WRITING THE ARCHIVES:
CONTEXT, MATERIALITY, IDENTITY

By

Madhu Narayan

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Rhetoric and Writing – Doctor of Philosophy

2013

ABSTRACT

WRITING THE ARCHIVES:
CONTEXT, MATERIALITY, IDENTITY

By

Madhu Narayan

In *Writing the Archives: Context, Materiality, Identity,* I develop a theoretical and

methodological framework for studying archives as institutions that reproduce the rhetorics and

identities of particular cultures. This framework includes four key arguments: 1) Archives are

constituted through a selective and subjective process of appraisal; 2) What counts as "historical"

or even "archival" depends on the attitudes and values of the cultures that create archives; 3)

Archivists depend on communicative processes such as writing in order to organize and frame

the materials in their care. These processes are culturally-situated and are not the same across all

archival spaces; 4) Archives are material spaces that bear very little resemblance to the

metaphorical notions of "The Archive" developed by theorists such as Thomas Richards, Diana

Taylor, Michel Foucault etc. Central to this framework is the idea that all archives are different

since they are constituted by communities whose experiences in the world are unique and

different. I argue that my framework for understanding archives would allow us to create better

archival research methodologies and also help us better train students who are interested in

archival research at the graduate and undergraduate level.

I employ a mixed method approach for understanding the role of archives in the

constitution of communities and identities. These methods include oral history interviews with

archivists who have worked at sites such as the archives as the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign and the Lesbian Herstory Archives. A close analysis of these interviews and these

sites reveals that archives are built in order to produce particular kinds of community

engagement. Decisions pertaining to the materials collected by these archives and access to these materials depend on the communal and identity politics of these institutions.

Additionally, I closely analyze finding aids from the above archives in order to show how they communicate the original context surrounding the production and circulation of archival records. I argue that that the contextual information offered by archival finding aids is always partial in nature. As such, finding aids are rhetorical artifacts because they build histories and identities for archival materials that affect the way in which these materials are read and interpreted by researchers. Finding aids frame researchers' knowledge of archival collections since they provide contextual information about how and where records were produced. I further demonstrate how western models of archival finding aids have been complicated by GLBTQ communities and indigenous communities; these communities argue for more egalitarian finding aids that acknowledge multiple record creators and stakeholders.

Lastly, I analyze the digitization practices of two digital archives, namely the Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives and the Blake Archive. I draw from the work of digital humanists and archivists to argue that in the context of digital archives, digitization of records is a cultural process. The manner in which we choose objects to be digitized reflects our biases, and it is never an "objective" process. As such, I argue that digitization is a rhetorical process because it creates culturally-mediated representation of a material object. I also point out that digitization does not necessarily mean that an archival record has been "preserved." All digitized records have unique identities and histories that need to be preserved as well. Therefore, I argue that archival digitization should attempt to connect records with their material counterparts in order to create a holistic representation of the original context in which records were produced and circulated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As this dissertation process winds down, I am excited about the next phase of my life as a writer, teacher and scholar. I owe thanks to many people who have supported me as mentors, colleagues and friends over the past four years. There is so much more I want to say to each of these people, but for now all I can say is thank you.

First, I'd like to thank the members of my committee: Dr. Malea Powell, Dr. Terese Monberg, Dr. Dean Rehberger, Dr. Trixie Smith and Dr. Daniel Heath Justice. Thank you for your incredible mentorship and intellectual support. I would have been a very different kind of scholar and colleague without you all.

I'd like to thank the archivists who agreed to speak with me and participate in this dissertation project. William Maher and Joan Nestle: thank you for your time and patience with my questions.

I would like to thank the Rhetoric and Writing program, especially our patient and compassionate graduate director, Dr. Bill Hart-Davidson. Bill, thank you for being available whenever I needed your advice.

I would like to thank the amazing staff in the WRAC office, particularly Melissa Arthurton, Marsha Edington and Dianna Shank. Thank you for helping me navigate the various bureaucratic systems at MSU and for always cheering me up. The WRAC office is definitely one of my favorite places in Bessey Hall.

I am so grateful for my incredible community of friends and colleagues at MSU and in other places. Thank you Matt Novak, Travis Webster, Caroline Wilkinson, Douglas Walls, Lehua Ledbetter, Jennifer Sano-Franchini, Katie Livingston, Casey Miles, Laura Julier, Stuart

Blythe, Marilee Brooks-Gillies, Sarah Johnson, Donnie Sackey and Stacey Pigg. All these people have taught me what it means to be a good friend and a supportive colleague.

I'd like to thank my parents, especially my mother for teaching me the value of a good education very early in my life. I'd like to thank my smart sister for putting up with my moods and tantrums over the years.

Finally, I owe a great big thank you to Ben Martin-Bean for going through this PhD process with me, for his unconditional love and kindness, especially on days when I was a difficult person to live with: Ben, I hope you know how much of all this you made possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
PRECURSOR: HOW I GOT TO THE ARCHIVES

"Endings are elusive, middles are nowhere to be found, but worst of all is
to begin, to begin, to begin…"
-Donald Barthelme, 1977

"How do scholars see beyond the norms they use to frame the experiences
of others unless those norms are interrupted and exposed so that scholars
are vulnerable, seeing what they believe as possibly wrong, or at least
limited?"
--Greg Sarris, 1993

A place where old things live:

I can still vaguely recall my first brush with the term "archive."

I was in grade school (or primary school, as they call it in India). Perhaps it was a teacher

or one of my parents who told me that the an archive was a place where "old things lived." For

me, this explanation immediately conjured a vision of a place where forgotten things ended up, a

place where things went to die. For a long time, I associated the word "archive" with dead things,

things that were decaying and rotting. I was convinced that if I ever visited an archive, I would

never leave. And if I did, I would leave with the residue of its dust and decay on me.

I find it interesting that when I think of my first brush with the archive[1], I immediately

travel to my first memory of the word and not a place. The archive is a place constituted of

memories and yet, paradoxically it is also constitutive of memory. Without archives, we cannot

recall memories: they have to be mediated through archives before they can be recalled. Our

power of recall is contingent on how well we've classified and preserved the past in our archives.

---

[1] I am trying to be very cautious in my use of "the" as a definite article when I talk about "the
archive": I will proved a more nuanced definition of "archive" later in this introduction, but I
want my readers to be aware that I am not positing a singular concept of archives here. Indeed
that would be contrary to the argument I am making in this dissertation.

My earliest understanding of archives was not entirely incorrect. It is in some ways a place for old and forgotten things: archives are our cultural unconscious, a place where memories are hidden or buried until they are needed again. And much like the Lacanian formulation of the unconscious, archives depend on language to give form and organize memories.

In this project, I trace the connections between language, writing and archives: as Brien Brothman (1991, 1999) contends, writing and archives work as perfect metaphors for each other. Writing and archiving are ways of organizing our experiences so that they communicate meaning and allow us to articulate our identities. Further, as an expression of language, writing is more than just a tool within archives. Writing becomes a representational medium often standing in for the materials of memory housed within archival spaces (Yakel 2003, Matienzo 2012). I argue that when archivists write and theorize about archives, they are also in fact talking about the complexities of writing: while archivists pay attention to how writing works a useful medium for organizing materials, it is also a medium that is meant to make archives seem less "messy." Archives are places where fragments from the past are deposited often in a disorganized and disordered form. Archival writing – as documented in various archival catalogs and finding aids – gives form and shape to this disorder. However, writing's ability to give form and shape is simultaneously contingent on its ability to leave out things that don't cohere or that seem out of place. The production of meaning through writing within archives is always a process of making things seem ordered, a process of making deliberate choices about what to include and exclude.

Given the fact that archives are constituted through deliberate choices, I argue that archives are rhetorical. This argument, of course, has been made before within communication and rhetoric studies (Biesecker, Morris, Finnegan 2006). Archives are also sites of social and political power (Foucault 1972, Derrida 1996, Cook & Schwartz 2002, Burton 2006, Kirsch &

Rohan 2008). They are sites that both enable and limit access to the materials of the past. They reflect, enact and authorize the rhetorics of the cultures and communities that created them. However, I argue that Rhetoric and Composition must pay more attention to the material realities of archival spaces[2]. We need to create a better understanding of the material processes (such as appraisal, authentication, description, preservation, etc) by which archives are created and maintained. Such an understanding would allow us to articulate the cultural logics through which archives are framed and composed.

In this project, I look at archives as material spaces comprised of material objects. I also point out that there is a tendency in current scholarship to conflate theoretical notions of archives (as exemplified in the work of Foucault, Derrida, Richards etc) with physical archives that house the materials of memory. I argue that when we study physical archives through the lens of discursive or theoretical archives, we risk homogenizing all archival spaces. Instead, I persistently show that archival spaces are different from one another since they are created to enact the rhetorics of particular cultures and communities. The material practices (such as appraisal, description etc) that constitute archival spaces often differ depending on the needs of the communities that created them.

In this project, I write about a range of archives, including a university archives (the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), a community-based archives (The Lesbian Herstory Archives) and two digital archives (*The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives* and *The Blake Archive*). I take a close look at the material practices of these archives: I particularly analyze their descriptive practices as evidenced by their finding aids and catalog entries. In terms of the

---

[2] Scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have already started doing such work: the recent edited collection *Working in the Archives* includes extensive accounts of archivists' material practices. I discuss this collection more extensively in later chapters.

two digital archives, I look closely at how they describe digitized or made-digital material. I argue that archival writing – as exemplified by archival description – is a process of building context for the materials of memory. While the content of archival records is certainly important, a record as a physical object can be equally revealing: hence, building a history for the record itself - by documenting the context of its production and use - can be of great help to researchers. It would allow us to look beyond the content of archival records and think about how records functioned as physical objects within a given cultural setting.

I further argue that archival researchers should understand artifacts like finding aids as rhetorical: these artifacts create narratives about archival records that are never comprehensive or complete. Researchers should engage in conversations with such artifacts and try to discover what they exclude as well as include. Broadly, I argue that documents like finding aids are like any other written products: they draw arbitrary boundaries around information and often only represent a partial narrative about the items contained within archives. Such a view does not make archival description any less valuable, but it does ask us to adopt a more critical lens when we engage with documents such as finding aids. Indeed, in their suggested guidelines for doing archival research, the Society of American Archivists requests researchers to point out mistakes in descriptive documents such as finding aids and catalogs. Archivists are well aware that neither finding aids/catalogs nor the people who develop them are infallible.

This project includes excerpts from my interviews with archivists: I reflect more deeply on the interview process and my reasons for including archivsts' voices later in this chapter. However, here I will say that I wanted to assert the archivist as a material presence within archival spaces. Often in the current scholarship on archives both within Rhetoric and Composition and other fields (such as History, English, Anthropology etc), the archivist is either

relegated to the background entirely or only appears as a shadowy figure, either granting or denying the researcher access to materials. We rarely write about archivists as experts in the area of long-term preservation of materials of the past. We rarely think of them as experts who can teach us a great deal about how archival materials are put together and maintained. This dissertation brings the blurry image of archivist into sharp focus. It looks to their views on archival preservation as rhetorical and meaningful.

Understanding the Purpose of Archives

I am not an archivist. My interest in archives springs from a long-term fascination with these spaces. Over the past decade, as I have moved from college to graduate school, archives – much like the unconscious – have been a recurrent theme. Almost every class I have taken in graduate school has included at least one discussion about archives. In these conversations, almost everyone seemed to have a different understanding of "the archive": sometimes, it was a place for research, at other times, it was an instrument of power. On the one hand, archives were often touted as a place where the past was revealed and on the other hand, it was also the place where the past was concealed. Some argued that memories could be discovered within archives. Others countered that archives were often the cause of cultural amnesia. Archives were static. Archives were timeless. Archives were places where "everything" could be found. Archives were places where only fragments of the past could be found. Archives were metaphors. Archives were problematic. Archives were wonderful...

As a graduate student, I found myself smack in the middle of all these ideas. And while I was fascinated by these views, I found that no one could exactly tell me what archives were. This question seemed to elicit a cacophony of responses that were as vague as the very first explanation I heard as a child: people talked about archives in terms of the past, or memory or

power. They talked about archives as a place to visit and read things from a long time ago. I found these explanations helpful of course, but I was never given an explanation that I could really pin down. What was even more fascinating was that everyone I talked to or read provided their explanation of archives with a sense of quiet certainty and conviction. It was as if everybody knew instinctively what archives were based on their own experiences and therefore no one felt the need to explain it in any other way.

It's perhaps because I am afraid of forming conclusions prematurely or perhaps as a scholar and as a human being, I have given up on the idea of certitude in general. Whatever the reason, when I started this project, I found that I was unable to provide a reasonable definition of archives to my dissertation committee. Indeed my initial proposal for this project was crowded with ideas as vague as all the explanations I had heard in graduate school. I certainly do not want to discount others' notions and definitions of archives: indeed, some of the explanations I had heard in my graduate coursework allowed me to understand archives as complex sites of socio-political power. But for myself, as a scholar interested in archives and archival research, I wanted to move away (at least momentarily) from these grand narratives about archives. Instead, I wanted to understand the material practices that constitute archives every day. I wanted to allow myself to look at archives as material spaces wherein people work and make meaning on a daily basis.

Methodologically, I took a leaf out Kathleen Stewart's *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996). A cultural anthropologist, Stewart launches into an investigation of what she terms "the Other America." She travels to the coal-mining towns of West Viriginia in order to uncover what lies beyond the grand narrative of America. As she argues, there is a consistent story about America as a nation, a set of expectations and attitudes of progress that are characteristic of

Americans as people. And yet, there must be a space wherein the grand narrative collides with the material realities of people who live in forgotten spaces in the mountains or by the side of the road. Stewart maintains that these are spaces that are literally left behind, forgotten by grand narratives of progress. These are the in-between spaces that come alive through the stories told by the people inhabiting them. In her work, Stewart also attempts to articulate a theory of culture. As she describes it, culture is "not an end, or a blueprint for thinking and acting, but a constant beginning again- a search, an argument, an unfinished longing. The very effort to imagine it, then, is itself a continuous effort to reopen stories, and spaces of cultural critique, that are just as continuously being slammed shut with every new 'solution' to the problem of culture and theory" (6). Stewart's theory posits culture, not as a singular thing, but as a process constituted through practice. In her study then, Stewart turns to people in order to understand how their practices constitute the culture around them.

As I set up this project, like Stewart, I learned to suspend my theoretical understandings of archives. It appeared to me that the grand narrative of "the Archive" had a tendency to assimilate and overwhelm the messy materiality of archival spaces. In extant scholarship, "the Archive" is not a physical place, but an attitude, a mindset of singularity that is bent upon accumulating information regardless of cultural context. In these formulations of "the Archive," information is assimilated in order to create a vision of homogeneity: this, in turn, becomes a way of closing off difference. While I do believe these theories of "the Archive," I would also argue that this conception is markedly different from material archives that house actual physical objects. The notion of "the Archive" is a theory about cultural discourses: it traces how these discourses are accumulated, manipulated and then deployed as knowledge. This kind of accumulation is different from the collection practices of material archives. When we deploy theoretical

conceptions of the Archive to understand physical archives, we risk the loss of materiality. Since theoretical understandings of the Archive are so focused on abstractions such as "knowledge," what gets lost is the materiality of archival objects.

The grand theory of "the Archive" has become a general solution, an easy way to ignore the ideological and material differences that lead to the creation of archival spaces. Grand theories of the Archive, much like grand theories of Culture close off the possibility that different formulations of archives and culture can and *do* exist. "The Archive" as a concept is not a "blueprint" after which all archives are modeled: instead, archives are cultural repositories that enact the specific rhetorics of the cultures that created them. As a researcher then, I wanted to get at the messy materiality of archival spaces. Each archival space is different, embedded in cultures and communities that are equally different. I also moved to a theory of archives as material spaces housing physical objects (I discuss this further in Chapter 4: "Writing the Archives"). I realized that understanding archives as material spaces necessitated approaching archivists. I understood archivists as people whose material practices constitute and maintain archives on a daily basis. Therefore, I decided to interview archivists about their lived experiences within archival spaces.

Learning the Language: A Brief Note on Cross-Disciplinary Engagement:

Whilst setting up my research design for this project, I decided to use oral history as my interview methodology. The two archivists who participated in this project were William Maher, University Archivist at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Joan Nestle, Co-founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), presently located in Brooklyn, New York. Each of these archivists have worked in two markedly different types of archives with extremely different missions and collection practices. While William Maher is a professionally trained archivist,

Joan Nestle was a self-taught archivist. While William Maher is still active in his job and profession, Joan Nestle no longer works at the LHA.

Even before I set up this project, I was cognizant that no two archivists' experiences would be the same. I was also incredibly nervous going into this project given that I am not an archivist and did not have the appropriate language/vocabulary to begin my conversation with archivists. Learning the practices and discourses of another field of study takes time, but given the time constraints I was working under, I really did need to set up my interviews before I had learned everything I needed. Cross- disciplinary engagement, however, is fraught with difficulties. Researchers do need to pay attention to the language/vocabularly they use as they speak to potential participants. One of the archivists I contacted very early on tersely reminded me that for many decades archivists have had strong professional standards, practices and a code of ethics. She also noted that archives are very close to libraries and emphasize access through physical spaces and online presence. She added that archivists' professional scholarship and narratives emphasize the archival profession's desire to document all aspects of history and remove barriers to accessing that documentation. She also wondered if I was aware of the several decades of scholarship on archives and archival work that were available to me online and in the library. It is not that I was unaware of this work and it is not that I hadn't been making an earnest attempt to read as much of this scholarship as possible (it is hard to catch up on about five to seven decades of scholarly discussions in the space of a few short months), but I think what this interaction demonstrated to me was that I lacked the language to explain myself clearly to my participants. But then again, this was another reason I wanted to speak to archivists: to learn their vocabulary and to understand the specific theoretical and methodological lenses they use to speak about their work. I found myself caught in a double bind of sorts: how to ask archivists to

teach me about their work without taking on the role of an "expert" and yet be able to show that I had some knowledge of their professional concerns?

As I have made it clear, I am not an archivist and it might take me months, if not years, of immersion in the field of archival studies before I am able to position myself as an authority on that field. No, instead my challenge was to find a way to communicate my questions in a way that would demonstrate my discipline's limited engagement with archival studies and also to find a way to have those questions answered without seeming condescending or disingenuous. Recruiting participants for this project was difficult because I found that I was double-guessing myself, constantly over-analyzing all of the emails that I exchanged with archivists, trying to find a way to articulate myself and my concerns without alienating anyone: this, I think, is one of the hardest challenges of cross-disciplinary research: How to speak and listen across disciplinary and cultural divides? How to be a respectful yet informed outsider?

When I started this project, I found an orientation to cross-disciplinary research through the work of community researchers; I looked to the work of scholars such as Kathleen Stewart, Jackie Jones Royster (1996), Julie Cruikshank (1990, 2000) and Greg Sarris (1993): I took my cues from them as to how to approach communities and how to act with deference. These scholars did not go into various communities hoping to "fix" problems or position themselves as experts: instead they went in wanting to learn how individuals in these communities told stories about who they are and how these stories stand in stark contrast to the narratives that are told about them in popular and scholarly discourse. In other words, these scholars provided me with an orientation, an attitude, an approach to doing community and cross-disciplinary research. I cannot say that I have not made mistakes, but I remained steadfast in my initial goal: there are grand narratives and orientations within our discipline about archives and archivists; I wanted to

have conversations with archivists to understand how we can counter some of the lore about archives and the archival profession within our discipline. I wanted to underscore the incredible physical and intellectual labor of creating and maintaining archives.

I found myself stumbling a great deal. I think, however, this journey has taught me that what I considered for so long a personal failing is in fact an disciplinary blind spot: one look at our discipline's publications and conference presentations on archives makes it clear that our orientation to archival spaces and archival research comes from disciplines such as history, anthropology, cultural studies etc. A look at the octalogs (1988, 1997, 2010) - three of the most important conversations on history in our discipline - will show that we talk about archival research as rhetorical historians. We have not looked to the contributions of archival profession for some reason. I became curious to understand why this field has only existed in our peripheral vision for so long. We like to talk about archives and have even started creating our own archives and yet we haven't fully sought out the expertise of archivists.

From "Archive" to "Archives":

This move from "the archive" to "an archives" was one of my very first lessons during my field research. Whenever I type the phrase "an archives", a thin green squiggly line appears underneath to reprimand me. Indeed, it feels odd, almost unnatural to juxtapose a preposition used to denote singularity to a concept as heterogeneous as "archives." And yet, as William Maher, one of the archivists participating in this project has pointed out, it is common practice among archivists to use the term "archives" as opposed to "archive" in the singular (1998). While the term "archive" is quite common in academic circles, most North American archivists prefer the term "archives" instead. Maher has written eloquently about how the term "archive" has been co-opted in popular discourse, but there isn't a clear understanding of what it means.

11

"The Archive" has also become a buzz-word in a number of scholarly disciplines to refer to a range of physical and digital repositories and databases. In these popular and scholarly conceptions, "the archive" often refers to a singular collection of documents or ideas. It is thought of as a purposeful collection: that is, documents are created and collected with the express purpose of placing them in an archive. For instance, if we were to look at the *Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives,* it is clear that they collect and create literacy narratives with the sole intention of preserving them in the *DALN*.

However, most archivists hold that archives are collections of "accidental" but "unique[3]" documents created during the day-to-day activities of an organization or a specific individual (Maher 1998, Nesmith 2002). That is, archives don't collect everything: they only collect papers and artifacts that may have some future relevance to particular communities. And in regular practice, not all organizations/people create documents daily with the knowledge that those papers would end up in an archival space some day. Instead, a lot of the knowledge created by people and organizations every day is in fact incidental to some other purpose. I am not writing this dissertation in the hope that it will end up in an archives. I am writing it so that I can graduate with my PhD. But there is a chance that in the future, an archivist may deem this dissertation to have some value. It would be "unique" in the sense that it might offer evidence of the way dissertations were written during this time period at Michigan State University. Or it might offer evidence of some other activity to future generations of students and scholars. In other words, most documents don't always start out being "archival."

