on the final fate of the disappeared.

The Archives also works closely with other organizations to provide digital material to the public. Organizations contributing material to the Archive's digital initiative include the Sub Secretary's Office of Human Rights (SDH), the Register of the Disappeared and Missing (REFDA), the National Commission for the Right of Identification (CoNaDi), and the archives dealing with material related to the Reparation Laws, enacted post-dictatorship to help the people of Argentina with monetary and other compensation for the injustices they suffered under the dictatorship as much as possible. The digitization effort so far has been huge, and "El Archivo Digital cuenta en la actualidad con más de 2 millones y medio de imágenes indexadas y puestas al servicio de la investigación de las distintas áreas / *The Digital Archive in actuality contains more than two and a half million images alone, indexed and put to service in many areas of investigation.*" (Área Digital)

Digitization efforts are important to many archives because the advent of the internet has changed the landscape of record keeping. However, in a situation where an archive is part of a process of reparation and healing, it is doubly important to encourage access. The Archive recognizes this, and lays out three main advantages to having a digital collection as follows:

El tener la información indexada en un sistema digital de administración brinda tres ventajas inmediatas: la primera es la de preservación evitando la manipulación del original. La segunda es producida por el aumento en la capacidad de distribución de la información. La imagen de un documento puede ser consultada por muchos al mismo tiempo. La tercera, y quizás la más importante, es la gran capacidad de procesamiento, búsqueda y recuperación de la información / *Having this information indexed in a digital system brings three immediate advantages: the first is preserving the material by avoiding undue manipulation of the original. The second is produced through the increase in our*

*capacity to distribute the information. An image of a single document may be consulted by many people at the same time. The third, and perhaps most important, is the great capacity for processing, searching, and recovery of information. (Área Digital)*

The Archive obviously understands the need to provide access and transparency in their dealings to the public. The digital initiative allows for this to a large extent. The documents in the Archive are not only the property of the state to be kept and administered to; they are a resource for the people, available to the people.

The final subdivision of the Archive's holding is their audiovisual collection, which houses videos, photographs, and sound recordings that are "...relacionado con las violaciones a los derechos humanos y su defensa, desde comienzos del siglo XX hasta la actualidad / ...related to human rights violations and defense of human rights, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to present day" (Área Audiovisual). The audiovisual collection includes news reports, sound recordings of protests, radio broadcasts, and photographs related to the dictatorship specifically and human rights in Argentina and Latin America in general. Also included is a large collection of recorded interviews with survivors of the concentration camp-like detention centers, through which passed tens of thousands of Argentinians during the dictatorship years.

The Archive offers guided tours and allows visitors to view the audiovisual collection in the context of the mission of the institution. Says one visitor:

*"No es un museo del horror, ni un monumento funerario. Tampoco visitarlo es un simple acto de conocimiento de un edificio vacío que fue, un lugar histórico, solo un recuerdo doloroso de pasado. Es mucho más que ello. Es un espacio de reflexión, una interpelación a cada uno de nosotros desde el presente /This is not a museum of horrors, or a funeral monument. Simply to enter is a simple act of knowing an empty building that was, in a historical setting, just a painful*

*memory of the past. But it is much more than that. It is a space of reflection, an appeal to each of us here in the present.” (Visit as Guiadas)*

This institution is a wonderful example of records serving the public. From digitizing collections to providing audiovisual materials to reporters and documentary teams to teaming up with other institutions to provide answers to the people of Argentina, this archive does the best it can with incomplete records to piece together history and encourage truth and reconciliation.

## **Case Study #3 – Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana (Dominican Republic)**

### **Introduction**

Located in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Resistance Memorial Museum is a testament to all the individuals and organizations that resisted the regime of Trujillo, who was the dictator of the Dominican Republic for almost thirty years. It is recognized by the International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of the Victims of Public Crimes (ICMEMO), established in 2001, which exists “to foster a responsible memory of history and to further cultural cooperation through education and through using knowledge in the interests of peace” and “to commemorate victims of State, socially determined and ideologically motivated crimes” (ICMEMO).

### **Mission & Goals**

The Museum is recognized on an international level; however, its short-term mission statement is focused on improving life on a local level: “Promover con significado histórico y conciencia ciudadana las luchas de varias generaciones de dominicanos (as) durante la dictadura de Rafael L. Trujillo, sus antecedentes y sus consecuencias/ *To promote the struggle of various generations of Dominicanos (as) leading up to, during, and after the dictatorship of Rafael L. Trujillo with significant*

*historical context and civic conscience” (Misión). The vision statement of the museum, however, has much more lofty goals, with effects that aim to make themselves felt internationally: “En el año 2014 seremos una institución LIDER a nivel nacional, por contribuir al conocimiento y cultivar las virtudes cívicas en una ciudadanía responsable, para evitar los abusos y la violencia por parte del Estado y los grupos de poder / By the year 2014 this institution will be a leader on a national level for its contributions to knowledge and cultivation of civic virtues in a responsible citizenship, with the goal of avoiding abuse and violence committed by the State and other groups in power” (Visión). The Museum is comprehensive in its goals and mission as stated, and appears to have every intention of coming through on its statements using outreach, and international presence, and a large digital collection of materials not only addressing the dictatorship years in the Dominican Republic, but also the causes, roots, and consequences of the abuse of power and human rights violations perpetrated by Trujillo.*

### **Collection & Holdings**

Like Argentina’s Archives, the Museum divides up its holding into three main collections: documents, photographs, and testimony (sound and A/V recordings) about the resistance movement. In addition to the display space, which often includes a temporary exhibit, the Museum offers access to its documents collection in a research room that is open to the public. Here, visitors can use the archival collection to do research or view the register of those reported missing or killed during the regime.

The Museum's documents collection is fully digitized and available through its web site. Visitors can access press clippings, articles, laws, declarations, and other such materials pertaining to the dictatorship years by searching the holdings chronologically. The collection is divided into increments by date range, with browsable years ranging from 1916-1978. Each section of digital holdings is prefaced with a short history of the time period covered, and items are listed by title. By selecting an item, a reader is able to view its full text format. Testimonies are available in a similar format, again browsable by year and title of item.

A large part of the audiovisual collection of the Museum has also been digitized and is available through the museum web site. Visitors can browse a photo gallery by subject and explore collections of photographs pertaining to subjects such as individuals persecuted by Trujillo, places important to the regime, and proof of the atrocities committed under the dictatorship (Galerias de la Resistencia). Photographs of prisoners of the State, military exercises, and funerals for those killed, as well as vide footage of rallies and survivors discussing their experiences, all convey the suffering of many of the people of the Dominican Republic under Trujillo.

Like other cultural institutions dealing with the aftermath of state-sponsored violence, the Museum includes a national register of victims as part of its holdings. What sets this register apart, however, is that it contains information provided not only by national and international organizations dedicated to justice for missing persons, but also from the friends and families of victims. This turns the register into not simply a list of names and statistics, but an organic and living memorial, a testament to those who

participated in the resistance movement. This is a document that deals with the lack of official records, the silence imposed on so many victims of violence, by giving the agency of record creation back to the people of the nation.



## **Analysis**

Several themes were present throughout the three case studies: each cultural institution placed heavy emphasis on transparency, availability of records, and including those who previously had no voice in the record-making process. These institutions view the work of dealing with these records not only as an act of preservation and classification, but also an act of memory and healing. In the space where government previously operated using secrecy and fear, these government-sponsored institutions now operate under the principles of transparency and openness.

Transparency is important when it comes to any cultural institution that deals with records and serving the public. However, it is especially necessary in cases like the ones discussed in these case studies. The reasons for this are many. First of all, because these institutions deal with parts of history that are characterized by information secrecy and state-sponsored destruction and alteration of records, any institution that handles these records must take the utmost care to ensure that they are properly contextualized. The entire process, from accession to display, must be carefully monitored and ideally shared with the public. Verne Harris says of the process of archival appraisal:

“Appraisal brings into sharpest focus the power wielded by archivists...Which stories will be consigned to the archive and which will not. The power of the storyteller is ultimately a political power. Which is why, in a democracy, society must find ways of holding archivists accountable for their appraisal decisions” (Harris 104).