Archives collect a variety of documents from various organizations and people: there is a vast heterogeneity in terms of what ends up in an archival space. Even though the location of an

---

[3] Of course who decides what is "unique" is completely subjective.

archives may be singular, their holdings certainly are not. So, in a sense the use of the phrase "an archives" instead of "the archive" makes perfect sense to me. As I worked on this project, I had to continually remind myself of this and train myself to say "an archives" over the more homogenizing "the archive." In truth, archives do closely cohere to the Foucauldian notion of "heterotopia." In a recent essay (2010), Knut Ove Eliassen points out that heterotopia is

> a place that, as it differs from the spaces that surround it, suspends the established schemata ordering the space-time order, and thus is experienced aesthetically (Foucault 1994 4,752). Furthermore, it is the place to encounter the past in its heterogeneity, an encounter that for Foucault remained aesthetic in the most literal sense as a bodily experience, as a displacement of the self...[4]

Archives are experienced as places that are displaced. They are experienced as being somehow outside of time even though they are in the business of organizing time. As Eivind Røssaak (2010) explains, archives take materials from different time periods and organize these in space. So literally, they take "slices of time" and turn them into multiple "spatial regimes." Archives "house" temporal regimes that are vastly different from our own. This kind of "disordered" time is often *felt* rather than experienced intellectually. Archives create a sense of anxiety because researchers are displaced both from the "normal" flow of time and also from those regimes of thought that value intellect over emotion. Archives demand an emotional response from researchers. They are at once singular *and* multiple.

I contend that in addition to experiencing archives as "outside" time or as timeless, there is also a tendency to think of them as "outside culture" or as "acultural." In a sense, archives are the

---

[4] Foucault clearly spent some time in archives. He writes about them viscerally, from the within the archives. His theory of the archive is embedded in his material and emotional experiences within these places. Eliassen notes the use of phrases such as "I shudder" and "I tremble" in Foucault's musings on archives.

offspring of high modernity. The modern notion of archives, or at least the ones that arose in

Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries (Jenkinson 1922, De Certeau 1992, Stoler 2002, Steedman

2002) embodied a certain anxiety and a need to control memory: such modernist archives not

only turned time into space, they also turned archives into positivistic repositories that

supposedly represented the past *as it happened*. The authority of the archives could not be

touched. They were "neutral" sites, representing the authority and the power of the nation-state.

These archives supposedly occupied a space beyond the reach of cultural influences; they were

completely objective. This line of thinking is reflected in early texts about archival management

and administration. In this view, archivists were merely caretakers whose objectivity went

unquestioned. They did not influence archival materials in any way.

   This view was first put forward by Sir Hilary Jenkinson – author of the monograph *A

Manual of Archival Administration*[5]. He maintained that "genuine archives 'accumulate

naturally'" (Jenkinson as qtd. in Nesmith 2002). For Jenkinson, archives grew naturally, just like

any other organism. As he explained, "(archives) came together and reached their final

arrangement, by a natural process: are a growth you might say, as much an organism as a tree or

an animal." (Nesmith 28). William Maher has pointed out that Jenkinson was writing at a time

when the allocation of space for archival purposes was not a political issue. He was also writing

a time when burgeoning records were not (yet) a problem. Jenkinson's treatise and other

---

[5] Jenkinson's 1922 text (a revised edition was published in 1937) was considered indispensable at the time of its publication because it was the first manual on archival administration in the English language (Maher 3). In this manual, Jenkinson also provides us with what might be one of the earliest definition of archives: "A document which may be said to belong to the class of Archives is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part ; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own in- formation by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors.   To this Definition we may add a corollary. Archives were not drawn up in the interest or for the information of Posterity" (11).

scholarship that followed him also emphasized the need for the archivist to be impartial in their appraisal and selection of records; the archivist was exhorted to take care, to not play the historian, to "make his decisions free of the taint of ideological, political or personal bias" (Grover as qtd. in Maher, 5). As Maher has pointed out, the pervasiveness of the Jenkinsonian perspective is still evident: the code of ethics established by the Society of American Archivists "uses… the words "impartial," "objective," "fair" or "balanced" at least ten times, and implies the concept of neutrality and balance throughout." (7).

Jenkinson was a firm proponent of archival non-intervention: as Maher has explained, Jenkinson proposed that the integrity of an archives depended on the establishment "*an unblemished line of responsible custodians* [emphasis in original]". In fact, Jenkinson believed that archival records possessed an "inherent impartiality" (Maher 2010); if the archivist made decisions about what to include or exclude, this would immediately make the records suspect. It would cast doubt on the records' ability to tell the "truth." Additionally, Jenkinson also proposed that it would be best if the archivist "adopted a strategy of self-effacement in their professional principles and discourse" (Nesmith 2002). While the archivist could be a student of history, he/she must pursue this kind of study in their "off" hours. The archivist's main task was to tread lightly around other scholars and to ensure that he/she did not deliberately tread on anybody's toes. In a nutshell, the archivist was to be seen and heard minimally.

Clearly, the Jenkinsonian perspective was entrenched in a positivistic view of history; it presupposed that with minimal inference or rather, with no interference at all, the past could be known as it was. While a great deal of concrete archival practice stems from similar positivistic views, Brothman (1999) has argued archival practices such as appraisal, arrangement and description are not neutral even though they are presented as such; Heather MacNeil (2005) has

also pointed out that even common archival texts such as finding aids are socio-historical constructs and these are built for particular purposes and for very particular audiences; these concepts and texts are inherently cultural even though they often espouse the stance of objectivity and neutrality.

While Hilary Jenkinson stoutly believed that it was not the archivist's job to throw things away, this view has naturally come under fire given the massive amounts of records that are produced on a daily basis by individuals, organization and communities. In fact, Theodore Schellenberg, author of *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (originally published in 1956) was a major proponent of archival appraisal; Reto Tschan (2002) has argued that in some ways, Schellenberg's book was written as a rebuttal to Jenkinson's work (179). For Schellenberg, the archivist was primarily an appraiser. He saw the archivist as "an interventionist, selecting documents for preservation and working closely with records managers and current records" (Tschan 187). Schellenberg also argued that the archivist selected administrative documents for future scholarly use (Tschan 186). Both of these views on appraisal have been reassessed by archivists in recent decades, but the idea of the archivist as selector and appraiser of records endures. Recent conversations on appraisal seem to indicate that records are "accessioned[6]" not based on some inherent value, but in their ability to tell us more about other

---

[6] Accessioning is the formal process by which an archives takes "legal and physical custody of a group of records" (Pearce-Moses 2005). Accessioning does not just mean "acquisition." Instead it is the process by which records are formally documented and codified as part of an archival collection. This might include "entering brief information about those materials in a register, database, or other log of the repository's holdings" (n.p.) On the other hand, "deaccessioning" is the process by which records are permanently removed from a repository's holding. This happens because a record has been reappraised and deemed unsuitable for preservation or it has decomposed and is beyond repair. Alternately records may be moved to other repositories and thus may be subject to deaccessioning. Records may also be deaccessioned if an archival space changes its collection policies and finds that "the material is no longer within its scope." (n.p.)

records and about the organization or individual that created them. As Gerald Ham (1993) has explained:

> "There are five analyses that make up the basic tools archivists need in their appraisal kits to identify and select records of enduring value. These are an analysis: of a record's functional characteristics – who made the record and for what purpose; of the information in the record to determine its significance and quality; of the record in the context of parallel or related documentary sources; of the potential uses that are likely to be made of the record and the physical, legal, and intellectual limitations on access; of the cost of preserving the record weighed against the benefit of retaining the information" (51).

Conversations on appraisal are ongoing and still remain a point of conflict, but it is important to remember that archives exclude or destroy as many records as they choose to keep or preserve. This process of inclusion/exclusion is often motivated by the particular goals and mandates of the archives itself: in composing an archival space through records, archivist often have to keep the archives' purpose, context and audience in mind. Additionally, if an archival record is deemed to have outlasted its value, it may be "deaccessioned." So records do not necessarily remain "archival" for the rest of their days.

As I worked on this project, one of my other lessons was becoming familiar with the archives as memory versus archives as evidence debate (Greene 2002, Maher 1998). In fact, archivists understand themselves as "evidence professionals" whose area of expertise is the preservation of materials of the past. As I have already pointed out, archives collect materials that were produced as a result of various day-to-day activities. These archival materials then work as evidence of particular actions that were carried out by human beings in the past. Indeed, one of the earliest function of archives was to help with issues of governance: the Greek

arkehion (from which the word archive is derived) was a civil servant, a bureaucrat, whose task was to maintain important state documents at his residence. It was his duty to pull out these documents in case there was a dispute of some kind and the documents could serve as evidence for the state at that time. So, even the earliest archives were not so much invested in preserving all cultural memories, but only those memories that might be of some use to the state at a later time. If archives work as evidence of particular activities, what counts as "important" or "unique" is entirely subjective and depends on the attitudes and values of the cultures that created them. Additionally, regardless of whether they are thought of as memory or evidence, the point I want to underscore here is that archives are constituted through an extremely selective process of appraisal.

Oral History as a Site of Shared Authority:

As I have already mentioned, I was trying to understand archivists' lived experiences in relation to the archives wherein they do their work on a daily basis. I understand "lived experience" as understandings garnered from a subject's long-term interactions within a particular culture. Lived experiences are often delivered in a narrativized form; the narrator acts as the protagonist and sets the tone and purpose for the narrative. Lived experiences are necessarily complex and contradictory but focusing on these narratives allows us to understand how subjects articulate agency and negotiate differentials of power and privilege in their every day lives. Such research also prompts the researcher to reflect on her own location and positionality, especially as she tries to interview, interpret and write about the experiences of her research participants.

Dana Collins (2102) has recently pointed out that turning towards lived experiences might help counter imperialistic research practices that "deny subjectivity and render invisible the agency of

those constituted through exoticism" (52). She theorizes the notion of "limited location" to argue that all research is "conducted from a standpoint of social positioning" (50). The researcher's perspective is always limited, never comprehensive. Given these limitations, it is often only too easy for researchers to objectify, exoticize and distance ourselves from our research participants. Such research practices multiply the distance between the researcher and the researched, creating suspicion and distrust. Collins argues researcher should "(keep) epistemology open" to "the contribution of lived experiences." (52) This might create "a shift in representation" for those who are spoken for and silenced, especially within research epistemologies that do not look to lived experiences as valuable (52).

I believe our research sites are infused with unequal relations of power. I am specifically referring to the unequal distributions of power between researchers and their participants. As Collins points out, research is an invasive process. In most research situations, the researcher has more power because she is the one "in charge." As a researcher, I am well aware of my participation in the problematic and colonizing discourses engendered by academic research. Additionally, lived experience research is as much about the researcher as it is about her participants. The researcher brings her own desires and differences to the research situation which may overwhelm the narratives of her participants. As such, I believe that when it comes to lived experience research, the researcher and her particpants must assume a stance of "shared authority" (Yow 2005) wherein both their desires and differences are accounted for and addressed. I borrow the concept of "shared authority" from the work of feminist and indigenous historiographers (Cruikshank 1990, Sarris 1993, Monberg 2008) who have argued that lived experience research needs to be a reciprocal process wherein both the researcher and her participants contribute to the meaning- making process.

As I was looking for an "in-depth" view of archivists' experiences, oral history methodologies offered a sound framework for collecting data about their lived experiences (Yow 2005, Ritchie 2003). Oral historians consider narrativized lived experiences to be rich resources that can tell us a great deal about how people construct meaning and make sense of their lives. Such narratives also allow us to understand "how culture influences individuals' interpretations of experience" (Yow 17). When I use the term narrative here, I am referring to strategies that people use in order to organize their experience. Such strategies involve positing beginnings, middles and endings for particular lived experiences, even if these categories are created and abitrary. A narrative strategy, for me, is any attempt made by a subject to make sense of his or her experiences through stories. An oral history approach presupposes that an individual is always embedded in a particular set of political and socio-economic structures: it looks to narratives of lived experiences in order to determine how individuals interacted with these structures and articulated a sense of identity for themselves. Most importantly, oral historians consider narrative itself to be a meaningful form of data. They looks to narratives as rich evidence of a person's life; such narratives are just as important as archival records since they can teach us a great deal about particular historical periods.

In oral history research, the concept of shared authority is not without precedent. Whilst describing her oral history research amongst native women in Northern Canada, Julie Cruikshank (1990) writes: "Instead of working from the conventional formula in which an outside investigator initiates and controls the research, [Cruikshank's work] depends on ongoing collaboration between interviewer and interviewee. Such a model begins by taking seriously what people say about their lives rather than treating their words simply as an illustration of some other process" (1). Cruikshank also points out that narrators of oral histories usually have

agendas that are just as important as those of the researcher's. In fact, people often agree to participate in interview project because they have something important to say or teach about their lives. Therefore, such interviews need to find a balance to address the needs of both parties. Instead of taking charge of the interview, the researcher should remain open to her participants' world-view and should be willing to share her authority. A too rigid line of questioning may in fact shut conversation down instead of creating more openings for the emergence of different kinds of knowledge.

For instance, in advance of my interview with Joan Nestle and Willam Maher, I sent both participants a preliminary interview guide over email containing questions that I wished to discuss with them. My questions mostly pertained to their work within their respective archives. Maher wrote back to me almost immediately and shared a paper that he had presented some time ago on the notion of archives and objectivity (which was one of the topics I had included in my interview guide). Reading his views on this topic helped me narrow and reframe my questions considerably. During our interview I was able to discuss the topic with him with a level of specificity that might not have been possible if he had not guided me earlier. Once Joan had had the opportunity to peruse the questions in my interview guide, she wrote me back to let me know that she was a bit tired of answering questions about the LHA, especially since she had already extensively written about it in her published works. Instead, she said she would like to discuss her ideas about archives in general, especially since these ideas had changed with the passage of time. I saw this, as a moment, in which Joan had created her own agenda for our conversation. While this was not a problem for me, it taught me about the need to keep my research design open. It also became clear to me that seeing the interview as more of a shared process would be more productive for me and the archivists.

The concept of shared authority also asks researchers to adopt a more vulnerable stance, to acknowledge their own limited locations. As Greg Sarris puts it: "How do scholars see beyond the norms they use to frame the experiences of others unless those norms are interrupted and exposed so that scholars are vulnerable, seeing what they believe as possibly wrong, or at least limited?" In Sarris' case, he discovers the limits of his own knowledge, as he works to record the lived experiences of his aunt, Mabel McKay. As an academic, Sarris chronicles his effort to "explain" Mabel's life experiences through a masculine, academic lens. However, Mabel constantly resists his efforts at such classification, forever complicating his pre-determined categories. She disrupts his efforts to provide easy explanations for her lived experiences and instead helps him see that things are not always what they seem. Sarris finds that once he let go of his need to impose preconceived explanations on Mabel's stories, he became much more open to the lessons she tried to convey. And he also finds that once he gives Mabel the space to tell her stories in the way that she wants, their interaction became less of a struggle. For Sarris, giving up his academic authority in favor of a more shared dynamic allows him to better understand Mabel's lived experiences. Sarris advocates a more dialogic mode of interviewing wherein the voices of interviewer and participant do not work in opposition to each other, but more as "different voices capable of communicating and informing one another" (7).

In my case, given my own "limited location," the temptation to "categorize" my participants and their experiences was overwhelming: for instance, during my interview with Joan Nestle, I was constantly tempted to classify her as an "archivist" because I was specifically interested in her work within the Lesbian Herstory Archives. However, as Joan emphasized at one point during our interview, her "writing and (her) archival work are one and the same" (2011). She constantly resisted my pre-conceived categories about her life and her

work. Given the way Joan talked about her life experiences, I found it hard to classify her experiences: I found that I could not separate the archivist from the activist, the teacher from the historian, the theorist from the human being. Listening to lived experiences is a messy process that necessitates an openness in our research design and epistemology. Lived experiences often resist easy categorizations since our participants' lives are messy and their various roles and histories often inform one another. In Joan's case, it soon became apparent to me that her personal life constantly rubbed against her professional life as an archivist, writer, theorist and activist. These various roles did not work in opposition to one another, but informed each other and Joan continually drew upon all of them to inform our conversation during the interview.

During my interview with both Joan Nestle and William Maher, I was comfortable asking them questions about things that I was unsure of or that I was not familiar with. Instead of presenting myself as a researcher who had all the answers, I let the archivists set the tone and pace for the interview. I asked them questions based on the responses they gave me instead of having a rigid set of questions prepared beforehand. I listened closely to their voices and let them teach me about their experiences as archivists.

Locating an Interpretive Methodology for Lived Experiences:

Oral history methodologies presuppose the existence of a narrator who speaks and a researcher who listens (Monberg 2008). Given the constraints of time and finances, I was unable to speak with Joan Nestle in person. I currently live in East Lansing, Michigan, while she resides in Melbourne, Australia with her partner, Diane Otto. Instead, we set up our interview over Skype. Since Joan's webcam did not work at that time, our conversation was entirely audio-based (Joan gave me permission to record our interview). While this is clearly not an ideal situation, our conversation was not too constrained. We spoke for close to two hours about

Joan's life with the Lesbian Herstory Archives. With William Maher, while I was able to interview him in person, I could only audio-record our conversation. Given that I could not depend on visual cues to interpret our conversation, I had to entirely rely on a methodology of listening (Powell 2002, Royster 1996, Ratcliffe 2006, Monberg 2008) in order to make sense of my conversations with the archivists. In practice, I understand listening as a recursive process that requires complete immersion in one's data: for me, listening is not just about reading and analyzing transcripts from an interview, but listening to participants' voices over and over again. Such a form of listening involves being familiar with the nuances of participants' voices; it involves paying close attention to the ways in which they frame their ideas. Listening as a methodology also complimented my focus on lived experiences because it acknowledges that participants' voices are authoritative and as important as that of any other writer or theorist. Additionally, listening as a methodology is particular useful because it requires that researchers look beyond published texts. Often when a research participant is a prolific writer like my both of my participants, it is very easy to make assumptions about their lives based on their published writing. However, during interviews, participants can often offer perspectives that are quite different from the researchers' initial assumptions.

For instance, before I interviewed Joan Nestle, I knew of her as a famous activist- feminist who had contributed a great deal to conversations on gender and sexuality. I had always assumed that her activism was rooted in her feminism. However, when I asked Joan to speak at length about the emotional and physical labor of being a grassroots archivist and activist, she explained that one of her main reasons for starting the LHA was to commemorate the women she had come out to in the 1950s. As she put it:

"it was my body's way of saying thank you and something I haven't – and you haven't

24

asked me this, but you say the kinds of labor – I am a lesbian, not as Lillian Faderman said,

because of my feminist principles. I am lesbian because I wanted – and I am going to say

this – I wanted to be fucked by a woman. And that sexual desire is behind everything that I

did. It was what led me to go into those dark streets, to places where women were not

supposed to be, to wake up in bedrooms not remembering how I got there, but enjoying

what had happened and all the other things. So the first labor is one of a passion, a passion

to hold the doors of history open for a loved community to slip in, who had given me, to

this young woman, my first taste, who had touched me, they touched me, they touched my

body, they spread my legs, also touched my imagination and I have written about them, so

this is where my writing and my archival work are one and the same."

Joan has written extensively about her encounters in working class bars as a young woman.

Particularly, in her essay, "The Bathroom Line" (1987) she details her experiences at The Sea

Colony: a working-class lesbian bar in New York City. She explains how the women in the bars

were monitored and kept under close watch by the police. They were forbidden from dancing

together, "a crime for which [they] could be arrested" (38). So, when Joan "passed the border

into the safe lands of lesbian feminism and gay liberation," she was intent upon recovering the

stories of the women she had met in those bars, who had created a safe space for her as a young

lesbian (2011). For Joan, her desire was a central motivator that led to the creation of the Lesbian

Herstory Archives. The archives would be a place where one's sexual desires would not be a

matter of shame. Instead, the archives would grant women a place to openly explore those

desires and share them with women both in the present and in the past. So much of Joan's life as

an activist and archivist was invested in her identity as a woman who desired and loved other

women. These physical and emotional longings dictated her sense of identity and responsibility

towards the lesbian community. Joan's feminism therefore is rooted in her desires and not vice-versa. With such a brief explanation, Joan powerfully re-framed my understanding of who she was and how her desires became the impetus for the inception of the LHA. Such a nuanced understanding of Joan's identity and experience would have been lost to me if I had not listened to her voice over and over again.

As an academic, I am conscious of my imbrication in colonizing discourses: academic research, after all, can turn research participants into passive "others" who are talked about, but are not allowed to talk back (Tuhiwai-Smith 2006). Researchers who write about their experiences in the field often allow their own interpretive frames to occlude participants' ways of making meaning; by virtue of the researcher's privilege, her interpretation is held up as more valid than that of her participant's. However, listening as an interpretive methodology presupposes a research participant who has something to teach the researcher: it demands that the researcher adopt stance of humility and shared authority. Even when my interview with Joan and Maher had "ended," I still listened to the recordings as a space of shared knowledge. I approached the interview not as an authoritative researcher, but more as a learner whose knowledge about archives was not comprehensive. Listening asks researchers to give up the myth of comprehensive knowledge and instead become aware of the various limitations that might mediate their understanding of their participants' lives.

Finally, as a straight woman, I am profoundly aware of the way in which my own histories (both personal and academic) could impact the way in which I heard and interpreted Joan Nestle's lived experiences. My experiences as a straight woman grant me a great deal of institutional and cultural privilege: during the interview itself, I did not tell Joan about my sexual orientation. Nor did she ask me for this information. I felt uncomfortable not revealing this

information during the interview: given that Joan was so open with me about her life, I felt that I was withholding vital information about myself from her and that this was somehow dishonest. Yet there was never a moment for me to come out as a straight woman during our conversation. (A few months after our interview, I did send Joan a preliminary version of an article about the LHA that I intended to publish wherein I was open about my sexual orientation. While retroactive, I felt that this move still created a much more honest space for our interactions.) Later, as I listened to our interview transcript, I was aware that I might distort the information Joan had shared with me. While I transcribed the interview, I had to find a way to look beyond my privilege (as a straight woman and as an academic) and still account for it. In other words, I had to account for the differences in interpretation that my own differences created (Reay qtd. in Archer 2002). For me, being straight meant that I had to be very careful while I wrote about Joan Nestle. While paraphrasing her words and ideas, I had to be very conscious of my language because I was afraid I would be extracting power and meaning from the stories Joan shared with me. So I made the commitment to not "clean up" the interview transcript or remove the pauses and repetitions in Joan's responses as I wrote. I made a similar decision regarding the transcripts that emerged out of my interview with William Maher.

Defining Rhetorics, Culture and Archives:

In his introduction to *A Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology* (2005)*,* Richard Pearce-Moses states:

> "Archivists have often been seen as custodians of the past. We are seen as the keepers of old things. While we will remain the custodians of old records, we must change our emphasis from the preservation of culture as a thing of the past. We must become advocates for future users of current information by ensuring the transmission of culture.

What of the present needs to be remembered for future users? I believe that our knowledge of what has enduring value and of how researchers use materials is our distinguishing expertise. It is that knowledge that can enable us to help records creators know when to commit intentional acts of memory, to know what to save. To do that, we must be able to speak clearly" (n.p).

This introduction manifests a tension that has been brewing in archival circles for the past three decades: the role of language in the creation of the past and the realization that the past can only be known through language. In some ways, this is an anxiety that archivists must constantly negotiate as they put together and describe archival records. It also highlights the fact that the archivist cannot remain "neutral" since he/she creates archival spaces through language.

Given that this project is located at the intersection of Archive Studies and Rhetoric and Composition, my task was to articulate an understanding of archives that made sense to both fields of study. Given the various understandings of archives, I didn't want to articulate an understanding that was one-dimensional. Archives are simultaneously a place for research, a collection of documents, keepers of cultural memory and repositories of socio-political power. They are extremely complex sites that simply cannot be reduced to a single "definition". So my working definition of archives is derived from the ideas articulated by Tom Nesmith (1999). He writes:

An archives is an ongoing mediation of understanding of records (and thus phenomena), or that aspect of record making which shapes this understanding through such functions as records appraisal, processing, and description, and the implementation of processes for making records accessible" (145).

For Nesmith, archives are "created" entirely through communication processes, which include

writing. While archival records are material objects, they are re-presented through material practices such as appraisal, description, processing etc. So Nesmith's definition presents archives as a process - created through language. Archives are always being mediated through language (and writing) to become meaningful to others. Such a definition of archives also highlights the political aspect of their existence: given that they are created through various communicative processes, it is clear that there is always a sense of deliberation in the making of archives. This deliberative process is always rhetorical and always embedded in a particular cultural context.

This brings me to my working definitions of culture and rhetoric: I understand rhetoric as always already cultural and vice versa. (Haas 2008). In the context of this project, I think of rhetoric as a culturally-mediated process of deliberation. That is, rhetoric is the deliberate process of making choices in order to make meaning and to represent oneself or one's culture. I understand culture as a complex discursive system of attitudes, practices and beliefs. These attitudes, practices and beliefs organize people's actions. Culture is constituted of people; it is always messy and contradictory. Culture cannot necessarily be "pinned down" or understood as singular thing (Cruikshank 1990, Stewart 1996, Lowe 1996). Instead, culture is a process: people deploy cultural attitudes, practices and beliefs to make sense of the world. This sense/meaning-making process in turn constitutes rhetoric. Additionally, cultural attitudes and practices are not immutable: given that people can deploy these practices and attitudes in any number of combinations means that these are always subject to change, depending on people's needs. Hence culture is rhetorical.

I understand that I am articulating a version of the chicken and egg theory here: I cannot tell you if culture or rhetoric came first. I can only assert that they work together. We cannot make sense of cultural attitudes and practices without some kind of rhetorical framework already

in place. And all rhetorical frameworks are always already cultural. We do not exist outside

culture or rhetoric. In the context of this project, I understand archives as rhetorical because they

are constituted through language (which is one of the discursive practices that helps organize

cultures). Given that archives depend on language, they enact, reproduce and authorize the

rhetorics of the cultures that created them. As such, archives are always cultural. They cannot

exist outside cultural formations.

A Map to this Dissertation:

There are five chapters in this dissertation. At the end, readers will find a short "postscript"

that sums up the important implications and contributions of this work. In the next few chapters,

I consistently turn towards archives as material spaces and take a close look at the material

practices (such as description, digitization etc) that constitute archives. I argue that all these

material practices are cultural. As such, they reflect the attitudes and values of the cultures that

created them. However, before I turn to the material practices, I also look at the materiality of

archives themselves. I describe particular archival spaces in detail including their plan and

design. I argue that the design of archival spaces is rhetorical and each of these spaces is

different, intended for a diverse range of scholars and designers.

In **Chapter 1, "Precursor: How I got to the Archives"** I have developed a theoretical and

methodological framework for studying archives as institutions that enact the identities of

particular cultures. This framework includes four key arguments: 1) Archives are constituted

through a selective and subjective process of appraisal; 2) What counts as "historical" or even

"archival" depends on the attitudes and values of the cultures that create archives; 3) Archivists

depend on communicative processes such as writing in order to organize the materials in their

care; 4) Archives are material spaces that bear very little resemblance to the metaphorical notions

of "The Archive" developed by theorists such as Thomas Richards, Diana Taylor, Michel

Foucault etc. In this chapter, I have also described the methods I used to understand how

archivists make choices about what to include in their collections. These methods include oral

history interviews with archivists and rhetorical analyses of archival catalogs and finding aids.

In **Chapter 2, "We Are What We (Don't) Keep: Archives, Rhetoric and Identity,"** I

demonstrate how the creation of archives is intimately tied to cultural or communal identities.

The choice to keep or exclude particular materials of memory is mediated by identity politics. I

also point out that the constitution of identities in the context of archives is a tautological

process: communities preserve materials that are intimately linked to their identities; these

materials in turn continue to sustain the identities that communities wish to preserve. In this way,

archives sustain communal identities and vice-versa. In this chapter, I also include excerpts from

my oral history interviews with two archivists in order to theorize how archives emerge out of

specific cultural and rhetorical exigencies: archives gather contextual evidence that may be used

to create arguments about the histories of specific communities. Archives are maintained through

a series of *culturally-situated practices*; these practices emerge out of a given community's

experiences in the world.

In **Chapter 3, "From Metaphor to Materiality: The Rhetoricity of Archival spaces,"** I move

away from the notion of archive as metaphor; instead, I point out how archives are materials

spaces deliberately designed to draw in particular audiences and encourage community

engagement. I argue that thinking about archives as a singular, undifferentiated mass of

documents and/or "knowledge" obscures the complex set of arrangement and descriptive

practices that help create archives. It also effaces the careful planning and arrangement that goes

into the creation of archival spaces. In this chapter, I move consistently from metaphor to

materiality, to reinstate the material processes that allow archivists to make meaning. I take a closer look at archival spaces – specifically, the space of the university archives in Urbana-Champaign and the space of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York. I argue that these spaces are not accidental; instead, they are material and have a rhetoricity that allows them to reach out to particular audiences. In general, I pay attention to the questions of architecture and design that allow spaces to function as archives. Additionally, I take a closer look at how being within the above archival spaces affected my body and moderated how I acted in these spaces. I will argue that such bodily effects/affects are the product of the design and architecture of archives.

In **Chapter 4, "Writing the Archives: Context, Materiality, Culture,"** I pay attention to the way in which finding aids create identities and narratives about archival collections. I closely analyze finding aids from the above archives in order to show how they communicate the original context surrounding the production and circulation of archival records. I argue that the contextual information offered by archival finding aids is always partial in nature. As such, finding aids are rhetorical artifacts because they build histories and identities for archival materials that affect the way in which these materials are read and interpreted by researchers. Researchers often consult finding aids before delving into archival collections. Finding aids frame researchers' knowledge of archival collections since they provide contextual information about how and where records were produced. As such, the composition of archival finding aids has a material effect on researchers' work within archives. I further demonstrate how western models of archival finding aids have been complicated by GLBTQ communities and indigenous communities; these communities argue for more egalitarian finding aids that acknowledge multiple record creators and stakeholders. As such, these communities are re-defining western

notions of context.

In **Chapter 5, "Moving beyond the Illuminated Screen: Asserting the Materiality of Digitized Records,"** I analyze the digitization practices of two digital archives, namely the Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives and the Blake Archive. I draw from the work of digital humanists and archivists to argue that in the context of digital archives, digitization of records is a cultural process. The manner in which we choose objects to be digitized reflects our biases, and it is never an "objective" process. As such, I argue that digitization is a rhetorical process because it creates a culturally-mediated representation of a material object. I also point out that digitization does not necessarily mean that an archival record has been "preserved." All digitized records have unique identities and histories that need to be preserved as well. Therefore, I argue that archival digitization should attempt to connect records with their material counterparts in order to create a holistic representation of the original context in which records were produced and circulated.

In **"Afterword and Implications,"** I argue that my framework for understanding archives would allow us to create better archival research methodologies and also help us better train students who are interested in archival research (at the graduate and undergraduate level). This chapter also synthesizes findings from my dissertation and sketches out future publications and projects that will emerge from this work.

CHAPTER 2
WE ARE WHAT WE (DON'T) KEEP
ARCHIVES, RHETORIC AND IDENTITY

It's early on a Sunday Morning in April. I am reading an email from my friend, J: she has invited me to brunch at her house the following week. I quickly type an email in response, expressing my regrets for being unable to attend. I hit "send." Once the email has gone out, I select the original message again and hit the "archive" function. Immediately, I receive a notification informing that my email conversation with J has been "archived."

The above scenario is probably familiar to a lot of people. Each day, we receive emails that are consigned to the "archives" with a simple click of a button. This allows us to maintain some modicum of control over the flood of information that confronts us every day. In a sense, archives are about asserting order and control (or rather the *desire* to assert control and order): they allow us to shore up certain versions of the past without letting that past overwhelm the present or the future. They also allow us to create narratives about who we are, where we have been and where we plan to go. Archives, in other words, are *useful.* And yet, when I reflect on the experience of "archiving" my emails on a daily basis, I wonder what it means to reduce the term "archive" to a mere function, or rather to the mere click of a button: how does this produce a one-dimensional picture of what it means to "do" archives? What does it mean to reduce an entire professional apparatus of appraisal, arrangement and preservation to a simple function? In other words, how do such daily acts of "casual archiving" de-value the work that archivists perform in material archives on a daily basis?

As I drafted this chapter, I came across a recent two-part piece (in *Enculturation* and *Technoculture)* by Jonathan Alexander and Jackie Rhodes (2012). In this piece titled "Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasure of the Archive," the authors "attempt both to perform a queer

34

rhetorical archive and to theorize such archives' rhetorical and pedagogical possibilities. At a time when "information" and "data" about the "queer" are readily accessible, [the authors] wonder about the challenges of making such information and data meaningful" (n.p.). Drawing on Ann Cvetkovich's ideas about queer archives and trauma, the authors argue that

"that the concomitant significance of ethos and pathos to the rhetorical performance on queer rhetorical practices may have much to do with the fact that such practices often present us with actual individuals or groups, not just with minds articulating a sense of the queer but also with bodies performing queerness. As such, the online queer archive offers us a nearly unprecedented opportunity to think the body in rhetorical practice—and in this case, the queer body in queer rhetorical practice" (n.p.)

They go on to present us with a "a mini-archive that queers dominant rhetorical practice in public spaces" (n.p.). The authors trace the presence of queer voices in places where such voices are ostensibly deemed to be "silent" or "absent," and assert that a rich archive of queer rhetorical voices *does* exist in public discourse.

Alexander and Rhodes seem to be looking at a discursive queer archive. Such discursive archives can also be found in the work of theorists such as Derrida (1996), Richards (1996), Foucault (1978) etc. I agree with these authors that such discursive archives have a profound effect on bodies and on practices. They dictate what can be said and they have a profound effect on what counts as knowledge and who can create knowledge. Indeed, such discursive archives are everywhere. If Foucault, Freud and Derrida have taught us anything, it is that such archives cannot be escaped, but they often leave openings wherein silent or absented voices may be able to insinuate themselves and assert their physical presence.

Indeed, I don't want to claim that such discursive or theoretical archives have nothing to do with the way concrete, physical archives are assembled. After all, physical archives are particular articulations of knowledge that arise at particular moments in time. They are products of time and space: depending on when and where they were created, they reflect the regional and temporal biases, but this does not mean that most archives do not constantly revise their collection practices in order to reflect a more rounded representation of our times. What I have gathered is that a good archives never stops collecting; or as an archivist once put it, a good archives never has enough space. To stop collecting, to deem an end point to a collection is antithetical to the way archives operate. To create an ending would mean to ignore knowledge that is being generated all the time. If as Burton maintains, physical archives produce speech and speech effects, then both of those elements would have to be constantly revised for archival spaces to survive. Without such revision, archival spaces would remain arhetorical constructions, reflecting the knowledge and the biases of a former period in time and space.

The point I am trying to underscore here is that the discursive archive that the above authors speak of and the concrete, physical archives that I am tracing in this dissertation are not the same. They are different orientations to building knowledge. Indeed, I will hold that while discursive archives seem to want to assimilate and homgenize all knowledge, concrete archives are about accumulation: the slow building up of certain culturally-relevant knowledges in the form of physical documents and artifacts over a long period of time. As I have already stated, I am not naïve about the fact that discursive archives have an effect on what we can say and do and physical archives are put together by *people* who are co-opted by discursive archives: they bring particular biases and knowledge regimes to their work within archival spaces. But there is a theory and a science to putting together physical archives that is grounded in particular

institutional, professional and communal experiences that cannot be simply equated to the makings of discursive archives. Such equation leeches physical archives of their specificity and rhetoricity since these are culturally-situated constructions. It also has the effect of ignoring the materiality of such spaces, the bodies that put them together and the documents/artifacts that literally hold such physical archives together.

The phrases that I want to underscore here are culturally-relevant, rhetoricity, specificity and materiality. These elements are lost when we talk about *the queer archive* or simply *the archive.* The above elements are also lost when we turn to theorists such as Derrida, or Richards to validate our ideas about what archives; these theorists are not looking at physical archives in all their cultural and rhetorical specificity. They cannot tell us how archival spaces work on an every day basis. The greater purpose of this project is to reorient us towards physical archives as material constructs and at the archivist as a real material presence who works everyday within archival spaces to reassert its cultural specificity and rhetoricity. As rhetoricians, we study how documents and artifacts are composed to communicate culturally-relevant knowledges across time and space. Archivists can teach us a great deal about such composition since their work is inherently rhetorical.

The Archives Versus Archives debate:

If we were to listen to Derrida, he would have us believe that archives are always about grand constructs such as the law, narrative, access, authority, privilege, power and singularity. In the introduction to his *Archive Fever*, Derrida takes us back (and away from the physical archives themselves) to the root of the word "archive": he evokes images of the Greek *arkhe* (power of commencement and commandment) and the *arkheion* (keeper of the archive). In the story he crafts for us, Derrida shows us *how* the archive has historically been a project of the

state, curated by a state-appointed official whose task it was to create a singular narrative about the state. Only select people are given access to the archive. Knowledge is always a by-product of the power of the state and the state employs the archive repeatedly to constitute individuals as subjects of power.

I am not trying to dispute the validity of these ideas; indeed I am not trying to say that archives have not been employed as repressive mechanisms of discipline and power by various institutions. Over the past couple of decades, narratives about the alienating and disciplining aspects of archives have proliferated. Within of the fields of English Studies, History, Rhetoric and Composition, scholars have tried to reimagine how they think *and* talk about archives. If we were to read edited collections such as Antoinette Burton's *Archive Stories* (2005) or Kirsch and Rohan's (2008) *Beyond the Archives,* we would encounter plenty of narratives about the importance of looking for sources outside archives and looking for alternate ways to do archival research in order to encounter narratives that might remain occluded otherwise. A common point underscored by most of these writers is well-encapsulated by Burton when she writes: "Archives are already stories: they produce speech and especially speech effects, of which history is but one" (20). And yet, I would argue that authors such as Burton and Derrida are talking about very different kinds of archives: their ideas are embedded in theoretical notions of "the archive." It is ironic that while so many of these authors are doing their work within material archives, their writing is informed by a consistent tendency to make these material archives abstract and metaphorical. The metaphor of the archive holds the promise of a kind of power that is missing from the mundane reality of more concrete archives. But I wonder what may be achieved by consistently turning to the material reality of archives? What knowledge might we gain by paying attention to the concrete practices (such as appraisal, arrangement, description) that

allows a place to turn into an archival space? And how do such practices allow archives to make arguments about the historical presence and visibility of particular communities?

I argue that archives are not just stories. Instead, *archives are culturally-situated arguments*. In other words, they are rhetorical. Archives emerge out of specific cultural and rhetorical exigencies: they gather contextual evidence that may be used to create arguments about specific communities. How archives are put together and sustained over time depends on a series of a *culturally-situated practices*; these practices emerge out of a given community's experiences in the world. Additionally, *all archives are different*: they enact, reproduce and authorize rhetorics that are always cultural.

In the next few pages, I analyze data from my interviews with two archivists; I will use this data to critically interrogate some of the "universalizing" language that is commonly used to represent archives in contemporary scholarship (especially scholarship out of English, Performance Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, History etc). I will try to understand how this universalizing language tends to extract archives from their cultural-rhetorical context and situate them in a realm that is somehow outside of culture. Next, I will argue that all archives emerge out of specific cultural and rhetorical exigencies and these exigencies dictate how archives will be managed, and how access to these spaces will be mediated. For instance, a university archives is very different from a community-based archives because both these spaces emerge out of the needs of very different groups. Decisions about the management of archival spaces depends on the common experiences and practices of the groups who helped create these spaces. So in a sense, the theory and management of archival spaces are intrinsically linked to group identities and experiences.

Lastly, I use the space of this chapter to contest some of the claims of homogeneity that are often deployed against archives. Instead, I claim that these spaces are heterogeneous and full of narratives that contest and contradict each other. I recount some stories that my participants shared with me in order to demonstrate how archivists often have to "step out" and present alternative narratives that contest the homogeneous narratives about their institution/communities. I argue that archivists sometimes function as activists whose task it is to set the record straight even in the face of pressures from their institutions and communities.

On Archives, Rhetoric and Identity:

The notion that archives are rhetorical is not new within rhetoric studies. In 2006, the journal, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, invited its writers to reflect on "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; Or, the Archive's Rhetorical (Re)Turn." Charles Morris, the editor of the issue, points out that "the archive itself, chief among the inventional sites of rhetorical pasts, has yet to be subjected to sustained critical-rhetorical reflection by scholars in this discipline" (113). Morris asserts that that

> "the archive significantly influences what we are able to study, to say, and to teach about rhetorical history, and what we do, as rhetors, with its holdings in our scholarship, in our classrooms, and in the streets. The archive, therefore, should rightly be understood not as a passive receptacle for historical documents and their 'truths,' or benign research space, but rather as a dynamic site of rhetorical power"(115).

Morris rightly points to idea that "the archive" is a space where power, authority and truth are not stable constructs, but are constantly re-negotiated. He also points out that the archive occludes as much knowledge as it reveals.

In the same issue, Cara Finnegan argues that we need to embrace "archival research as a process of rhetorical negotiation that parallels the demands of our other critical practices. Recognizing that the space of the archive both prompts discovery and requires interpretation and evaluation has the potential to make our experiences in the archive more fruitful and our resulting scholarship richer" (121). Fignnegan points out that archives are products of deliberate classification; these classification systems can work as "terministic screens" that may limit the researcher's interpretation of the archival object. Thus the researcher has to actively work against such screens as s/he works within the archive. In her essay titled "Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive As Scene of invention" Barbara Biesecker writes that "out of the deconstruction of the material presence of the past and thus, in relation to what the archive cannot authenticate absolute but can (be made to) authorize nonetheless, issues an invitation to write rhetorical histories of archives, which is to say, critical histories of the situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put" (130). Biesecker calls for increased attention to the "historicity of the archive" and asks scholars to write rhetorical histories of the archive. Writing rhetorical histories will allow us to understand archives as sites of complex negotiations of the past.

Similarly, in his piece, "Archival Queer," Charles Morris insists that "straight archives" silence or ignore queer histories. He writes that "a significant portion of (LGBTQ) history is housed in straight archives and circulate in straight collections." This creates a need to "queer the archive" (147). In order to recover these histories, Morris writes that "we must all become archival queers. Queer historical voices, and their interrogations, must echo throught our epideictic occasion… must inform our own deliberative discourse… and must provide alternative precedents for judicial renderings" (149). He also argues that rhetorical scholars should "take seriously sexuality as a chief influence of rhetorical culture, past and present…

Queer movement… will be measured by the common usage of the texts archival queers have assembled and articulated" (149) Morris asks rhetorical scholars to become activists, to go beyond their disciplinary boundaries and insist upon the presence of queer voices within straight history. However, it is worth nothing that Morris does not necessarily call for the construction of more queer archives. Instead, he wants to focus his attention on extant archives that mask queer histories. This view has been contested by Joan Nestle in her conversation with Jim Monahan in 1978.

As all the above writers point out, archives are rhetorical constructions: rhetorics reveal as much as they conceal. When one rhetoric is made visible, it simultaneously conceals other rhetorics and forms of knowledge. Our task as rhetoricians is to uncover what things mean within a given context, fully aware that meanings change as contexts change. Archives are a form of cultural rhetoric: they are created by communities in order to make visible particular aspects of their pasts. Such forms of archival construction allow communities to articulate their presence and their identities to the world. Additionally, if we agree with the idea that archives are constructed rhetorically, then this implies that archives always make choices about what to keep. . For instance, while conducting research in the archives of a Chicana organization in California, Kendall Leon (2010) discovered that the members of that organization were making deliberate choices about what to keep and what to exclude from their archives. This process allowed them to articulate a particular identity. Rhetoric is a deliberate process: it implies that choices are being made about how to represent someone or something to the world. Leon's work allows us to see that the inclusion of particular materials within archives allows for the construction of deliberate identities.

This link between archives, culture and identity has been an ongoing conversation in the

field of Archival Studies as well. In her article "We Are What We Collect: We Collect What We are," Elizabeth Kaplan (2000) points to the rhetorical nature of archival and identity construction. She makes the case for this argument by the tracing the way in which American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) was created in 1892. A fundamental exigency that led to creation of this historical society and its archives was to establish the American Jew not as a sectarian identity, but as an American identity (127). Kaplan takes a close look at the minutes from the meetings of the AJHS in order to trace how archives are employed to create certain identities and reject or sublimate others (127). As Kaplan explains:

"Archives would serve as the props with which an American Jewish identity would be built. The initial activity of establishing a historical society would begin a tautological process; each step of which would legitimize the next. The historical society would serve as a sanctioned, authoritative base which would enable the collection of archives, carefully selected for their content. With a critical mass of documents, histories could be written. The publication of documents and histories by a historical society would grant legitimacy and authenticity to an American Jewish identity. Once this identity was forged, further collection of archives and writing of histories would confirm and sustain it, continually 'proving' its existence." (149).

She concludes by cautioning archivists that they should be aware of their own role in the construction of identities since they "appraise, collect, and preserve the props with which notions of identity are built" (126). Kaplan reminds archivists that they need to pay careful attention to the cultural and historical contexts out of which archives emerge and that they must resist essentialized notions of identity while creating and administering archival records.