Without the transparency of process practiced by these cultural institutions, important public trust would be lost.

Some of the major protests during each of these dictatorships were carried out by friends and families of those persecuted. Their demands were simple: they wanted information. In Argentina, a group called Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo attracted international attention by carrying pictures of those who were missing. What galvanized groups like this to take action? Lack of information about their sons, daughters, wives, husbands, and friends. The forced disappearances that were endemic to these dictatorships were carried out under a shroud of secrecy, and it was impossible to find an official story or update on the whereabouts of the disappeared. In a reversal of this trend, each institution in this study has at least some sort of program to make the information for which it is responsible available to the public. As information stewards, these archives and museums have a mission to provide their populace, their patrons, with answers.

The large-scale digitization projects are one way in which these institutions foster information availability. In addition, each is open to the public, includes a public reading room for perusal of primary source resources, and encourages its patrons to use its resources to find the answers or reconciliation that they seek. In response to groups like Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the museums and archives keep memorials for the

victims. These include lists of names, the fate of the disappeared, circumstance of death, photographs, and other information as relevant. To some, this would be a morbid display. However, for the families and friends who spent decades searching for information, these collections of information are the closure that they had been seeking.

Perhaps the most important step taken by these museums and archives in order to both handle the issue of a lack of reliable official records and create a space that pays homage to the people of the countries victimized by dictatorships and state-sponsored violence is use of civilian testimonial to build their own records. Every institution included in this case study makes a point of having some form of record made by the victims of dictatorship after the fact. This goes a step beyond including oral histories, usually a prescribed solution to a lack of records on underrepresented populations in an archive or museum, to allowing those who were previously silenced to help create new records by telling their own histories. Instead of trying to piece together a history using incomplete and altered records, these institutions enlist the help of those whose voices need to be heard in creating their own histories.

Because “the archive never speaks as a thing in and of itself...it always speaks through specificities, including those of particular societal dynamics and relations of power” (Harris 243), it is important to include voices that are able in one way or another to address the specificities that have been left out of the record, whether purposefully or because of past ignorance. Through individual interviews and testimonies, the

archives and museums of the dictatorship are able to address these specific voices in spite of the dynamic of power that worked to keep them out of official records.

## Conclusion

In the book *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost its Archives and Found its History*, Jeannette Bastian discusses the concept of the African proverb Sankofa. Loosely translated, the idea of the proverb is “go back and fetch it,” that there is no shame in reconstructing or going back for something that has been lost or forgotten. This concept certainly applies to cultural institutions who must go back to retrieve what was lost under a dictator’s regime. Later in the book, Bastian poses the following questions to those who manage these types of records:

With no input into the record-creating process, how can these communities reclaim their history? How can the voices of those who were silent be recovered? How can communities that were the victims of records use those records to build reliable and positive constructs of their past? (Bastian 76)

In the case of records in cultural institutions that have been effected by factors outside of their control, there is no shame in going back to re-explore the records landscape through alternate forms of records construction and narrative.

Involvement of the population in the “going back” process is one way of dealing with the issues brought up by the revision process of information contained within records officially approved by a dictatorship administration. As an institution, any museum or archives post-dictatorship must distinguish itself from the past administration in order to gain back public trust. This can be accomplished by ensuring

transparency and public cooperation in the steps of the record creating and keeping process, by democratizing access to records, and by including individual voices in the records-making process. By being mindful of these considerations, an institution may be able to surmount a past characterized by censorship and secrecy and move into a future of openness and national reconciliation