Along similar lines in his article, "The Archival Sliver" (2002), Verne Harris points out the

national archives of South Africa were constructed during the heyday of apartheid by suppressing and destroying documents and memories of anti-apartheid institutions. This process of destruction literally involved burning thousands of documents that posed a challenge to the reigning powers. Harris then also describes the manner in which South African archives are being transformed to become more democratic now that apartheid has seemingly come to an end. He looks at the ways in which access to the archives is becoming easier for the black population of South Africa. However, Harris explains that the construction of archives in South Africa is still rooted in a "positivist paradigm" which believes that the past can be known as it was. This, he points out, is a fallacy as theorists like Derrida, White (1987) and Foucault have also pointed out. Instead, he calls for archival construction processes that are rooted in South African realities and conceptual frameworks. To me, this call exemplifies a need to examine the particular cultural and rhetorical exigencies that make archives necessary. Paying attention to such aspects of archival construction may also help archivists cater to particular audiences in a better way

A chief problem with recent work on "the archive" - in fields such as Rhetoric and Composition -is the conspicuous absence of archivists or theorists working within archival studies[7]: indeed, as Joan Schwartz (2006) has pointed out, many academic conversations on "the archive" seem to be lacking contributions from archivists themselves. If academics acknowledge the presence of archivists at all, they are either cast as evil figures lurking in the shadows just waiting to restrict the researcher's access to materials or they are cast as invisible figures who try

---

[7] The recent collection *Working in the Archives*: *Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* (edited by Ramsey, Sharer, L'Eplattenier, Mastrangelo 2010) intervenes in this discourse in a significant way. This collection contains chapters by noted archivists and librarians such as Sammie Morris, Helena Zinkham and Elizabeth Yakel who write about issues such as researching photographs, searching for sources on the web and processing records and creating finding aids for archival collections. This collection constitutes a significant step towards including archivists in our disciplinary conversations about archives.

to stay out of the researcher's way: both of these characterizations, however, are grounded in truth to some extent. Archivists work in accordance with particular institutional mandates: they can make some things available for the researcher and restrict access to other things. On the other hand, archives are also lacking in resources to appraise and describe all of the materials in their holdings. So sometimes, archivists are not sure if they have all the materials that researchers are looking for. Historically, archivists have also been trained to step out of the researcher's way and to merely act as invisible custodians of archival spaces. They are to be seen and heard minimally and not intefere with the reseacher's discovery of the past. Of course, these particularly characterizations of the archivist have been debunked recently (Nesmith 1999, 2002; Brothman 1991,1999; Cook & Schwartz 2002; Harris 2002).

Archival studies, as a discipline has been growing over the past seven decades: and yet, our academic conversations about "the archive" usually absent the voices of those who've the most to say about these spaces. For instance, in January 2002, Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz guest edited a special issue of *Archival Science* devoted to the theme of "Archives, Records and Power." As practicing archivists, they claim that far from being benign repositories, archives are active sites where power and privilege are negotiated. They argue that archives are social constructions that reflect the conflicts and contradictions of their time and place. They admit that archives and archivists are complicit in perpetuating certain power dynamics. The others authors in this issue of the journal also make recommendations about how archivists can renegotiate some of the problematic discourses that archives are often embedded in. They also try to imagine different ways of constructing archives that are not embedded in (mostly Western) positivistic notions of the past. This particular issue of *Archival Science* however is not the first instance of such conversations: similar issues have been debated in other journals such as American

Archivist and Archivaria (two pre-eminent journals authored and edited by North American archivists).

Similar concerns have also been reflected in various book projects developed and published by archivists. For instance, in a recent collection titled *Refiguring the Archive,* Graeme Reid, a former coordinator of the South African Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA) argues that "archivists are susceptible to the social mores and moral codes of the time" (194). He further explains that "… in deciding what is included and what left out of the public record, archivists wield considerable power. It is a power that impacts considerably on groups that are marginalized or oppressed by the dominant social order" (200). There is a sense in all these conversation that archivists enact the cultural rhetorics of their time and place: archival records are reflections of choices made during a particular time and within a particular place. In Foucault's theoretical conception, the archive sets limits on what can be considered "knowledge": while Foucault is referring to a more discursive notion of the archive, it still acts upon everyone, including archivists who come into material archives everyday with very particular notions of what counts as knowledge. However, the important fact is that archivists are aware of these issues and are actively working towards creating archival systems that are more inclusive. Outside the world of professional archives, many grassroots archives have been in existence: these grassroots archives- such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) – enact their commitment to preserving the voices of marginalized communities by enacting a form of radical archiving: they work against common notion of what counts as "archival" and instead place power entirely in the hands of the community. As Maxine Wolfe of the LHA has explained: "… the community defines what is important about their lives." (*Refiguring*, 202). The LHA is not just another "queer" archive; instead, it is a community-based archives that is working to create

and preserve particular lesbian identities that are deemed important by the community: while this process of picking particular lesbian experiences for preservation is fraught with political debates about identity, it still works against dominant archives that have ignored or absented lesbian voices from their records.

To me, the above examples underscore the idea that the archives of an American Jewish Historical Society are not exactly like the archives of South African communities. There may be similarities in terms of archival practices (such as appraisal, authentication, preservation, etc), but both these archives are rooted in different realities. They are built for completely different audiences and their purpose is to enact and authorize rhetorics that emerge out of very different cultural contexts. Archives are rhetorical constructions. So what exactly is lost when archives are extracted from their particular cultural and rhetorical locations? What happens when archives are leeched of their particularities and operationalized as a universal regardless of their cultural-rhetorical contexts?

Theorists - such as Derrida, Foucault, Carolyn Steedman, Thomas Richards, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Lisa Lowe, Diana Taylor etc - have written persuasively about the Imperial Archive (or at least about a version of the Imperial Archive) whose agenda is homogeneity, the pursuit of sameness. The point of this pursuit, this need to make archives seem "unmarked" by culture goes hand-in-hand with the pursuit of progress (mostly western notions of progress that legitimated and supported so many colonization efforts); there is a desperate need to flatten out those differences that will not allow us to look forward, that will not legitimate narratives of progress. If archives legitimate and authorize rhetorics, then many theorists would have us believe that it is the problematic rhetorics of progress that most archives believe and enact. In a sense, I fully agree with these critiques of "the archive": texts such as *The Imperial Archive* present a

compelling case about how nation-states try to control and homogenize cultures through the assimilation of knowledge. In scenarios such as these, there is no regard for the cultural context out of which knowledges emerge. Instead all knowledge is used to perpetuate the power of the nation-state regardless of cultural context, regardless of the cultural rhetorics that created those knowledges in the first place. And yet, I would like to claim that there is a *difference*, a gap between the theoretical archives that the above writers describe so convincingly and the concrete, physical archives that hold and store documents for users. So for the purposes of this project, instead of assuming that concrete archival spaces are all the same, I assumed the opposite: that all archival spaces are different and they enact rhetorics that emerge out of different cultural contexts. Therefore, the analytic that I used to interview archivists for this project is: archives are spaces of difference.

In the next section of this chapter, I will outline archivists' ideas about difference, identity, archival spaces, context and activism. As I have already mentioned in Chapter 1, the two archivists that I interviewed for this project were: William Maher, a University Archivist and Joan Nestle, founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York. I will present both their views on some of the abovementioned issues; I do not plan to "compare" their ideas or to claim the validity of one set of views over another. Instead, I am presenting their views here as different orientations to the creation and management of archival spaces. I will argue that both of these orientations are equally useful because they can teach us about how different communities create, mobilize and use archival spaces for purposes of creating and preserving memory.

What The Archivists Taught Me:

Before I present the data that emerged from my interviews with my research participants, I would like to make two claims as a way of framing this section. The first claim pertains to why it

is necessary to understand how archives are created and managed; while this may be self-evident, I do think it is important to mention that archives are often touted as one of the keepers of cultural and public memory. As rhetoric and composition scholars, we have a special stake in understand how memory works. A great deal of recent scholarship has demonstrated the importance of memory as a form of composition (Lowe; Villaneuva 2004; Hoang 2008; Carruthers 1990); many scholars have convincingly eschewed the idea that memory can ever be objective; they argue that all memory is partial and in fact all memory is deliberately crafted and put together for different audiences and for different purposes. Hoang, Lowe and Villaneuva especially have shown us how marginalized communities deliberately compose memories as a way of inciting social action. Such alternate sites of memory not only provide a different orientation to the past, they also help undo the primacy of dominant narratives about the past by showing us the composed nature of all memory. What we remember and how we remember depends on context and on the rhetorical situation that creates an exigency for memorializing events from the past. Thus, if archives are one of the keepers of memory, then it is important for us to understand how archives themselves are composed and arranged. It is important for us to consider the cultural-rhetorical contexts that create an exigency for memorializing the past through archives. Both of archives/archivists' stories that I present here are located in very different contexts with concerns that are varied and dissimilar, yet both of their views can teach us a great deal about how communal and institutional memories are preserved in archival spaces.

My second claim also serves as another analytic I employed as I collected and analyzed interview data from my participants: archives are a form of cultural rhetoric. To be more specific, archives enact and authorize cultural rhetorics. My reason for making this claim springs from the idea that all rhetorics are cultural and these rhetorics emerge from specific cultural

practices and beliefs. Archives are a form of cultural rhetoric because they help create and preserve memories that serve specific rhetorical purposes for a particular culture. In other words, archives emerge from the practices and beliefs of specific cultures. Therefore, when I started analyzing the patterns that emerged from my data, it was important for me to not impose a pre-conceived definition of rhetoric that emerged from say, a Greco-Roman cultural context. Instead, I looked for particular tropes or ideas that recurred in my interview data that seemed to help my participants convey how archives worked. To me, these tropes/ideas seemed like culturally-situated analytics around which my participants organized meaning. Cultural rhetorics is study of how meaning is made within discursive systems created by various cultures. I argue that archives are a kind of cultural discursive system.

Both the archivists that participated in this project have practiced their craft for several decades. While Joan Nestle is now retired, William Maher still holds an appointment as a University Archivist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Maher began working at his institution in 1977 as an assistant archivist and was eventually promoted to the position of University Archivist in the late 90s. Given that Maher[8] works at UIUC (a state-funded university in the mid-west), clearly there are particular limitations set upon the University Archives. Within this context, the archives collects materials pertaining to student life and the administrative life of the university. Since its funding comes from the University and from the State, the archives' mission is tied to both these entities. The archives helps construct a particular kind of identity for this state school: an identity that is very much grounded in its location.

In 1997, Maher also served as the president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

---

[8] In this project, I refer to William Maher by his last name and to Joan Nestle by her first name. I was invited by Joan Nestle to use her first name given that our relationship evolved a great deal since the beginning of this project.

As the former president of the SAA, Maher is very clear about the fact that his concerns and identity as a professional archivist are grounded in the goals of this organization and also in his duties as the archivist of his institution. As he explained to me "… the archivist is part of the lifeblood of the institution and I think really needs to have a certain amount of loyalty to the institution and I take that loyalty to be… to me much more important than loyalty is trying to keep the institution honest which means sometimes raising your hand to say 'Sorry teacher, I don't think that's right'" (2012).

This impulse to keep the institution honest springs out of a series of experiences wherein Maher and his staff were called upon to verify his institution's version of certain historical events. As the University Archivist, Maher felt compelled to present archival evidence that directly contradicted the University's narratives about its past. For instance, when his university made the claim that its students had invented the tradition of "homecoming" back in 1910, for various reasons, the archives were called upon to validate this story. Maher and his staff decided that

> "instead of waiting for someone to ask for the archival evidence of the claims–something that too often happens only after thousands of dollars have already been spent on the project. Utilizing credibility previously developed with the Alumni Association, we approached them for financial support for a summer project to try to assess the strength of the claim of "first," and we embarked on the project with the hopes that we could settle the claim once and for all to the benefit of the institution…What we found, however, was that the story as it has been promoted is not entirely true. Those two students back in 1910 probably were not aware that a university over 900 miles away in the deep south, Baylor University, held an event called Homecoming a year earlier, in 1909. The event, like the idea that later developed at Illinois, was an organized alumni affair including a varsity

sports match as well as a concert, pep rally, parade, and bonfire. The only difference–that

Baylor's was not planned as an annual event until 1915–offered little support for Illinois

continuing to claim it had 'invented' Homecoming in 1910" ("Stepping Out," 14).

In this manner, Maher has consistently argued that the archivist often needs to "step out of the

shadows" (in the face of dissent and disagreement) and balance the historical record when the

institution is at the risk of making claims that may be construed as dishonest or damaging.

Repeatedly, during the course of our interview, Maher underscored the link between

practice and identity. This was especially apparent when I asked him about the "risk of naming

things that may not be archives as archives." In a sense, I was trying to understand what happens

when there is no explanation for how an archival space functions as an archives. In response,

Maher explained:

"Well, I think the risk, I would argue…. is that good archival work, proper archival work

which has been developed over the archival profession in Europe and in the United States,

Europe in the 19th Century, United States in the 20th Century, involves a systematic

application of a series of principles to accomplish certain things, to ensure that the record is

an authentic record. To ensure that the record reflects that same kind of evidence that it had

when it originally came in or when it was originally created, so that has to do with

authenticity. That the right stuff is selected, that it is made accessible in a way, etc, etc. All

these standards… that is different than somebody going out and just gathering materials

and saying it's an archives. It's not just a pile… it has structure, it has order, it has

principles that it is following, that the record of the past will be messed up… so that's the

risk that somebody is putting something forward as an archives and it hasn't really been

followed in a way that ensures that it communicates to the future what it has the potential

to communicate to the future. Now you could also say, just to step away from our field… I have read enough and done enough in the whole professional status issue that it's just a matter of being in a guild and trying to protect ourselves, that we are archivists and we are the only ones who can do archives and you can't do it, you can't call it archives and so on.… and there's certainly that and when you are president of a professional organization, you are going to speak on behalf of your guild… of any organization. And it could be land-surveyors, it could be anything else, you know, we don't want any amateurs coming in here and doing dental work on people, you know? Normally, people don't get harmed if bad archiving is done, but they can..." (2012)

In this response, Maher consciously emphasizes the link between archival practices, identity and professional cultures. In this view, archival practices are not "unmarked," but reflect the professional culture out of which they arose. The standards and principles that Maher describes are determined by that professional culture and are not "universal." Indeed, as it was repeatedly pointed out to me, the archival profession in North America is quite different from the archival profession in Europe. Different standards and principles determine how materials will be selected, authenticated, narrated and preserved across these cultural contexts. Admittedly, there is also a certain conflict here relating to who can "do" archives or who can claim to be an archivist. This is a tension that is related to question of professional identity and community; there is no clear or easy way to respond to this tension since members of professional communities are responsible for protecting the interests of their community. And yet, as Maher himself has pointed out in his SAA chair's address, archivists have a responsibility to work with others outside their profession and educate them about archives while still adhering to the principles established by their profession (SAA address). The problems of professional status

and identity, the questions of inclusion and exclusion that they bring up are not ones that I can answer in this dissertation. Indeed that is not the aim of the project. Instead I will point out once again that the archival practices emerging out of professional cultures are different from the practices that motivate community-based organizations. Both of these practices are meant to invite very different audiences so we should expect variations across archival spaces.

In above response, Mr. Maher also brings up the idea that an archives is "not just a pile." He asserts that "it has structure and order" and "involves a systematic application of a series of principles." To me, this indicates that there needs to be a theory motivating the management of archives. An archives is not merely a place for things to settle or pile up without purpose; instead it is the systematic accumulation of a series of documents/artifacts that may explain how a culture understands itself and the world. While there may be differences in the science motivating archival management across different cultural contexts, it is still important to note that this science is not *arhetorical*. These practices and principles spring out of a cultural exigency to *communicate* a version of the past to the future. If rhetoric is the study of how communication occurs within a given cultural context and if archives are a product of culture, then I argue that archival science is culturally situated and rhetorical: its task is to narrate, arrange and preserve certain documents of the past in a way that it communicates that past to the future. Indeed, as Tom Nesmith has argued, the archivists' work of narrating records is almost akin to authoring" (32). The archivist creates a certain version of the past through language. If rhetoric is the study of authoring, of narrating and arranging a world through writing, then our field may have more in common with archivists than we realize. It could also be said that if archives are not arranged carefully, if there is no thought behind their composition, it leads to a failure in communication. Such failure might have consequences for the way documents of the

past are read, understood and narrated by researchers in the present.

The notion of archival spaces being rhetorical is reflected in the way Joan Nestle speaks about the Lesbian Herstory Archives. The LHA started out in Joan's Upper West Side Manhattan Apartment, a home that she shared with her then partner Deborah Edel (also one of the founders of the LHA). In her article "A Will to Remember" (1990) she explains that one of the main reasons for the inception of the LHA was that "we remembered a world of lesbian culture that had nourished us but that was rapidly disappearing. We also knew, in this early heyday of lesbian publishing, that our presses and publishers were fragile undertakings and we were concerned about preserving all their precious productions. But the strongest reason for creating the archives was to end the silence of patriarchal history about us - women who loved women" (87). The LHA was founded in 1973 and it "became a reality in 1974." To this day, the LHA honors the idea that present everyday struggles of lesbian women are historical. The mantra "the past is now" has motivated the LHA's collection practices since its founding by a consciousness-raising group made up of approximately 20 women.

Joan Nestle's contributions to queer studies/theory are well-known. As a writer and a theorist, she has persistently argued that "there are pluralistic gender histories, pluralistic challenges to the male/female, woman/man, lesbian, butch/fem constructions and identities…" (*GenderQueer* 9) For years, she has been an outspoken advocate for women's sexual autonomy; in particular, through her vivid explorations of lesbian sexuality and her erotic portraits of butch-fem relationships (see her edited collections: *GenderQueer* [2002] and *The Persisitent Desire* [1992]*),* she is one of those thinkers who made it possible for us to think of the body as a site of

pleasure and meaning. For Joan, lesbian[9] sexuality and desire need not be a source of shame[10]; instead lesbian sexuality and desire seem to be at the source of her activist consciousness. It is through the acknowledgment of the body's most intimate and demanding desires, that histories can be re-written. Lesbian desire interrupts heteronormative histories by making the body visible and particularly by making the shamed, subdued and often, *displaced* body visible. If mainstream heteronormative histories try to "normalize" desires, then lesbian histories deconstruct such normalizing tendencies and point to bodies, memories and desires that exist *outside* the heteronormative matrix.

For Joan, the Lesbian Herstory Archives was a labor of remembrance and love as much as it was a professional labor. When I asked her to speak at length about the emotional and physical labor of being a grassroots archivist and activist, she explained:

> "the reason I did it, I did it – and this is heartfelt- was to commemorate and in a way thank the women I had come out with or come out to in a way, in those butch-fem working class bars because these were the women, passing women, working women, butch-fem women, who even while I was in those bars, I had a sense something amazing

---

[9] Please note that here I am not talking about a singular expression of lesbian desire or a singular idea of the lesbian body. Indeed, I am not trying to propose a singular definition of what it means to be a lesbian. As a "straight" woman, I am aware of how definitions can make things invisible, even as they try to create a fixed view of things. My purpose in this essay is not to provide definitions of identity categories and expressions that are very fluid and subject to change.

[10] Eve Sedgwick has suggested that "for certain ("queer") people, shame is simply the first and remains a permanent structuring of identity. One, that… has its own powerfully productive and powerfully social metamorphic possibilities" (64). Sedgwick resists binarizing shame as entirely "good" or "bad" or "healthy" or "unhealthy." Instead, Sedgwick asserts that the "toxic" parts of shame cannot be "excised" permanently from a group or an individual: it remains tied to their identities. Shame is part of the process of "metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transformation, transfiguration.... (and) deformation." (63). This view of shame as a process, as part of the apparatus of one's identity is reflected in Joan Nestle's writing about the LHA. At one point in our interview, she asserted "to me all the richness of life is embedded in these so-called shameful moments, and they have to be part of our history."

was happening, you know? Something… women without power, women often without family, women who were working – and I am using the word women again – let's say, lesbians, gay women, fem women, butch women, we would have used those words, kiki women, sort of who went both ways, bi women, bisexual, were taking on the forces of the state, of criminality, of organized criminality, to pursue a sexual longing. Now in the 1950s – and now remember it started way back, but I entered it in the 1950s- that's one hell of a moment, you know. So that's why – when I passed the border into the safe lands of lesbian feminism and gay liberation and all of that, what was in my mind, and it was my body's way of saying thank you and something I haven't – and you haven't asked me this, but you say the kinds of labor – I am a lesbian, not as Lillian Faderman said, because of my feminist principles. I am lesbian because I wanted – and I am going to say this – I wanted to be fucked by a woman. And that sexual desire is behind everything that I did. It was what led me to go into those dark streets, to places where women were not supposed to be, to wake up in bedrooms not remembering how I got there, but enjoying what had happened and all the other things. So the first labor is one of a passion, a passion to hold the doors of history open for a loved community to slip in, who had given me, to this young woman, my first taste, who had touched me, they touched me, they touched my body, they spread my legs, also touched my imagination and I have written about them, so this is where my writing and my archival work are one and the same" (2011).

Clearly, Joan's activism, writing and archival work are intimately tied to the fact that she came out in the 1950s. She found a welcoming community of lesbians in the working class bars of Greenwich Village. The need to remember and memorialize these women became one of the

foremost reasons for the establishment of the LHA: to not let a past lesbian culture dwindle away and to establish a solid foundation for the remembrance of present cultures.

In her life, Joan has worn, and continues to wear many hats. Before I embarked on this project, I was familiar with Joan, the outspoken writer and the theorist. As a writing teacher myself, I felt a kinship with Joan who had also taught writing for about three decades. However, when I sought her out for this project, I was also looking for Joan, grassroots archivist and co-founder of The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA). It is always tempting (and always so easy) to compartmentalize the lives of project participants, to separate the archivist from the activist, the teacher from the historian, the theorist from the human being; but, as Joan taught me, it is often not as easy to keep these things separate, because when it comes to the work of a lifetime (such as the LHA), every role, every experience and every history matters. It is this sensibility that Joan brought to her work in the LHA where her personal life literally rubbed against her professional life as an archivist, writer, theorist and activist. When it was housed in Joan's apartment, the LHA was interesting conglomeration of personal/public and domestic/professional. Even after the archives moved to a new location in Brooklyn, it continues to be housed in a *home*. A member of the LHA's collective continues to live with the archives and take care of it, in much the same way that Joan took care of the archives during its first twenty years. Thus, the LHA continues its dual legacy of being a domestic and a public space.