## Bibliography

1. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Museo/Fundamentos/HistoriadelMuseo.aspx>. Historia Del Museo. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
2. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Museo/Fundamentos/DefinicionesEstrategicas.aspx>. Definiciones Estratégas. Web. 2 Sept. 2011
3. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Patrimonio/Colecciones.aspx>. Colecciones. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
4. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Patrimonio/Colecciones/Coleccionesdeobjetos.aspx>. Colecciones de Objetos. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
5. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Patrimonio/Colecciones/Coleccionesdearchivos.aspx>. Colecciones de Archivos. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
6. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Patrimonio/Relatosytestimonios.aspx>. Relatos y Testimonios. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
7. <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/ES/Patrimonio/Comentariosdevisitantes.aspx>. Comentarios de Visitantes. Web. 2 Sept. 2011.
8. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/inicio.html>. Decreto Nº 1259/2003. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
9. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/inicio.html>. Área Fondos Documentales. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
10. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/pdfs/Listado%20O-Z.pdf>. Víctimas De Desaparición Forzada y Ejecución Sumaria. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
11. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/inicio.html> Área Audiovisual. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
12. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/inicio.html>. Área Digital. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.

13. <http://www.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/anm/inicio.html>. Visitas Guiadas. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
14. [http://falstadsenteret.no/ic\\_memo/index.htm](http://falstadsenteret.no/ic_memo/index.htm). ICMEMO. Web. 4 Sept. 2011.
15. [http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=162&Itemid=181](http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=162&Itemid=181). Misión. Web. 9 Sept. 2011.
16. [http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=13&Itemid=236](http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=13&Itemid=236) Galerias de la Resistencia. Web. 9 Sept. 2011.
17. <http://www.memoriaabierta.org/ar>. Marshall Meyer: Una Vida, Una Mision. Web. 10 Nov. 2011.
18. Anderson, Jack. "Book Burnings in Chile." *Modesto Bee* (Modesto, CA) 17 September 1975: 5, Online.
19. Harris, V. S. *Archives and Justice : A South African Perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007.
20. Bastian, Jeannette Allis. *Owning Memory : How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2003
21. Brown, Richard Harvey, and Beth Davis-Brown. "The Making Of Memory: The Politics Of Archives, Libraries And Museums In The Construction Of .." *History Of The Human Sciences* 11.4 (1998): 17. Academic Search Premier. Web. 13 Sept. 2011.
22. Cook, Terry, and Schwartz, Joan. "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance. *Archival Science* 2 (2002) 171-185:Academic Search Premier. Web. 7 Sept. 2011.
23. Panitch, Judith. "Liberty, Equality, Posterity?: Some Archival Lessons from the Case of the French Revolution". *Society of American Archivists* 59.1 (1996): 30-47. Academic Search Premier. Web 13 Sept. 2011.
24. Jimerson, Randall C. *Archives Power : Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, c2009



## Appendix: Figures

Fig. 1

### FICHA INDIVIDUAL

Tipificación denuncia				Legajo RedeFa		Leg CoNaDeP/SDH	
<b>Apellido paterno</b>		<b>Apellido materno</b>		<b>Nombres</b>		<b>Apodos / Otros</b>	
Doc de Id		Ced de Id (PFA) / Otros		Edad al momento del hecho		<b>Embarazo</b>	
Nacionalidad / ascendencia						<b>Tiempo de gestación</b>	
<b>Fecha</b>	Detención/secuestro: Lugar / referencias		Ciudad / Localidad	Partido / Dpto	Provincia / País		Niño/a localizado/restituído
Centros Clandestinos de Detención donde fue vista la víctima en calidad de detenida-desaparecida							
<b>Fecha</b>	Fallecimiento y/o hallazgo de los restos: Lugar / referencias		Ciudad / Localidad	Partido / Dpto	Provincia / País		
Exhumación / Identificación: Fecha aprox / Instancia judicial Interviniente							
<b>Para los casos de embarazadas: Cónyuge / compañero / padre del niño por nacer</b>							

Al contener un valor nulo (vacío) los campos se comprimen verticalmente, ocupando el espacio en blanco el campo inmediatamente posterior