This need to house the LHA in a home is related to the idea of "persona" that Maher brought up during our interview. For the founders of the LHA, it was important that the archives acted as a safe space, not just for documents and artifacts, but for community members, on a physical level. This notion has been repeated persistently in every newsletter published by the archives since 1975. The LHA depends on the community to stay alive: its primary audience is

lesbian community members who support the archives both monetarily and by donating materials to it on a regular basis. Therefore, it was important that the archives felt like home to community members.

Another reason the LHA used the word "home" in conjunction with archives was to enact its commitment to co-creating culture and history was through the establishment of the "At-home-with the Archives" series. A goal of this weekly community event was to throw open the doors of the archives to community members and have them engage in conversation with each other in a physical and emotional safe space. This series - which is still in existence - "allows lesbian cultural workers to try out first-time creations, gives space for open debates and discussions where women know that all are welcomed, and encourages political organizing" (92). Another goal of this series was to help community members feel a sense of ownership towards the Archives. It allowed community members experience the space of archives not as foreboding or ominous, but instead as welcoming and safe. As Joan pointed out:

> **"…**so we always did "At homes" which is… we always believed we were creating culture at the same time we were preserving it. So we have new writers and new filmmakers and political debates and things, always at, at the archives where people felt safe, women felt safe to disagree with each other. So we have the sex worker representative and we have the women against pornography…no other place in the community could this happen. Now here is where you can use the so-called neutrality of the archives as a positive space… because the archives is… has to be, in my head, a safe space for difference. So that means conversations can go on and there is disagreement, but there is no, you know, close the door on that woman who practices S & M, or close the door on that commie… it's a community archives because it's a place of community

59

conversation about culture of the past and culture being created in the very conversation itself becomes culture, you know, within the archives. It's a place where contact with one's past can be made safely, particularly, if it is a criminalized archives…. So it has to be a place where the encounter with memory, with cultural collective memory, is a physically safe encounter, even that bare minimum…but any way, it's a place where the culture is created at the same time it is preserved through sharing of cultural… it's a place where identities can be revalued… and identities can be questioned in safety. So a community archives… doesn't mean a fixed narrative about any specific community, but it does mean a place where there can be a safe conversation using all the materials of memory that are available in that space by community members" (2011).

The use of the phrase "at home" in conjunction with the word "archives" once again overturns the alienating connotations attached to some archival spaces. In this context, it gives community members the sense that the archives could - in addition to being a safe space – be a space of comfort and belonging. Thus, it turns the archives into an invitational space where the professional work of archiving could comingle comfortably with the domestic connotations of a home-space. However, the trope of "At-Home" further works to overturn the connotation of domesticity because it is intended to help community members uncover and work through memories and stories that are subversive to the traditional idea of home and family. So in a sense, this is a very different home within a very different kind of archival space, all nested together in a supposedly harmless series of weekly meetings. The LHA thus persistently works to create a unique paradigm of archives in which one's public, private, domestic and professional selves can profitably rub shoulders. This is a paradigm in which the archives belong to the

community and is as much a home as it is a space for histories and memories to repeatedly come out rather than remain shut in.

As Joan also explained to me, the LHA was started at a time when many GLBTQ communities felt left out of mainstream historical narratives. Not only did many institutional archives seem intimidating, there was also a sense among GLBTQ communities that their life experiences were not considered important. This created an exigency for the creation of archival spaces that would honor the everyday struggles of GLBTQ communities. Grassroots efforts such as the LHA were started in order to reimagine archival spaces entirely, and to humanize people's experiences within such spaces. More importantly, the LHA also hoped to create a sense of belonging and safety for lesbian community members. For the LHA, there is also a great deal at stake in memorializing the lives of contemporary lesbians by collecting and recording their everyday experiences. In *An Archive of Feelings,* Ann Cvetkovich explains that given the supposedly "short" history of homosexuality in official accounts, it has created the imperative for recording histories left out of mainstream accounts, but that nevertheless created the foundation for gay liberation movements that emerged in the 70s. It has also created the historiographical challenge of rethinking what "counts" as historical; Cvetkovich explains that "the stock-in-trade for gay and lesbian archives is ephemera, the term used by archivists and librarians to describe occasional publications and paper documents, material objects and items that fall into the miscellaneous category when being cataloged" (243). For gay and lesbian archives, the notion of what counts as historical are not "subject to the same categories of inclusion and exclusion as those of a public research archive" (243). As Cvetkovich further explains:

"in insisting on the value of marginal and ephemeral materials, the collectors of gay and lesbian archives propose that affects – associated with nostalgia, personal memory,

61

fantasy and trauma – make a document significant. The archive of feelings is both

material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not be considered

archival and at the same time, resisting documentation, because sex and feelings are too

personal or ephemeral to leave records" (243)

This revisionist attitude towards history and archival collection would explain why the LHA

encourages all living lesbians to donate everything that they consider important about their lives.

There is an emerging sense here that the past is happening right now and it has to be carefully

recorded and remembered in the present through the collection of everyday artifacts and stories.

Joan and some of the early coordinators felt that the LHA should be an inclusive space.

This meant that the archives would accept all histories. This commitment to being inclusive

came out a particular orientation to the "sex wars" of the 70s and 80s in which many writers and

activists came under fire for their support of particular sexual practices and histories (like butch-

femme relationships, lesbian sadomasochism and women's pornography). Certain feminist

groups such as Women Against Pornography (WAP) considered such practices and histories to

be anti-women and dangerous. They condemned writers such as Joan for trying to reinforce

"problematic" sexual practices and gender hierarchies. This created an atmosphere where certain

conversations about gender and sexuality were considered taboo. However, when the LHA was

started, the founders and volunteers decided that it would be an inclusive space where all sexual

histories and practices would find a home for preservation and discussion. When I asked Joan to

elaborate on how the LHA created an argument for a space of inclusivity, she explained:

"The challenge to our… inclusivity was the politics of our own communities, so I'll tell

you some early conversations. When an archives… a lesbian archives was being

considered, was being started based on the model of LHA, which was use your own, use

any space you have, don't wait for a grant, don't wait for funding, just do. Okay? … but

the woman who was… starting it, we were sitting down and talking, and she asked about

what do you collect and I said, we collect anything we can… but she said, well you

wouldn't – this grew out of the debate over S&M, lesbian S&M- she said, well you

wouldn't collect the papers of a lesbian Nazi party, would you? And I said, of course we

would. Of course, we would. And then, I got into some discussions with Lillian

Faderman over this and I really have a different view of history than she does, and I own

it… we refused, I refused and the archives, other people in it agree mostly – that we not

be a role-model archives because that's one of the beginnings of exclusions. In others

words, when you've been an oppressed people, and this I see in many other communities,

the battle about how respectable do we have to appear, not only in the present, but in the

past. You know, how much dirty laundry, as it's called, are we willing to show… and I

coming from a family, whose mother was a whore sometimes… to me all the richness of

life is embedded in these so-called shameful moments, and they have to be part of our

history" (2011).

The refusal to be a "role-model archives" indicated the desire to eschew the narrative that "all

lesbians did good things all the time" (Nestle 2011). The LHA has never belonged to a single

group of lesbians or to a singular narrative about what it means to be a "lesbian." This decision

also meant that the archives refused a simplified, homogenized and cleaned-up version of the

past or the present. Such a narrative would serve to keep people out instead of creating an

inclusive space. Repeatedly, through its collection and memorializing practices, the LHA has

tried to make the argument that all lesbian stories were important legacies for future generations

of lesbians.

In the next chapter**, "From Metaphor to Materiality: The Rhetoricity of Archival spaces,"** I move away from the notion of archive as metaphor; instead, I point out how archives are materials spaces deliberately designed to draw in particular audiences and encourage community engagement. I argue that thinking about archives as a singular, undifferentiated mass of documents and/or "knowledge" obscures the complex set of arrangement and descriptive practices that help create archives. It also effaces the careful planning and arrangement that goes into the creation of archival spaces. In this chapter, I move consistently from metaphor to materiality, to reinstate the material processes that allow archivists to make meaning. I take a closer look at archival spaces – specifically, the space of the university archives in Urbana-Champaign and the space of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York. I argue that these spaces are not accidental; instead, they are material and have a rhetoricity that allows them to reach out to particular audiences. In general, I pay attention to the questions of architecture and design that allow spaces to function as archives. Additionally, I take a closer look at how being within the above archival spaces affected my body and moderated how I acted in these spaces. I will argue that such bodily effects/affects are the product of the design and architecture of archives.

FROM METAPHOR TO MATERIALITY: THE RHETORICITY OF ARCHIVAL SPACES

> "the term 'archive' is itself polyvalent, referring simultaneously to a place, to the papers collected there, and to the institutions that manage such collections." '
> - Randolph Head, 2008

> "… the meaning of archive, its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek arkeheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house or employee's house), that official documents are filed…. It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place"
> - Jacques Derrida, 1996

I am in the archive.

In rhetoric and composition, our work on archives exists in the gap between the metaphorical and the material, between the abstract and the specific. Even when we are inside material archives, we tend to turn them into abstract, theoretical constructs. There is something entirely too seductive about the metaphor of the archive rather than the dreary materiality of dusty documents. The metaphor of the archive is about the promise of power and knowledge; the materiality of the archive promises long, hard days spent hunched over documents that may or may not reveal something about the past. And yet, what may be gained by taking a long hard look at these material archives? What may be gained by making a leap from "the archive" to "an archives"?

I am in an archives.

August 2012: Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York

I pause excitedly outside #484 in Park Slope, Brooklyn. It is a bright and sunny day in New York City. The street I am on seems deserted. There are no signs on the large black door to

indicate that I am standing in front of the famed Lesbian Herstory Archives. A casual passerby would not be able to tell that this place is home to records about lesbian writers and activists such as Joan Nestle, Adrienne Rich, Dorothy Allison, Mabel Hampton etc. Indeed a casual passerby might keep on walking past the house unless she were to be specifically looking for it. At the door, there seem to be three different buttons for the doorbell: I press the one that looks like the newest and wait. After a minute or so passes, I become anxious that that the bell hasn't rung at all. As I resist the temptation to press the button again, I see the inner foyer door open. Soon I am met by S[11], an archival intern at the LHA. She has helped me arrange this visit and agreed to meet with me on a day when the archives are closed to the general public.

We walk into the house: it is dark and cool in here. I let my eyes adjust to the dim lighting as R and I walk down the hallway. Right in front of me is a broad wooden staircase leading upstairs. To my right is a doorway leading to a series of interconnected rooms. I feel awkward in here. I feel as though I have stepped into someone's private home: I take a moment to remind myself that in fact, this is a private home. The LHA's caretaker has an apartment on the topmost floor of the house. Like Joan Nestle and Deborah Edel, the LHA's caretaker lives with the archives.

As the second epigraph to this chapter indicates, the connection between archives and houses/homes is not an unusual one. Derrida points out that originally archives were housed in the home of a bureaucrat or government official who had the authority to interpret the law. It was his task to use and interpret archival documents as evidence to protect the nation-state. His home, therefore, was in itself a place of authority. I find it interesting that homes were vested with so much authority and power that they were deemed appropriate to house important documents of

---

[11] I don't have S's permission to use her full name.

66

the state. Archives were originally housed in the same spaces where people lived and ate and slept. I wonder to what extent the "domestication" of homes led to the institutionalization of archives. To what extent, did the "feminization" of homes make these spaces less authoritative? Indeed, in a tiny footnote in *Archive Fever,* Derrida cites a historian named Sonia Combe who mentions the connections between the archive and the "patriarchive." They both dangle in front of the reader the idea that many archives are masculinist in nature, intended for the purpose of perpetuating the authority of the fathers. Indeed, the word patri-archy (literally: order of the father) carries the memory of the word "arkhe" from which "archive" is derived. It is not inconceivable that the more homes came to be associated with women, they could not continue to sustain the archives/authority of the fathers.

The Lesbian Herstory Archives reinstates the forgotten connections between homes and archives. This is a place that functions as a home, not just for the materials of the past, but for people as well. While the archives has an official "reading room" with a long table for researchers to work at, there is also a "parlor" with a long couch. Additionally, researchers and volunteers at the LHA are also welcome to use the kitchen. The copier is located in the kitchen. No matter how much I tell myself to relax and to enjoy myself, I am initially nervous. I am afraid of touching things because I am afraid of being reprimanded. My experience in other institutional archives has trained me to be wary and circumspect: I have been trained to ask archivists for materials instead of look for them myself. Besides, institutional archives are rarely comfortable: when I think of these spaces, I am reminded of uncomfortable chairs and windowless reading rooms. In contrast, a sense of comfort pervades the space of the LHA. This is clearly not something I am used to. S tells me that community members often use the archives as a space to hang out and read. The LHA often works as a community center rather than an

archival space.

In her introduction to a special issue on archives, space and power (available in *Archivaria* 61), Joan Schwartz (2006) writes about the "academic/archival divide." She argues that "differering conceptions of the archive/ 'archives' are at the heart of the ironies of postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial scholarship. The 'disconnect' or 'slippage' between "the archive" of this recent and burgeoning scholarship and 'archives' where archivists live and work has a great deal to do with misunderstandings about the relationship between records and power, and the presumed role of archives as spaces of power" (8). She points out that there is a difference between the "metaphorical archive" (as theorized by scholars such as Steedman, Richards, Derrida, Foucault and Taylor) and the "material archives" that archivists deal with on a daily basis.

Schwartz also points out that academic conversations about "the archive" are taking place without the input of archivists. However, as she puts it "ultimately, what these examinations of "the archive" have to offer archivists working 'in the real world of archives' is an important critique of the knowledge/power nexus which archivists occupy. Their lessons are not pointed, specific, tailored to our needs; their caveats are embedded in their observations; their suggestions are written between the lines. It is our job-nay, our duty – to attend the conferences, read the journals, learn the vocabulary, cut through the jargon, better to understand the power we wield and how others in many important sectors of society see us" (9). Schwartz calls upon archivists to work with scholars in other fields in order to understand more about theoretical/academic formulation of archives. She explains that such conversations are important because it would help archivists re-evaluate their own practices in the light of theoretical critiques about archives.

It would also allow archivists to explain their practices to scholars whose ideas about archives –
in addition to being mediated by theoretical concerns - is solely based on their experiences as
users of archives. William Maher (1998) has also advocated that archivists work closely with
scholars from other disciplines, especially if these scholars are interested in starting and
maintaining their own archives. Maher advocates that archivists help the "nonarchival world" by
emphasizing their expertise in the seven core domains of archival world -"securing clear
authority for the program and collection, authenticating the validity of the evidence held,
appraising, arranging, describing, preserving, and promoting use" (255).

Admittedly, an "archive" can be many things. As Randolph Head points out in the quote
that serves as the epigraph to this chapter, the term "archive" can be a place, a collection of
documents or an institution that collects documents. Additionally, theorists such as Derrida,
Foucault, Richards, Tuhiwai-Smith would maintain that an archive is also a function, and an
orientation/mindset towards collecting and creating knowledge. However, as Schwartz and
Maher have pointed out, a great deal of damage can be done by thinking about archives as a
singular, undifferentiated mass of documents and/or "knowledge." Such a view obscures not
only the complex set of arrangement and descriptive practices that help create archives, but it
also writes out the careful planning and arrangement that goes into the creation of archival
spaces. In this chapter, I move consistently from metaphor to materiality, to reinstate the material
processes that allow archivists to make meaning. I take a closer look at archival spaces –
specifically, the space of the university archives in Champaign, Urbana and the space of the
Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York. I argue that these spaces are not accidental;
instead they are material and have a rhetoricity that allows them to reach out to particular
audiences. In general, I pay attention to the questions of architecture and design that allow spaces

to function as archives. Additionally, I take a closer look at how being within the above archival spaces affected my body and moderated how I acted in these spaces. I will argue that such bodily effects/affects are the product of the design and architecture of archives.

January 2012: University of Illinois Archives, Urbana-Champaign

I am in Urbana-Champaign for the day to interview William Maher, the University Archivist at UIUC. My back is sore from the long train-ride to Champaign, the day before. I am staying on campus at the Illini Union. The campus is deserted: students are not yet back from winter break. This makes for a particularly eerie experience: what is a place when there are almost no people in it? What is a university campus without people? From the window of my hotel room, I also have a clear view of the library where the university archives are located, but I am not yet aware of this just yet. Having only been on this campus once before, I am disoriented: I leave my hotel early to ask for directions. I discover that my destination is only about three minutes away. This is good news: it will allow me to arrive early and orient myself to the space of the archives. I imagine that the interview will take place within the archives. However, despite asking for directions, I still get lost on the way to the archives. I keep second-guessing myself and my directions. Even though I am secure in the knowledge that I set up this interview well in advance and have followed all of the protocols that I laid out in my IRB application, I am anxious. My anxiety has at least two causes: first, I am not "at home" here. I am an outsider temporarily taking up space in this other place. Second, I have traveled to this place, not to use the archives (at least not in the conventional sense of the term), but to meet the archivist.

In her essay "Orientations," Sara Ahmed explains:

70

"Bodies hence acquire orientation by repeating some actions over others, as actions that have certain objects in view, whether they are the physical objects required to do the work (the writing table, the pen, the keyboard) or the ideal objects that one identifies with. The nearness of such objects, their availability within my bodily horizon, is not casual: it is not just that I find them there, like that. Bodies tend toward some objects more than others, given their tendencies. These tendencies are not originary; they are effects of the repetition of 'tending toward.'" (553).

When I read over my reflections about my trip to the UIUC archives, I am struck by the repeated use of the words dis/orientation: I wonder what it is about visiting the archivist that made me so nervous. I wonder why it was important for me to arrive early, to "orient" myself to the new surroundings I found myself in. There are a few ways of reading into my sense of dis/orientation: first, as Ahmed points out, our tendencies – the way in which tend, or lean – are the effects of particular histories. When I think about it, I realize that my entire disciplinary training, my entire disciplinary "orientation" has required me to not seek out the archivist, but to look towards the archives, nay, the objects within the archives as the goal of my inquiry. Indeed, my training has taught me to not look at archival records as material objects, but as texts to be read and transcribed. In other words, my disciplinary orientation makes me tend towards dismissing the thingness of archival records and asks me to textualize records instead.

My sense of dis/orientation is compounded further by the fact that archivists are trained to remain in the background. While they do "step out" sometimes to set the record straight or assist the researcher in accessing records, they remain liminal figures on the peripheries of our scholarly frames of reference. In other words, the archivist is deferred, never quite "within our reach." And as Ahmed would point out, this sense of distance between the researcher and the

archivist is a product of particular cultural histories of interactions between academics and archivists. So what does it mean to "tend" towards the archivists? What does it mean to assert not just the materiality of the archives, but also the materiality of the archivist? This, perhaps, was one of the reasons for my discomfort (in addition to the "newness" of the location I found myself in. I was not familiar with Urbana-Champaign. I had not become familiar with it in the way bodies become familiar with places through repeated visits and by demarcating clear boundaries and landmarks): I was both deliberately disorienting and re-orienting myself away from the archives and towards the archivist. I want to point out that by moving towards the archivist, I wasn't dismissing the archives themselves. Instead, I wanted to understand the rhetoricity of the archives through the archivist.

In her lecture titled "Rhetorical Powwows: What American Indian *Making* Can Teach Us About Histories of Rhetorics" (2010), Malea Powell introduces the term "rhetoricity" in order to show how *things* have meaning. She argues that things (such as baskets or wampum strands) are not the same as *text*: when we turn *things* into text, their meaning is lost. Things, by themselves, have a presence and a meaning; this meaning depends on how a particular cultural uses things; cultures build *stories* around things and therefore when something like a basket is *used*, it carries with it the weight and meaning of that cultural usage. As Powell explains: "There is a space between textualization and discernability/signification, a place where story and thingness meet. We don't have to turn [a] wampum strand into a text in order for it to have meaning – its presence invokes meaning, it's part of an entire structure of meaning that isn't necessarily textual but that is nonetheless a discourse available for us to learn from" (6).

An archival space is *material* (indeed all spaces are material): it has what Powell would

call a *thingness*, a tangible reality that can be touched and felt by one's body. Indeed if we were to look at recent scholarly collections on archival research (such as Antoinette Burton's *Archive Stories* or Kirsch and Rohan's *Beyond the Archives)*, we would find many writers trying to articulate how archival spaces *feel* and how being in such a space affects how they do research. An archives is a space built for users (among others): it has a presence and a meaning that acts upon users. This presence and meaning cannot necessarily be textualized: they exist in the stories that are built around archival spaces. This presence and meaning are *felt* in the intersections of story and space. What Powell calls rhetoricity - the transmission of meanings through a thing - is located at this intersection. Rhetoricity, then, is the meaning located within an archival space; it can be seen, felt and heard when someone uses the space. Rhetoricity is kinetic, not passive. It is dependent on use and on action. It is not a stable set of meanings; instead the rhetoricity of a thing changes depending on the user. An archival space feels different to different people. We all bring particular histories and interpretive frames to our experiences within archives. Please note that I am not saying that archival spaces have a rhetoric or that they are rhetorical: instead what I am arguing is that archival spaces are not inert, passive things. They are living things, just like the baskets and the wampum strands that Powell has theorized about. Therefore, archival spaces have a *rhetoricity.*

Elsewhere in this dissertation, I have argued that archival records capture both meaning and materiality. And, in some ways, the meaning and materiality of archival records are deferred because language and time act upon the archival record. Archival records like archival spaces also have a *thingness* and an accompanying rhetoricity. The archival document is more than just words on a page: it has both an intellectual and a physical structure, an order. When we read something in an archives, we read not just the words on the page, but we also notice the physical

state of the document itself: the faded words, the worn out edges of the pages, the weight of the paper; all of these things tell us something about the record and about the *meaning* held in the record. This meaning can be only be seen and felt when we are in the presence of the thing itself, when we let the thingness of the record act upon us. However, the archival space also acts upon the user's experience of the record: reading a record in an archives is a very different experience than when one reads it in a non-archival space. The archival space itself imbues the record with an additional layer of meaning: in an archives, in this place where the past, present and future collide, this space of both secrets and discovery, the record becomes a thing that is both recovered and discovered. In an archival space, the researcher has the satisfaction of knowing that she has toiled in some way in order to unearth the information held in the record. There is a kind of pleasure in this experience that is deferred when the record is discovered elsewhere, in a space that is not archival.

Despite all the deferrals and delays coded into his work and despite the fact that he is talking about a very different kind of "archive," Derrida's "archive fever" is a very pertinent concept especially when we talk about rhetoricity. Archive Fever is about the researcher's feverish truth for the past; it is about the feverish race to invent the past for the present and the future. However, this feverish drive takes place *within* an archives: this fever, this archival illness would not be the same if it were happening elsewhere. There is joy in this archive fever, there is a kind of pleasure in being ill for "truth." Archive Fever, then, is not just a sickness of the mind or the body; in fact, this fever is more of a fervour. There are emotions and feeling attached to this fever/fervour (despite Derrida's best attempts to defer these things). When I talk about the rhetoricity of the archives, when I talk meaning being coded into an archival space, I am also talking about the intense emotions – those feelings of joy, anxiety, sorrow etc – that accompany

all kinds of archival work, that make archival work meaningful and memorable. When I talk about rhetoricity as a set of meanings that are kinetic and not stable, I am also referring to the different emotional experiences that people have within archives. An archival space has, both, intellectual and emotional value (as does an archival record). And despite Derrida's attempts to defer the archive's materiality, he cannot ever get away from the concept of place in his work: he constantly refers to the archive as an event that *takes place* or the archive as a thing that "*takes place* at the place of originary and structural breakdown…" (11; emphases mine). Whether this place is material or metaphorical, it is coded with intellectual and emotional value: a place has value only when it means something to someone. A place is an accumulation of stories. A place has a rhetoricity that is dependent on use. Therefore, no matter how much Derrida defers the archive in his work, an archive (be it an institution, a building or a set of documents) is always built upon another place. An archive *means* something more when we experience it within a place.

August 2012: Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York

As S gives me a tour of the LHA, I am reminded of something Joan Nestle told me during our interview:

> "… the archives has never been a static place. It has never been a quiet place. It doesn't mean you know that it can't work in the quiet, but it has never been a place without conversation between all its parts. Its private self, its public self, its workers and its users and sometimes, they are the same. You know women who sit around that table… we are an artifact. I always said, if we didn't collect another thing, the archives itself is an artifact. Just the way it is and the way it functions" (2011).

For Joan, the LHA is a place of kinetic energy. There is something extraordinary at work when a researcher or a community member finds herself *in* the archives of a collective lesbian past. This "extraordinary something" relates back to the concept of place and rhetoricity that I discussed earlier: rhetoricity is a set of kinetic meanings that depends on use and interaction. The LHA has a rhetoricity because it is a place where community members can jointly recover and discover their past, present and future. This discovery/recovery would not be the same if it were to happen in a different place or in a different archives. Place means something when it used or practiced. The meaning and the materiality of the Lesbian Herstory Archives is amplified through the repeated use of its place. If the archives were to be devoid of people, if it were to be devoid of use, it would mean something entirely different. Additionally, as Joan points out, the LHA is an artifact – it has a *thingness,* a materiality that may not be reproduced in another place. Inside the Lesbian Herstory Archives, community members come together to make their pasts both meaningful and material. This materiality, this rhetoricity is lost when we talk or theorize about the LHA as just another "queer archive" or equate it to other GLBTQ archives: each archives has a unique constellation of meanings that can only be discovered when we visit it in its place.

In the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the past comingles with the present. It is a place where feelings and emotions are central to the work of memorializing lesbians who may have remained nameless. Indeed as Ann Cvetkovich has pointed out, the LHA is "organized as a domestic space in which all lesbians will feel welcome to see and touch a lesbian legacy… (the LHA) aims to provide an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience." She adds that "archives of emotion" such as the LHA assert the centrality of emotional and affective experience to the process of remembering the past. Often in the absence of context surrounding many LGBTQ document and artifacts, emotions often add a much-needed contextual dimension. Cvetkovich

asserts that "subject to the idiosyncracies of the psyche and the logic of the unconscious, emotional experience and the memory of it demand and produce an unusual archive, one that frequently resists the coherence of narrative or that is fragmented and ostensibly arbitrary. Memories can cohere around objects in unpredictable and the task of the archivist of emotion is thus an unusual one" (242). While Cvetkovich maintains an arbitrary division between emotion and intellect, in the context of the LHA, the emotional work of producing and maintaining the archives has always been an intellectual process and vice-versa. Joan Nestle has pointed out that the LHA was created to nurture both emotional and intellectual inquiry about a collective lesbian past. In this view, an emotional lens towards intellectual inquiry would work to dissolve feelings of cultural deprivation and shame; it would also allow members of lesbian communities to re-imagine their alliances based on intellectual *and* emotional ties.

The LHA was created in 1973 in the home Joan Nestle shared with her then partner, Deborah Edel. It is a *home* for the artifacts of lesbian memory; the earliest organizers of the LHA were afraid that if something wasn't done to preserve material objects from lesbian lives, these objects would be lost forever. The mantra "the past is now" has motivated the LHA's collection practices for the past 40 years. Joan Nestle and Deborah Edel "agreed that the first ten years of the Archives would be to build the trust of the communities it was serving. They were determined to keep all of the services of the Archives free, to not seek government funding, and to build grassroots support for the project" ("A Brief History of the Lesbian Herstory Archives"). With the help of thousands of volunteers, the earliest coordinators of the LHA created presentations that would help them reach out to lesbian community members. However, in the mid-80s, it soon became apparent that the LHA would need a much bigger space to house its

expanding collection. With the aid of a bank loan[12] and further financial help from the

community, the LHA was able to purchase a home for the archives in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

S's tour of the LHA's space includes the first and second floors. The second floor houses

the LHA's "special collections" (specifically materials donated by lesbian community members

about their lives. The LHA now currently has 400 special collections in their Brooklyn location.

Other more fragile collections are housed off-site in a special storage facility). S also walks me

through the LHA's collections of periodicals and newspapers. Everything smells dusty here.

There are boxes upon boxes of materials piled everywhere: all of these are materials that are

waiting to be processed by volunteers. A sense of happy disorder pervades this space. When we

walk back to the reading room, I look up at the ceiling and notice a large sign that reads

"Adrienne Rich Road." This makes me happy. I have always felt a special connection to Rich:

her book *Of Woman Born* was my first theoretical text; it helped me make sense of and locate

invisible, yet powerful institutions. It was a text that made me feel empowered. I am humbled by

the reminder that Rich had visited the LHA as a researcher. I feel as though I am participating in

something wonderful that I cannot name. This realization makes me feel increasingly silly and

giddy. There is no surface in this archives that does not contain a piece of lesbian history.

Everywhere, I look there are posters, books, buttons and boxes. Even the bathroom is decorated

with various plaques celebrating LHA's coordinators such as Joan Nestle and Mabel Hampton.

Once we are done with the tour, I ask to look at some of photographs. I am specifically

interested in looking at pictures of the archives when they were housed in Joan Nestle's

apartment. When I ask S about the photographs, she points me to a large filing cabinet in a

corner of the reading room and tells me to help myself. When I hesitate, she explains that most

---

[12] While the bank had some reservations about lending money for the archives, the LHA was able to repay the loan completely.

researchers who visit the LHA become nervous when they are asked to seek out materials on their own. She also adds that the LHA does not believe archivists are "servants" to researchers. There is a definite "do-it-yourself" attitude here. However, there are many signs around the place asking researchers and community members to be careful with materials. I feel strange walking into the archives' special collections and hauling acid-free boxes out by myself. I am sure a stern voice is going to reprimand me, but it never happens. I feel emboldened by this lack of discipline.

January 2012: University of Illinois Archives, Urbana-Champaign

Inside the library, I still have a few minutes left before my interview. I take the elevator to the basement. I stride confidently through the corridors, certain that once I turn the next corner, I will see the long narrow corridor that leads to the archives. However, I slowly realize that I am lost, again: perhaps I took the wrong elevator. Perhaps I took the wrong turn. I am not sure. I run into a library staff member who leads me through an intricate maze of rooms and corridors and finally to the long passageway that leads to the University Archives themselves. At the end of this long passageway, there are a couple of bulletin boards and a small exhibit case. On one of the bulletin boards is the picture of a large canyon with the question "How much space does the University Archives Really Need?" written above it. Space is clearly a point of contention here. This is something Maher will discuss at length during our interview, but archival space and the lack of it is a point of debate for many archives.

When I step into the archives, it is almost empty. A few members of the archives' staff are working. I see Maher in his office (a cubicle-like structure) on the phone. He waves me in. The reading room is poorly lit. There are no windows down here. One side of the room is lined

with metal shelves. I am too nervous (and absent-minded) to take pictures. I walk into the room and sit down on the chair nearest the door. I feel like the proverbial bull in the china shop as I try to take off my bulky winter coat without knocking anything off the table next to me. I notice that the table is littered with documents and boxes. As I wait for Maher to finish his phone call, a member of the staff approaches me: in a slightly condescending manner, she asks me about the purpose of my visit. I explain to her that I am there to interview Maher. She instructs me to go sit in a chair across the room since the chair I am currently occupying is reserved for other researchers. I do as she requests, but I feel a mixture of anger and embarrassment: I feel disciplined and humiliated by her condescension. I make note of it in my journal. I try to rationalize it by telling myself that she is probably wary of students who come into the archives without any sense of the place's value. And yet, I remain angry. I wonder if she made wrongful assumptions about me based on my accent or the color of my skin. I wonder if she was just as condescending towards other researchers. For a moment, I wonder what I am doing here and whether my dissertation project had any merit at all. In the space of a single interaction with a member of the staff, I am beginning to question everything about myself and my work. I wonder how much the atmosphere of the archives have to do with this feeling. I wonder how the archives are acting upon my thoughts. When Maher finishes his phone call, he lets me know that he has reserved a conference room for our interview up in the library. He informs his staff that he'll be away for a couple of hours and that they should call him if there is an emergency. As I briefly wonder what kind of emergencies occur in archival spaces, we leave the archives and head upstairs.

August 2012: Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York

I ask S about how well the temperature and climate in the LHA are moderated to help preserve the archive's records. She responds that the building doesn't have very good safeguards which is why more fragile materials are stored off-site in a storage facility with better controls. In general it appears that the LHA has to constantly balance the need for preservation versus the need for access: the LHA's mission is to make archival materials immediately available to community members and to place almost no restrictions on access. Therefore, the onus of making sure archival materials remain intact falls on researchers. As I looked through some materials, I felt a great sense of responsibility knowing that these materials were one of a kind. I had to exercise a great deal of caution and care as I handled documents. But there was also a great deal of relief in the knowledge that I wasn't being monitored, that I was trusted by the LHA to treat the materials carefully.

Indeed, this balance between preservation and access seems to have motivated the architecture and design of the archives. A floor plan of the archives [13]reveals that during the process of constructing the archives, the coordinators of the LHA wanted to preserve the "homeness" of the original building. Hence, they left the parlor and the kitchen on the first floor almost intact. The kitchen and the backyard were envisioned as "center(s) for socializing." (LHA Newsletter, 1992) The need to create and maintain a community space alongside an archival space motivated the re-design of the house. The LHA seems to have been constructed as a place for people as well as archival objects. It is not just a place for research, but a place for community. A heavy emphasis on socializing and bringing people together indicates the LHA's

---

[13] Available here: http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/tourfloor.html. The first floor houses the LHA's book collection. It also has a dining/reading room area, a kitchen and a bathroom. The second floor houses the periodicals, newsletters, objects such as clothing and also the LHA's special collections. The LHA's website also offers a "virtual tour" of the building.

commitment to creating joint communal memories. The objects in the LHA have greater value because they are actively *used* to remember and invent the past. The design of the LHA's space enacts Joan Nestle's idea that the archives cannot be an isolated building, separate from the community that created it. Instead, the archives should enact the cultural values of the people who use it the most.

On a second level, the LHA's design also affirms its commitment to being a place where one's bodily desires co-mingle with one's intellectual longings. As a queer archives, the LHA welcomes all forms of lesbian sexual expression: sexuality is not something one needs to check at the door. Indeed, for many people who visit the LHA, it is a place where they re-discover their desire through archival objects. As Joan Nestle explained to me, the process of archival research is an "erotic exchange." As she put it during our interview:

"There's a moment of welcome to the archival experience, put it that way. And for me, I always saw it as a moment of seduction. And people say " Oh Joan, you see everything sexually!" But it was sexual and it was wonderful and I used, you know, one of my lovers grew out of this experience but you know trying to seduce her with watermelon which you should never have in an archives anyway. But it was safe, it was in the kitchen. But I always saw the act of welcoming people into the archives as another form of my sexuality. For better or for worse and people loved it, people stayed – I didn't mean that I jumped on people, that's not what I mean, but I loved serving food. That makes us different also because it was an apartment you know. We always served food in the kitchen, I mean. But there is a … to me there is an erotic encounter that happens, for me, when someone comes and says "do you have?" and I say "yes" and "you are welcome to

it." That is an incredible moment, of an erotic exchange that is the desire to know and the desire to give" (2011).

The fact that the LHA exists in a home, the fact that an archivist/coordinator comes out to greet and welcome visitors continues this tradition of "seduction." Indeed, all archival research is borne out of some desire that is felt in the body: there is a sense of immense bodily gratification and elation in being allowed to access that which we desire. At the LHA, such desires are not condemned as deviant or wrong: instead, the LHA collects particular archival materials *because* they are representative of lesbian sexual desire across many generations. By preserving these materials, the LHA preserves and affirms the pervasiveness of lesbian sexuality and desire even during times when they were deemed "absent." When researchers and community members look for materials at the LHA, they are accessing and exploring not just memories, but also the desires of lesbians who came before them. As such, in the context of the LHA, archival research is an erotic encounter because there is always an exchange of desires amongst researchers/community members and the archival materials they handle.

The LHA is designed to not frustrate, but seduce and gratify. Archive fever, in the context of the LHA, is a very different experience: it is not a feverish search that requires researchers to punish their bodies in order to fulfill an intellectual longing. Instead, the LHA is a place where the body is acknowledged as the space where desires expresses themselves. Allowing researchers access to materials is a way of letting the body's desires be acknowledged and fulfilled.

January 2012: University of Illinois Archives, Urbana-Champaign

Space has a rhetoricity. It acts upon us. As I reflect on my experiences in the archives at UIUC, I can distinctly recall a flood of emotions ranging from nervousness to anger to elation.

Archival spaces are built in particular ways in order to both preserve documents and encourage researchers to visit. Certain areas within archives are meant for researchers whereas other areas are out of our reach. Our bodies are made to tend towards certain archival objects and away from others. When I reflect on how I was told to move away from one table and towards another, I saw that as a moment of the archives exerting its discipline on me. And yet, despite their status as places that exert discipline, archives are also welcoming places, the point of contact between the past, the present and the future. They are constructed in a way to facilitate this contact. When I asked Maher to reflect on the construction of archival spaces, He spoke about what it means to deliberately create an archives instead of merely finding "leftover" room for it:

"In an archives, you have a function, you have to store the stuff for permanent retention and protect it. You have to be able to receive new material that comes in, you have to then prepare it so that it can later be used and you have to then serve it up for users. I also think you have to have an ability to do public engagement and you have to administer all those things… those are probably some other functions. But so that when you are thinking about planning a space all those factors need to be brought into play; Archives in American universities really took off as a field developed in the 1960s and so various archives were kind of put in, a lot of universities, especially public universities faced their centennials in the 1960s and that was a impetus for a lot of them, there was something existing before. But they were kind of given leftover space, basements and attics - not sorry attics – but basements and top floors of buildings because they were not going to be high use, not perceived to be going to be high use. We don't want, we can't take people out of the reference room and put archives in there. And they were sometimes given space that were released from other purposes. University of Missouri had a lot of its

storage space and its archive space in an old dormitory. Dormitories are fine if you are

housing students and you need a bunch of old rooms. They don't work very well when

you are trying to deal with several people at the same time and you know, organizing

stuff like that. That's where that comes into play, but to realize that there are these

different if you will personas of what an archives does of keeping –that's not necessarily

analogical - getting, preparing, keeping, making available and promoting" (2012).

In this response, I hear Maher articulating the idea that archival spaces need to reach out to

audiences and they do this by constructing deliberate "personas." To me, this is a rhetorical

impulse: the need to relate to the community through spatial organization and configuration. An

archives is, therefore, not an "accidental" space. It is always meant for an audience and it is

always meant to help store documents and artifacts over the long term. An archives is not just an

inert space where things end up by accident; there always need to be a careful process of design

and planning before an archival spaces *becomes* an archival space.

Later in the interview, I asked Maher to talk out loud about the idea of constructing an

ideal archival space. In response, he reflected about the process of creating an archival space

within the Horticultural Field Lab building on the UIUC campus. This building serves as an

extension of the University Archives and also houses the archives of several organizations

including the American Library Association (ALA) and the National Council of Teachers of

English (NCTE). Maher drew a map of this building in order to explain its various

characteristics. I asked him to reflect on the design of the building:

"One of the good things about the Horticultural Field Lab building Archives Research

Center, is that it has a loading dock at the back, you gotta have a loading dock, but the

loading dock is covered on the outside and then on the inside of the building is a huge,

kinda like, if you will, at the back a lobby just inside the loading dock so that there is

adequate space to unload a big truck with lots of boxes before you can get them on to

shelves and do triage right there, covered, out of the way…. This is actually ALA

archives here… which is ours. The center of the building, the part that you see most from

the street, is three stories high and it's a book stacks area, it's a stack area with a

refrigerated vault. So this therefore when you want to keep the temperature and humidity

very controlled is surrounded not by an outdoor wall, but by indoor walls so that means

that it doesn't have as much problems with condensation on the outside in the summer

time and on the inside etc, all sorts of environmental things become easier to control

because it's got the whole envelope of the building even though it's an older building. A

new building you can build much tighter than you can with this… The public comes into

reference room, this lobby… one of the things I like about it is that it can be used for

exhibits and public events and its big, high ceilinged and so on, just has a concrete floor,

they never finished it off with terrazzo or tile or anything like that. In terms of layout,

there's a lot of assets here. It's probably got too many little cubicles broken off into

offices on the side, it does allow us to find people who are focusing on student records or

focusing on in this case, American Library Association's archives or Law School

association's archives in their little separate work spaces there. There's a conference

room down in here and so forth. It's this general layout where you get… you know you

wanna have a lobby where you can do exhibitions and public events because archives

need to connect with the public and public engagement is really important. You do need

to have a reference room. Then the stack area is then in the middle which means it is

accessible to all these other sources. There's lots of other designs I could come up with

that might have this, and of course one of the problems here is, one stack area, this is not

enough space to take all the collections we need, so we need all three floors, so you have

have to the elevator here etc etc…" (2012).

Listening to this explanation of the construction of this space, I am reminded again of Powell's

notion of rhetoricity. Much like baskets or wampum strands, archival spaces are made for use,

for archival staff and researchers. These spaces have a function and deliberate design that

promotes community engagement. Each archival space is different because the needs of its

community of users are different. Further, the UIUC archives is a space built over another space:

the horticultural field lab building was not originally intended to be an archival space. Instead it

had to be deliberately converted into an archives. This is not a metaphor. A place does not turn

into an archival space by merely depositing a bunch of old artifacts and documents inside it. An

archives, as Mr. Maher pointed out during our interview, is not a pile. Instead an archives has an

order and a structure. This structure has to be *practiced*: it involves a complex set of appraisal,

arrangment, description and preservation tactics. It is also true that an archives can be many

things: it can be a collection of documents, a building, a function, an institution or even a

metaphor. I am arguing that these descriptions are not mutually exclusive: an archives is at once

all of these things. It is both materiality and metaphor, it works at an intersection of these things.

An archives can be a material collection of documents within a building housed in an institution

and a set of immaterial stories surrounding those documents, buildings and stories. This is where

meaning resides: between the material and immaterial, between the story and the spaces.

August 2012: Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York

There is so much I want to do, see and accomplish at the Lesbian Herstory Archives. I only

87

have about three hours to spend here. Given that I do not want to overwhelm myself with information, I draw strict boundaries: I tell myself that I can only look at specific materials that would help me write this chapter. In addition to the pictures, I am also interested in looking at materials from the controversial 1982 Barnard Conference on Sexuality[14]. I tell S about this and she informs me that the archives has the original program from the conference. I grin broadly and tell her that I would like to see it. She takes me upstairs and into the Special Collections room. I tell S that I am excited. My heart is beating loudly in my chest. I can sense all the blood in my body rushing to my face, my neck, my head. I feel a sense of … *intense pleasure*. I can't stop grinning. She hands me the materials, including a copy of Joan Nestle's original typewritten remarks at the conference[15]. My hands shake as I take the documents from hers; I make copies of everything. I am not sure if I'll ever use any of these materials in my dissertation. I just know I need to have them.

I am content here, I think to myself. I am content to just be in this place, even if I have nothing to look at or to do. There is a sense of safety here. I know my presence here would not be questioned even if I didn't have any research to do. I could just be here. For once, as a researcher, I am free to let my body dictate how I go about my work. I am free to let my body

---

[14] In 1982, as part of the "The Scholar and Feminist" series, Barnard College organized a conference entitled "Towards a Politics of Sexuality." This conference exemplified the moment in which the debate over women's sexuality became more prominent and pronounced. This debate is commonly referred to as the "sex wars" since it polarized people who felt that particular representation of women's sexuality reproduced patriarchal forms of oppression. Joan Nestle had been invited to speak at this conference, along with others such Carole Vance, Amber Hollibaugh, Gayle Rubin etc. The group "Women Against Pornography" (WAP) had not been invited to participate in the conference because the organizers of the conference felt that the anti-pornography moment was already very visible and dominant. They wanted to make space for other people who were not as visible. On the day of the conference, WAP organized a protest in order to explain their point of view to conference attendees (Hamilton 1993).

[15] Titled "The Fem Question," this talk was later published in Carol Vance's edited collection "Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality"

feel a sense of pleasure that has almost always been suppressed or absent in other instances of archival research. It is okay for me to let my emotions dictate what kinds of materials I choose to take away from this place. But soon my time is up and I must leave the archives. Before I go, I invest in a Lesbian Herstory Archives tote bag. And then, seized by another impulse, I leave the rest of my cash as a donation to the archives and walk out the door.

In the next chapter, **"Writing the Archives: Context, Culture, Composition"** I pay attention to the way in which finding aids create identities and narratives about archival collections. I closely analyze finding aids from the above archives in order to show how they communicate the original context surrounding the production and circulation of archival records. I argue that the contextual information offered by archival finding aids is always partial in nature. As such, finding aids are rhetorical artifacts because they build histories and identities for archival materials that affect the way in which these materials are read and interpreted by researchers. Researchers often consult finding aids before delving into archival collections. Finding aids frame researchers' knowledge of archival collections since they provide contextual information about how and where records were produced. As such, the composition of archival finding aids has a material effect on researchers' work within archives. I further demonstrate how western models of archival finding aids have been complicated by GLBTQ communities and indigenous communities; these communities argue for more egalitarian finding aids that acknowledge multiple record creators and stakeholders. As such, these communities are re-defining western notions of context.

CHAPTER 4
WRITING THE ARCHIVES: CONTEXT, CULTURE, COMPOSITION

I am at Special Collections located in the basement of Michigan State University's library. I am here to look through the newsletters of the Lesbian Herstory Archives for an article I am writing[16]: it feels strange to be doing archival research about another archives. I am physically removed from the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and yet here I am, trying to create a sense of its place in this other archival space. As I peruse the newsletters, I try to take copious notes on my computer. I also try to photograph some issues of the newsletter: particularly, I am interested in capturing Joan Nestle's words about the early days of the LHA, since her life with the archives was going to be a major focus of my article. But soon, I am distracted from my note-taking endeavors: the physicality of the newsletters itself is enticing. When I had looked at the brief description of the newsletters offered online on the library's website, I wasn't made aware that the earliest newsletters of the LHA were held together by a single stapler pin. I did not know that for a long time, the LHA's newlsetters were composed on a typewriter (conceivably in Joan Nestle's home) and corrections were letter appended to the text often by hand. How do I capture all of these physical details in my notes, I wonder? How do I capture a sense of the early days of the archives by merely recording the text in my journal? Eventually, I give up on taking notes and just ask for photocopies of the newsletters. While the photocopies are not quite the same as the originals themselves, they help me read the words on the page in their context rather than as abstracted thoughts.

Recently, archivist Mark Matienzo tweeted that "library authority control is almost exclusively about control of names of bibliographic entities; archival [authority] focuses on

---

[16] The Special Collections at MSU has copies of the LHA's newsletters. These newsletters were widely circulated by the LHA in order to reach a larger audience.

context" (2012). My experience with the LHA newsletters within MSU's Special Collections was indicative of this dichotomy: in the MSU library's catalog, the entry about the LHA's newsletters[17] was restricted to cursory descriptions. It included elements such as the name of the author, title, frequency of publication, number of volumes etc. This description seeks to faithfully record details about the newsletters themselves, but doesn't necessarily give us a sense of the context surrounding the production of these letters. For instance, what exactly did the LHA's newsletters seek to record? What purpose did they serve? As I look at the library's description, I wonder if I might have approached the newsletters differently if I had had a better sense of their context. I begin to wonder how archival description - with its focus on context – produces a different orientation towards research. To what extent does archival description – as exemplified in archival finding aids and related catalogs – refocus our attention from the words on the page towards the context of the document's production? That is, how does it allow us to see a document, not as a solitary artifact, but as being located in a network of related information?

In this chapter, I trace the following claim: archival description seeks to preserve the rhetorical context around material artifacts: that is, archival compositions - such as finding aids - seek to describe and preserve both the intellectual content and context of archival records. Fundamentally, one of the purposes of archives is the long-term preservation of records. Archivists are experts in the preservation of records that are no longer used on a day-to-day basis but may still hold some enduring historical value. So, as researchers, when we read a finding aid we are in fact looking at contextual descriptions of concrete material artifacts. Archival

---

[17] The MSU catalog entry about the LHA's newsletters is available here:
http://magic.msu.edu/search~S39?/tlesbian+herstory+archives/tlesbian+herstory+archives/1,5,7,
B/frameset&FF=tlesbian+herstory+archives+newsletter&1,1,/indexsort=-

description tries to not simply privilege the content or the intellectual matter contained in a document. Instead, this is a kind of writing that seeks to capture a record's context and materiality as well.

Archival description also tries to represent the physical location of a single record in relation to other records that are housed within archives. So a finding aid does the work of reasserting the context of archival records alongside other records. Additionally, in an archival space, meaning may not reside in a single record, but can be inferred by locating that document in relation to other records. That is, in archives, information literally resides in a network of material records. Finding aids are rhetorical artifacts that allow us to see information in their entire context even if they don't give us specific item-level details about particular records. A better understanding of archival writing and description would serve to enhance our knowledge of archives in general and would aid researchers greatly when they work in archival spaces. As Wendy Duff and Catherine Johnson (2002) have argued, researchers often turn to finding aids first when they visit archives. Such aids give researchers a good idea of what is available in a particular collection, even if item-level descriptions are not present. In this chapter, I will also argue that archival writing is culturally-situated. Particularly, in the last section, I will trace how Western archival practices have been complicated and re-imagined by LGBTQ and indigenous communities.

Creating a Record through Archival Description

The most basic "unit" of an archival space is a record. Pearce-Moses (2005) notes that a "record" usually means documents although "collections of records may contain artifacts and books." Records are stored within acid-free boxes, usually in the order in which they were created. While records may be housed within archives, they are not necessarily synonymous with

archives. Additionally, a record also has "fixed content, structure, and context." The idea of "fixed content" implies that the record has some data (in the form of text, images, graphics, sounds etc) that can be repeated, recalled or used as evidence at some later date. "Fixed" means that this data is not changeable or unstable. The record must have integrity and it needs to serve as consistent proof of past activities and events. In our age of electronic data, even if a record is created on a "mutable form" (such as a computer program), it is considered "fixed" if it yields the same result or data over and over again. The "structure of a record" refers to its physical and internal organization: regardless of whether it contains words on a plain piece of paper or complex charts and graphs, the structure allows the content of the record to become intelligible. Additionally, a record does not indicate a single sheet of paper: if a record's structure and content exceed its boundaries, it must all be held together. Lastly, the "context" of the record refers to "organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding a record's creation, receipt, storage, or use. Context includes a record's date and place of creation, compilation, or issue, and its relationship to other records." While records may be transferred to different media or stored in a different format (e.g. paper records are often turned into microfilm), the record must be stable enough to endure such changes and still convey its original content, structure and context. Typically, archives that are well-funded and staffed are able to both describe and digitize their records for users.

Rhetorically speaking, the idea of preserving the content, structure and context also preserves the intention behind the creation of the record. A record is generally a text that originally had a purpose that might have resulted in an action or an event of some kind. Preserving that original purpose and intention might also help other scholars piece together a narrative about how events of the past might have taken place. So, essentially, in preserving the

content, structure and context, archivists are allowing us to see that records don't exist in isolation or in a vacuum: records are always in conversation with each other and with other collections of records. They must be read as part of a larger narrative about a particular organization or event.

Archives depend on writing in order to organize the records in their holdings. In the *Standards for Archival Description* (1994) developed by the Society of American Archivists, "description" is defined as "the process of capturing, collating, analyzing, and organizing any information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and interpret the holdings of archival institutions and explain the contexts and records systems from which those holdings were selected." Such archival writing and description is useful not only for users, but for archivists themselves as they manage the holdings in their care. While this form of description is similar to bibliographic description, it is different in the sense that it relies heavily on the context of the record rather than the content. While describing books, we often rely on the cover page for publication information, but archival records lack such information: hence the record is always described in relation to what it is next to, or what it is part of. Further as Daniel Pitti (1999) has explained: "In contrast to the published items collected by libraries, the identifiable object of interest in the archive is a complex body of interrelated, unique materials. The *fond*[18]*s* coheres and is identifiable because all of its records or papers share a common *provenance*, derived from one source and context" (n.p.). While a library may have several copies of the same book, often these books are not unique (since any one copy may serve the interest of researchers); however

---

[18] Terry Cook describes the concept of *fonds* as: "The fonds is thus the conceptual 'whole' that reflects an organic process in which a records creator produces or accumulates series of records which themselves exhibit a natural unity based on shared function, activity, form or use. It is at the heart of this process or relationship linking the creator to the records that the essence of *respect des fonds* can be found and must be protected" (33).

the materials in an archives are unique because they often don't have multiple copies and were created in a particular context that may not be reproducible.

Lucia Duranti (1993) has argued that description "has been one of the means to accomplish the only two permanent archival functions: (1) preservation (physical, moral and intellectual) and (2) communication of archival documents, that is, of the residue and evidence of societal actions and transactions" (52). She also argues that "there is no universally recognized conceptualization of archival description, no steady progress in its use, and not even linear development in its application. Description has been carried out or not carried out depending on the specific needs and conditions, attitudes and requirements, and its products have consistently reflected the conceptions about archives held by the society of the time" (53). Description, then, is a culturally-situated process that reflects the needs and resources of particular communities. The manner in which records are described are dependent on what particular communities view as important and useful. In the Western archival tradition, elements such as the name of the creator, the title of the record and a brief contextual history are usually provided, but these standards are not universal and may differ across various communities.

Archival finding aids are one of the most visible products of the archival writing process. Heather MacNeil (2012) has defined the term "finding aid" as "any tool that aims to provide users with intellectual and/or physical access to holding of archival institutions." She characterizes finding aids as a rhetorical genre system that commonly contains elements that allow users to access and understand archival holdings. She argues that finding aids are largely meant for users and most archives operate under the assumptions that users understand the genre of the finding aid. In other words, it is commonly assumed that users know that finding aids are

meant to provide contextual information about a set of records rather than direct information at the item-level. Pitti adds:

> "Archival description represents … a complex body of materials, frequently in more than one form or medium, sharing a common provenance. The description involves a complex hierarchical and progressive analysis. It begins by describing the whole, then proceeds to identify and describe sub-components of the whole, and sub-components of sub-components, and so on. Frequently, but by no means always, the description terminates with a description of individual items. The description emphasizes the intellectual structure and content of the material, rather than their physical characteristics" (n.p.).

Finding aids, then, move from the general to the specific. Often finding aids may also just provide information about the structure of the records, or merely the content or simply the physical location of the records. In such instances, the user who is looking for very particular information has to know that archival records exist in relation to other records and therefore must use finding aids as the initial point of contact that could lead to other connected resources. As such, reading finding aids can be a befuddling experience for new users; in such instances, MacNeil (2012) adds that the archivist "has to play a mediating role between the user and the descriptive system" (12).

For instance, consider the finding aid linked here: http://archives.library.illinois.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=1815&q=ncte The above link is that of a finding aid that describes the collected publications of the Conference on College Communication and Composition (CCCC) since 1957. These records are currently housed at the University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign. As finding aids go, this is a fine

example since it provides enough metadata[19] about the creator of the record, the date of

acquisition and also links the user to related records. On the same webpage, the user can also

find a detailed contextual description of the records themselves. In the description, the user is

given general information about CCCC's various publications. This finding aid is structured in a

way that allows us to approach CCCC publication records in a particular context. For instance,

the above description clarifies what the CCCC does and provides pertinent information regarding

the publications produced by this organization. The records are described in a way that reflects

their arrangement within the archives themselves[20]. Thus this finding aid preserves the original

---

[19] In the archival context, the idea of metadata is a standard that has emerged in response to
emerging digital technologies and encoded archival description. Increasing levels of information
require more context; so in a sense, metadata constitutes information about information or data
about data. The Minnesota State Archives offers the following explanation about metadata on its
website: "(Metadata) is used to describe an object (digital or otherwise), its relationships with
other objects, and how the object has been and should be treated over time. Metadata allows
users to locate and evaluate data without each person having to discover it anew with every use.
A structured format and a controlled vocabulary, which together allow for a precise and
comprehensible description of content, location, and value, are its basic elements." The concept
of metadata allows us to understand a record's "internal" information such as date of publication
or authorship or even accompanying data such as the publisher's name, place of publication etc.
On a deeper level, metadata allows us to see how the record exists in relation to other records; it
might also enable an understanding of how the record has changed or been altered since its
creation: if the context around archival records are subject to change because of the way they are
described by the archivist, then this new context needs to become a part of the record's narrative.
So in a sense, metadata allows for an increased level of awareness about the context in which a
record was produced and the context in which it was changed or altered. The standards for
metadata may vary from one context to the next. However, the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative
has provided a scheme for the stabilization of metadata standards across different contexts. In
this scheme, the following information elements must be included: title, creator, subject,
description, publisher, contributor, date, type, format, identifier, source, language, relation,
coverage, and rights. Other elements of information may be included by different agencies in
order to provide more specific context.

[20] This online finding aid is a good example of how Encoded Archival Description (EAD) works:
With the emergence of digital technologies, Encoded Archival Description (EAD) is a second
standard has emerged in order to broaden the scope of archival description online. The SAA's
application guidelines for EAD (1999) defines it as "a data structure standard for preserving the
hierarchy and designating the content of descriptive guides to archival holding worldwide. It

order and arrangement of the physical records. So even if researchers are unable to find a box of

records physically, the same order of records is represented online. By providing this context and

by replicating the original order and arrangement of the records in the finding aid, it becomes

clear that CCCC publications do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are a part of a unique

constellation of publications produced by a single organization which caters to teachers of

college English. Anyone who wishes to research a specific publication or journal would have all

this information and context before she even gets to the physical collections themselves. Contrast

this finding aid with an entry from a library catalog: instead of providing descriptions about a

specific item or a journal (as libraries often do), this finding aid provides overarching

---

enable Internet delivery of these guides and also ensures their permanence by providing a stable, non-proprietary data storage environment from which data can be transferred to other software environments as necessary. In technical terms, EAD comprises a Document Type Definiton (DTD) that is written following the syntactic rules of Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) and Extensible Markup Language (XML)" (2). Given that most researchers depend on the internet to deliver finding aids electronically, EAD provides archival repositories "with a means of establishing an effective, accessible, and stable presence for their holdings information. EAD accommodates variations in the length and content of finding aids within and among repositories, and preserves in electronic form the complex, hierarchically structured descriptive information found in archival repositories and registers, while also enabling the documents to be navigated and searched in ways that their printed counterparts cannot." (Feeney 99). The EAD project was initiated in 1993 in Berkeley, California[20]: Daniel Pitti headed the project and developed requirements that would allow electronic finding aids to represent information in a way that physical finding aids could not. In particular, encoded archival description allows users to move through finding aids in a way that maintains the document's hierarchical nature (since finding aids are written in order to reflect original arrangement or the fonds); however users are allowed access to information at all levels and may be able to trace how different elements in a finding aid are connected to one another because of their hierarchical arrangement. Thus, it allows users to read information about records in their own context rather than in isolation. EAD also, however, allows user to find specific records and retrieve them electronically. In sum, the EAD project allowed for the stabilization of archival description in online spaces by preserving the original order and arrangement of records. Thus even if researchers are unable to find a box of records physically, the same order of records is represented online. While some records may be digitized and found online in their entirety, this may not be the case for all archival records. Even so, encoded archival description allows finding aids to convey a specific record's information in relation to other records. As I have already mentioned, archival arrangement is mean to reflect information in context rather than information in isolation.

information about CCCC as an organization and the related publications it produced. As such, this finding aid represents a very different genre of writing that is intended for the purpose of reading information *within a given context.*

The archives at the University of Illinois also provide box-level and folder-level descriptions of many of their archival holdings. While these descriptions don't necessarily narrate detailed bibliographic information about every single item, they still give researchers a pretty good idea of what they can expect to find in the physical boxes themselves. Such detailed box/folder-level descriptions may not be provided by all archives: it depends on the resources available at the archives' disposal. What we get here is a chronological list of all the CCCC publications starting from 1957. This chronological list of publications serves to create a narrative about CCCC as an organization: it creates a sense of the kinds of issues valued by the organization. While this list highlights certain details – such as conference proceedings and issues of style and linguistics – it perhaps does not include other issues that the organization was dealing with between 1957 and 1974. A researcher must therefore think of this list and indeed the entire finding aid as a rhetorical artifact that makes visible certain aspects about CCCC and obscures others. The physical boxes themselves might contain more information that is not represented in the finding aid. Documents such as archival finding aids are rhetorical because they create particular personas for people and organizations by highlighting certain events: we cannot think of such documents as accurate or holistic representations. Instead, when we look at descriptions such as the ones in the above image, we should remember that it represents only one outlook about CCCC as an organization. Indeed, Heather MacNeil (2005) has also argued that archival finding aids are socio-cultural constructs that reflect the prejudices and biases of the archivists who compiled them. She critiques the positivistic assumption that archivists offer

impartial representations of records; she points out that finding aids are "shaped by particular ideologies and intentionalities, which in turn shape what they include and exclude, what they emphasize and what they ignore" (274). She lays bare the idea that archivists often function as "editors" who make culturally-situated decisions about what goes into finding aids. Therefore, such finding aids are not "neutral" and researchers have to read them rhetorically in order to discover records that may be occluded by such documents.

Tom Nesmith (2002) further echoes MacNeil's ideas about writing and archival work. As he puts it, "Seeing archives… means seeing archivists anew- as visible, active, agents in the construction of this history and the societal knowledge it shapes" (41) He even suggests linkages between archiving and authoring:

> "…any work of archives-making is a type of authoring or creating of the archival records. What does it mean to author? Authoring means much more than inscribing with pen, keyboard, or camera. There are many acts of records creation that are not solely literal acts of inscription by an initial inscriber. The idea that archives play an authoring role is based on the view that a record is a meaningful communication, which means it is a physical object, plus an understanding or representation of that object. Some of what makes a record meaningful is inscribed in it by those who literally made it, but most of what makes a record intelligible lies outside its physical borders in its context of interpretation. Archivists, who do much to shape this context, therefore share in authoring the record" (32)

Nesmith works to dispel the myth of objectivity that is often tied to the work of the archivist. For him, archivists are creators and authors of records; the archivist's work of description and narration is a form of recontextualization: this work creates a new narrative around the record.

MacNeil has also argued that archivists are *producers* of contexts: context is always invented. Archivists make conscious decisions about how much context they include; and no matter how much context "archivists try to include… something will always remain outside of it; and… the decision they make about what to include and exclude are, inevitably, ideological" (MacNeil 2011, 190). Context, therefore, is not a neutral construct: so when we read finding aids, we should be aware that there may be other ways of contextualizing the information provided by such descriptions. Indeed, many theorists have also suggested that by merely turning a document into a archival record, the archivist is in fact "elevating" the status of that document: when something become "archival," it becomes a valued commodity and this in effect changes the way the context of the document and the way it is read. Therefore, archival processes are not innocent: even activities such as appraisal and arrangement are value-laden and they work to both de-contextualize *and* re-contextualize records. As Nesmith argues, far from being "neutral," the archivist's practices become part of the history of archival records. Margaret Hedstrom (2002) has advocated for a great sense of transparency when it comes to archival work. She suggests that "rather than obscuring the interpretive aspects [of their work], archivists should expose and articulate these interpretive acts, capture and structure information about them, and leave as many traces as possible about interpretive frames" (43). She also asked archivists to be aware of the power structures within which they operate and share their power with users. For Hedstrom, such transparency would allow users to understand why certain kinds of contextual information were privileged. It would give users greater agency to interpret both the evidence and context left behind by archivists.

Brien Brothman (1991) has argued that archival writing is about creating "order" out of the seeming "disorder" of information that floods archival spaces. Drawing upon anthropologist

Mary Douglas' ideas about "order," "disorder," "cleanliness" and "dirt," Brothman asserts that the archivist's task is to create some kind of neat meaning out of the flood of documents and artifacts that are often deposited into archival repositories. Writing is a large part of this meaning-making process (81). For instance, the finding aids pictured above represents a very "neat" version of CCCC's organizational concerns. Archival description is often the process of taking messiness out and imposing an artificial sense of order. Indeed, archives are messy places, but when we look at neat descriptions offered in finding aids, we don't see the mess. It is often the archivists' job to create boundaries between the messiness of the past and the seemingly ordered present of the researcher. Brothman (1999) has turned to the Derridean project of deconstruction in order to show the *constructedness* of archival projects; through deconstructive readings of archives, he tries to dispel the illusion of objectivity that are often associated with archives. He has written persuasively about the connections between writing and archival practices:

> "…it is necessary to understand that Derrida simultaneously construes writing as one of several important metaphors for archiving, and archiving as one of numerous metaphors for writing. It will also help to keep in mind that the notions of both writing and archiving are metaphorically associated with concepts of memory and preservation, and vice versa, and even with the formation and operation of consciousness. This should not come as a surprise, as Derrida seems to believe that language unavoidably carries metaphorical resonance – and thereby never quite yields the literal meanings its users intend to express. Thus, when Derrida writes about archives, the discussion stretches beyond and beneath our profession's conception of archives. By the same token, when he dwells on the thematics of "writing," when he introduces seemingly recondite notions of 'difference,'

'trace,' and 'origins,' and when he deals with the issues of 'presence' and 'absence,' being and meaning… he is addressing concerns that ultimately carry consequences for the archival community's conception of what the preservation of records actually accomplishes, and what significance lies within and beyond the language archivists use to enunciate their purposes." (66)

Here, Brothman is pointing to an important link between archives and writing: both these technologies emerged coterminously (at least in Europe). Writing and archives share the same concerns: the preservation of memory through the meticulous invention, arrangement and description of the materials of memory. For those of us in Rhetoric and Composition, this is an important set of linkages: our canons of writing are similar to the canons of "archiving." Archivists are also concerned with the processes of arrangement, invention and description: they are trying to understand how writing may be used to describe and re-inscribe the materiality of archival records. Archival records are *material*. They possess a "thingness" and a concreteness that archival writing attempts to capture. This materiality is lost when we speak of archives in metaphorical terms or when we conflate them with discursive or theoretical notions of archives. As a profession and as a discipline, archival science attempts to preserve and reinstate the materiality of records.

If writing and archiving share the concern of preserving memory, they both depend on language; as Brothman points out in the above quote, language works through deferrals, through the postponement of meaning: in Rhetoric and Composition, as teachers and researchers of writing, we constantly grapple with such deferrals and postponements. We are forever caught up in this constant interplay of figuring out what things *mean* in a given time and place before there is a change of context. Our work, in so many ways, is the preservation of meaning within a given

context. However, for archivists, this play with language and meaning takes on another level of significance: archival writing is not just about the deferral of meaning, it is also about the deferral of materiality. Archival writing depends on language to not just capture the context of a record, but also its material presence. However, by merely making a record "archival," the archivist changes not just the context of the record, but also makes its materiality all the more significant. And in making the archival record significant, the archivist must impose restrictions on who can access the record and under what conditions. Thus, the meaning and the materiality of the archival record are constantly deferred.

For Brothman, "archiving" as a practice – because it is emerges out of writing– necessarily "depends on tracing": as he explains, the idea of a trace suggests both the presence and the absence of something from a record. Archival records are necessarily "incomplete" traces because they are created through language and always signify the absence of something else. So if archiving is a form of tracing, then as Brothman puts it, tracing also "induces archiving." If archives try to make visible certain aspects of the past, then something about this past is always lost or missing from archival records which further induces the need to find and archive more materials that may account for this "gap." Additionally, archives and archival records are often considered to be objects outside of time; in a sense, they are considered "timeless," or not subject to the ravages of time. However, time works on archival records in two ways: first, as Brothman, suggests "writing… is the most obvious form of temporal delay, for signs in all their forms engender delay. No word, no sign, ever "takes time off" to remain fully present and self-identical. Signs unavoidably become swept up in the movement of delay and difference, of traces leaving traces" (72). Time, therefore, works on the archival record through language: it works on a metaphorical level to *delay meaning,* to never allow the past to be known

as it was because the past itself is a linguistic construction that is further constructed through linguistic delays (Notice how I use the word "construct" only to deconstruct it? Notice how I use a temporarily stable sign in order to show its permanent instability? For a moment, allow me to insert my own material presence here: allow me to point out that, at this moment, my very material head hurts).

On a second level, time works on the archival record in a very material way. The archival record is "preserved" for the future; the general fallacy holds that this preservation is supposed to make the record timeless (notice the linguistic tautology here: pre-serve. Something that is served before; and yet the archival record is generally served *after*, right?). I am not arguing that archival preservation strategies are not useful, but I am arguing that time still affects the record: the record grows old, it wears at the edges, the words on its surface eventually fade. The researcher steps into the archives in order to discover the record as it was, as it used to be and yet this discovery is always mediated through the passage of time. The materiality of the record has changed: time has worked upon it in such a way that it cannot convey its origins any more. It can only convey what has happened to it *over time.*

As Brothman points out, even though the stability of language, meaning and materiality are not guaranteed, archives and archival records are still necessary and useful. He writes: "The survival of communities depends on our capacity to stick labels on things. It is how we control – and make – our environments" (73). This ability to control and make depends on the context: in other words, the emergence of archival spaces depends on exigent circumstances. Archival spaces are not acontextual or timeless: archives emerge in order to make claims about the presence and visibility of particular communities. They are made in order to argue for the

historical existence of these communities. In other words, archives are rhetorical. They enact the cultural logics of particular communities and cultures for very specific purposes and audiences.

Complicating Archival Description and Decolonizing Archives:

Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz (2002) have pointed out that archives are social constructs that serve particular political stakeholders. As Cook and Schwartz put it, "Their origins lie in the information needs and social values of the rulers, governments, businesses, associations, and individuals who establish and maintain them… archives (are) about maintaining power, about the power of the present to control what is, and will be, known about the past, about the power of remembering over forgetting" (3). Like many disciplines –such as English, History, Anthropology, etc - archival studies has been undergoing a "postmodern turn" (Cook *&* Schwartz; Fredriksson 2003; Holmes 2006; Nesmith); this has led to an increased awareness of the constructed nature of archival projects. Since then, there have been many debates about what archives exclude from their collections and why. However, many marginalized and colonized communities have been aware of this idea for a long time. Indeed, as Joan Nestle has pointed out, before the emergence of grassroots archives such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives, many GLBTQ communities felt as if they had been written out of history and out of archival spaces. This writing out was a literal process. As she explains:

"… when we were, at the beginning, thinking about this[the LHA], and we talked to people in the American Library Association who were gay like Barbara Giddings who since has died, and she suggested we give it to the New York Public Library instead of doing it ourselves. You know… when we approached [the New York Public Library] in the beginning, the said no no no, they've changed now many many years later, we all knew [they] wanted collections of famous people… so, you know, we said, no, we'll do

it, that's not how we want to do it. So, inclusiveness and exclusiveness – and you are right- are central pivots – both practical moments of archives… and I'll just come out and say this, these major women's collections and wealthy academic institutions like Sarah Lawrence never had the word lesbian in their catalog. Never considered it as a collection heading, but later, later, after we'd been in existence for many years, now it's a very hot topic. So many academic institutions and I can't speak for them, I don't know what the Smithsonian is doing, but I imagine if it's a white man and he is a famous gay writer, you know, they want his collections. So…. it's the fashion of memory, it's…. who is… who represents the image of your archives and your institution, and who is funding it" (2011)

As Joan points out in the above quote, entire populations can be written in and out of archives. Through finding aids and catalogs, mainstream archives often manufacture narratives and arguments about what is important to a given culture in a particular time and places. For a long time, the absence of word "lesbian" in various archival lists and catalogs served to signify the absence of lesbian lives and histories entirely. Given the political climate of the early 70s, GLBTQ communities were highly policed. Indeed in many states in the US, homosexuality was criminalized: given this kind of charged political atmosphere, the presence of GLBTQ lives could not be written into mainstream archives.

The inception of archives such as the LHA became necessary especially since many mainstream archives privilege the lives of the famous or the published. Indeed, as Joan points out, many mainstream archives continue to collect materials of predominantly white, male individuals who have made some visible contributions to society. Such a collection mandate writes out the lives of other individuals who may be less visible, but whose contributions are nonetheless important. Archives such as the LHA work to decolonize the practices of

mainstream archives by collecting materials from lesbians everywhere, regardless of whether they are famous or not. Such a collection mandate builds the sense that all lesbians are responsible for collectively shaping lesbian past(s), present(s) and future(s) by sharing their histories and stories: in this view, no community member stands outside lesbian history as a mere onlooker. Instead everyone shares in the task of creating legacies from which future generations of lesbians will benefit.

Every newsletter published since 1975 contains explicit requests to community members to become historians and interviewers[21]. The newsletters ask their readers to seek out other lesbian community members and interview them about their lives. These requests gave community members an opportunity to consider themselves historians and historical subjects: they were participants in the culture and history that they were responsible for creating. Most notably, the January 1995 issue of the LHA newsletter carries an extended article that provides step-by-step instructions about donating materials to the archives. Given the widespread nature of their audience and the constraints of time and distance, in this article the LHA asks its readers to "be archivists of (their) own collection" (Thistlethwaite 4). The article contains deliberate instructions for readers about preparing their collections for donation, such as including an outline of major life events; identifying people who appear in letters, pictures, etc; using archival folders with clear detailed folder headings; The instructions ask readers to "use a soft #1 pencil; pen seeps through eventually. Include notes explaining how memorabilia, flyers and clippings relate to your life." The article also includes notes about storing collections "in a cool, dry, dark place. Dampness, heat and overexposure to dust and sun encourage paper and electronic records

---

[21] While the co-founders of the archives - including Deborah Edel and Joan Nestle – were not trained archivists, later generations of coordinators have gone on to receive degrees in archival studies and have returned to work at the LHA. The earliest coordinators and volunteers were self-taught archivists.

to decay. Keep moldy books and documents away from everything else" (4). Additionally, this article also addresses concerns about property rights and copyright, privacy restrictions, appraisals and tax deductions amongst other things. In other words, it provides a holistic sense of what it means to donate to the LHA and how such donations will be processed.

Additionally, the LHA's current website also contains explicit instructions to community members for creating special collections: these collections contain the personal papers, letters, emails, photographs etc of lesbian community members who may have been relatively anonymous, but nevertheless made an impact within their communities. The LHA urges community members to immediately start creating special collection by compiling their own papers with the intention of donating it to the archives. The website provides clear instructions for describing materials in a special collections. Such descriptions are mean to make the materials more accessible and understandable to users of the archives:

> "If possible, include an outline or timeline of the major events in your life in either written or recorded form. Be as lengthy or brief as you like, then organize the collection using your outline.
>
> Identify the people whose letters appear in your collection, making clear who wrote what, and arrange the letters in order by time and/or correspondent. You might want to add a description of your relationship to them and other information about them. Arrange other writing, photographs, clippings and keepsakes similarly.
>
> Use folders (acid-free folders are best) for your materials and give them headings, for e.g., 'LETTERS, GLORIOUS R. DYKES, 1981-1989" or "PHOTOS, SOFTBALL TEAM, 1985.'

Clearly label your photographs, clippings and other items with names, dates and

locations. Include notes explaining how the memorabilia, flyers and clippings relate

to your life" ("Donating Materials: Special Collections," LHA Website).

By asking potential donors to provide these descriptions, the LHA gives donors the agency to

narrate the context around their own materials. This allows donors to be the authors of their own

collections; donors have the power to give as much context as they like and in a way that makes

sense to them. Instead of leaving the narration of context to an archivist who may not know them

very well, donors make choices about what to include and exclude from their descriptions. For

me, this demonstrates the LHA's commitment to demystifying the process of archiving itself.

Community members are educated in the process of creating and maintaining archives over a

long period of time. So in a sense, archival science is not seen as an arcane process; instead it is

as a deliberate skill that needs to be practiced by every community member to keep the Archives

alive. Additionally, such moves to reach out to community members turns them into active and

careful documenters of their own life histories; it also gives them a sense of why their lives

might be historical and useful to future generations of lesbian women. Additionally, in this view,

all community members can become archivists and historiographers. They are responsible for

shaping the histories in which they participate regularly. Community members are left with sense

that they do not have to be carried by the overwhelming tides of mainstream history, but they can

narrate and preserve their own histories in a way that is meaningful to them and others who will

follow them.

The notion of decolonizing archives has for long been a part of many indigenous

communities. In a recent issue of *Archival Science* (2011) devoted to indigenous perspectives on

archives, Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead and Lynette Russell describe the Trust and

Technology Project whose goal is to build "indigenous frameworks of knowledge, memory and evidence" (212) into archives that were constructed as part of Australia's colonial apparatus. The authors argue that Indigenous people "view archival records containing information about themselves…. as indigenous records." (219). As such, many Indigenous Australian communities feel that control and access of these records should be handled by them and they should be considered owners of such records. However, archival institutions in Australia are working within legal frameworks that make the archives owners of indigenous records. The authors argue that archival initiatives work within a paradigm that positions indigenous people as "subjects of records and clients of archival services, rather than as co-creators of records and partners in developing archival systems and services" (220). Additionally, the article points out "in Australia and other post-colonial societies, western representations of the orality vs literacy dichotomy have been associated with views relating to the inferiority of oral traditions that have been an obstacle to mutual. [The article] posits instead a continuum of orality and written text, with both oral tradition and written records being accessed and understood in the context of their own knowledge systems and related transmission processes."(212). The Trust and Technology project represents an "archival reconciliation project" that puts Indigenous Communities in dialog with archival communities.

The authors of the article found that current archival classification and descriptive systems that are based in Western epistemologies do not favor "participatory model[s] of recordkeeping" (229). Instead in the Western archival tradition, "metadata elements and archival descriptors designed to manage ownership, custody, privacy and access as defined in western legal system can deal with individual but not collective rights in records. They cannot support decision-making shared between co-creators…" (229). Working against such ideas, the Trust and

Technology project created specifications for a Koorie archiving system. In this system, indigenous community members would have access to their own records and would be able to create their own annotations for the records. Such a system would support multiple descriptions and annotations about a single records and allows multiple stakeholders to access, create and add new content to the archival system. The Trust and Technology project is a good example of how indigenous communities are reimagining and decolonizing archival description. Such methods of describing archives put records back in the control of indigenous stakeholders and allow for multiple perspectives and contexts.

For those of us in rhetoric and composition, many implications arise from the views of archival description presented in this chapter: our field has been increasingly turning to archives in past few decades to make sense of our disciplinary past(s). As researchers in the archives, we should learn more about archival description so that we are able to pay greater attention to the created contexts of our research materials. We should read materials both in and out of context in order to create new frames of references for our research. Additionally, when we educate our students –both graduate and undergraduate - about archival research, we should advice them about how finding aids work to create context about particular individuals and communities. Finding aids should be read both along and against the grain in order to lay bare who/what such documents include and exclude.

In the next chapter, **"Moving beyond the Illuminated Screen: Asserting the Materiality of Digitized Records,"** I analyze the digitization practices of two digital archives, namely the Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives and the Blake Archive. I draw from the work of digital humanists and archivists to argue that in the context of digital archives, digitization of records is a cultural process. The manner in which we choose objects to be digitized reflects our

biases, and it is never an "objective" process. As such, I argue that digitization is a rhetorical process because it creates a culturally-mediated representation of a material object. I also point out that digitization does not necessarily mean that an archival record has been "preserved." All digitized records have unique identities and histories that need to be preserved as well. Therefore, I argue that archival digitization should attempt to connect records with their material counterparts in order to create a holistic representation of the original context in which records were produced and circulated.

CHAPTER 5
MOVING BEYOND THE ILLUMINATED SCREEN
ASSERTING THE MATERIALITY OF DIGITIZED ARCHIVAL RECORDS

"…one of the things that I've always said is one of the most useless things
in an archives is an unidentified photograph of a person."
-William Maher, 2012

I am idly browsing through the *Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN):* [22]the

DALN is "publicly available archive of personal literacy narratives in a variety of formats (text,

video, audio) that together provide a historical record of the literacy practices and values of

contributors, as those practices and values change. The DALN invites people of all ages, races,

communities, backgrounds, and interests to contribute stories about how — and in what

circumstances — they read, write, and compose meaning, and how they learned to do so (or

helped others learn)" (*DALN* Home). Indeed, the *DALN* has accumulated several hundred such

literacy narratives in a variety of formats ranging from audio files to personal letters to freshman

composition papers. The website also has an extensive FAQ page about what a literacy narrative

is, why the *DALN* is interested in collecting such narratives, who can submit etc. I decide to look

through the archives via the "date submitted" link on the lower right hand corner of the *DALN's*

homepage. There are over 3000 items available, ordered from the earliest date of submission

through the latest. A navigation bar at the top of each page allows me to sort through the

submission index by issue date or ascending/descending order etc. Overwhelmed by my choices,

I click on the second link of the first page: "Kristine Blair's Literacy Narrative." The screen

changes to reveal a "simple item record" for this submission. Visitors to the *DALN* also have the

option to access the "full item record" which provides more detailed metadata about particular

submissions. As I look through all this information, I am struck by the fact that neither the

---

[22] Link to the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives is available here: http://daln.osu.edu/

"simple item record" nor the "full item record" provides a fuller description of the images accompanying Blair's literacy narrative. There is no contextual information about the images: how are the images supposed to explain Blair's literacy history? What was the context for the creation of these images? What were the original dimensions of these images? Where and how were these images stored before they were digitized? Were they part of a scrapbook perhaps?

The full item record merely notes in the description field that the record "contains a video and related images (pictures, report cards, diplomas, handmade cards) related to Kristine Blair's literacy history." Yet, there is almost nothing in these images that suggests anything about literacy to me. It might be argued that the report card could stand as an example of Kristine Blair's literacy, but outside of the context of the DALN, the report card could have many other histories and meanings. As a collection of visual artifacts chosen and assembled ostensibly by Kristin Blair herself, the above images represent a *created narrative*. But have these images always stood next each other? Spatially, have they always been arranged in this way? Additionally, there is no documentation that might help other users trace the original context of these images.

The insinuation of literacy with regard to the above images is a product of "archival intervention" (Opp 2008). It suggests an archival narrative about these visual images that they don't contain in and of themselves. Making literacy central to these photographs creates new meanings for these images and leaves out the original contexts of their production and circulation. To me, these images appear as records that were abstracted from their original material context and then repurposed to make an argument about Blair's literacy history; these abstracted and repurposed images illustrate one of the dangers of archival digitization: namely, its ability to simultaneously decontextualize *and* recontextualize information.

As Joanna Sasoon and Joan Schwartz have argued, archives have a responsibility to document not just the content of digitized images, but the original material contexts in which such images were created. Surely, the pictures, diplomas, handmade cards pictured above had a rich history before they were repurposed for the purpose of this literacy narrative? Surely, the picture of the smiling child in these digitized images was taken for a purpose other than illustrating the development of literacy? Who is this smiling child? Is the user supposed to assume that she is the subject of the literacy narrative (i.e Kristine Blair)? Why was her picture taken? What was that purpose for it? Why has the history of all these digitized images gone unacknowledged in the full item record? Why is there no metadata surrounding these images themselves? It may be argued that I could learn more about these images by listening to the literacy narrative itself, but that still creates the same problem[23]: i.e. the images would only be explained in the context of the literacy narrative and not perhaps in the original context of their production. Additionally, if I were a visitor to the archive who may not know much about the concept of literacy or why literacy narratives need to be archived, I am not sure a cursory investigation of these images would yield too much knowledge.

These images, along with others available on the DALN, create another complication: it appears as if the DALN seems to be conflating digitization with preservation. It is assumed that just because an artifact is digitized, it is preserved and available for long term-

---

[23] I listened to Kristine Blair's narrative on the DALN website as I looked at her images. The images, including the photographs are mentioned a few times as part of Blair's efforts to excavate how literacy articulated itself during her childhood. She mentions being surprised at finding things in the photographs like "technologies of gender, so understanding what it means to be a girl and how that involves toys, like [she] had a stove… a hair dryer, and [she remembers] getting those little kits and things" (Blair, 2008). It appears then that the images posted with the narrative itself act as supplements to the larger narrative of literacy being crafted by Blair. They are not being regarded as documents that are capable of communicating information on their own.

use. However, archival preservation of digitized artifacts is a complex process of appraisal, arrangement and description: providing contextual information about digitized artifacts helps make them useful to users on a long-term basis. It is also helpful to users when archives provide information about why particular images were chosen for digitization over others. With regard to archival digitization of photographs, Joanna Sasoon has argued than "an archival approach to documenting photograph collections requires transfomation in the understanding of the nature of a photograph. Rather than seeing the photograph as an image and as a passive object, it can be seen as a material document that has played an active role in history." (199). She also points out that while it may be an expensive process to document the context of a photograph's production, such an approach helps maintain the material histories of the photographic document. Sasoon's argument could be extended to a range of digitized images, including photographs. She argues that the process of digitization – when it is performed without regard to context – is not preservation. Instead, such a process only creates a "digital shadow" that is much more "ephemeral" than the original object itself. Mere digitization does not create an enduring digital object: instead it creates a dematerialized and discrete object that is divorced from other material objects. It makes it impossible for researchers to study "materiality and the entangled histories and relationships between artefacts" (201). As Sasoon points out, instead of providing enhanced access, such a one-dimensional approach to digitization only creates an impoverished view of the visual image.

Through the selection of particular images for digitization, archives frame researchers' understanding of the past. Therefore, a more reflexive and transparent approach to digital preservation and description helps build trust between users and archives. James Opp

(2008) has also argued, archivists should try to connect digitized artifacts[24] with their material histories. He explains that while digitized artifacts might offer great access to users, digitization often has "serious consequences to the loss of materiality" (4). He also writes that digitized artifacts often carry hidden histories that may become invisible when we simply look at them on the flat screen of a computer: since digitization –to some extend - depends on standardization (especially in terms of image formats) archival description needs to make visible all the histories and narratives surrounding digitized artifacts instead of presenting them as abstracted pieces of history. When we look at a digitized object that is not framed by contextual information, we are merely looking at a flattened text. It lacks the nuance and the subtlety of its original because digitization often leaves out blemishes in favor of providing a more enhanced view of the object. Such a view of the object limits the kinds of research questions that can be asked: it frames how we will interrogate the past and interact with it. For instance, when I look at the above images that are part of Blair's literacy narrative, I wonder what questions I can ask of the smiling child in those pictures. Without any context around those images, I am not sure how to interact with them as a researcher. Am I only supposed to understand those images through the concept of literacy? Are there no other possibilities for research embedded in the above images? As archival documents, the above images from the DALN seem to preclude research questions rather than encourage them.

Asserting the Materiality of Digitized Texts:

---

[24]Archivists also make a distinction between images that are digitized versus images that are "born-digital": digitized and born-digital artifacts are encoded with different kinds of metadata which needs to be captured so that we may understand such artifacts in the context of their production.

In his book, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination,* Matthew Kirschenbaum argues that electronic texts[25] are material artifacts. He persistently works against the notion that electronic texts are ephemeral or unstable and open to modification or that they are easily replicable. Instead, he argues that each electronic text is unique; his book is "given over to the project of discovering the heterogeneity of digital data and its embodied inscriptions" (6). He uses the term "screen essentialism" to critique the culture of "critical and theoretical writing about electronic textuality to date" (19). This is a kind of essentialism that privileges the "illuminated screen rather than the inscrutable disk" (30). Kirschenbaum borrows insights from the field of computer forensics in order to argue that digital data can be individuated; in other words, even though digital texts can be copied, such text still have an individual identity and material presence that can be detected and preserved. In terms of archival practice, Kirschenbaum argues that as more and more digital objects take on "archival identities," it will become necessary "to understand the nature of what is being collected and preserved, and where the most significant challenges of digital preservation finally lie" (21). He also points out that for archivists "it will be important to insist that digital objects are no more homogeneous or self-identical than other artifacts, and that the relationships between individual digital objects (and versions of those objects) should be preserved along with the actual works themselves" (22). Kirschenbaum's critiques are relevant to digitized texts as well as born-digital texts[26]. Often, in

---

[25] In this chapter, I use the terms electronic texts and digital texts interchangeably.

[26] In terms of born-digital texts, Kirschenbaum articulates several ideas that hold relevance to our work in rhetoric and composition: using insights from the field of computer foresnics, Kirschenbaum argues that electronic or digital objects "can be algorithmically individualized" (56). That is, no two digital objects are ever the same and they can be differentiated from one another. Secondly, he also argues electronic data is "explicitly built and engineered to model ideal conditions of immateriality." (71). He points out that digital inscription is a "written trace" that may be "invisible to the naked eye, but it is not instrumentally undetectable or physically immaterial." And lastly, he argues that digital inscription is a form of writing that always leaves

our study of born-digital and digitized archival images, we restrict ourselves to what we see on the screen, instead of connecting digitized and digital images to more material histories *beyond the screen*.

For instance, a cursory examination of the digitized images from the DALN may be read as an example of "screen essentialism." This is an approach to image digitization that focuses on the preservation of content, or more narrowly on what is readily available to us on the surface. And yet, I wonder if the backs of the digitized photographs contains some information (such as date and place) that could be use of to researchers? Did these photographs have negatives that might need to be preserved as well? As Sassoon has pointed out, often archivists consider the negatives as "originals" as opposed to photographic prints themselves. The prints are infinitely reproducible, but the negatives are not. Archivists who preserve photographs try to keep the negative intact as well. Additionally, even if there are multiple prints of the same photograph, each print may exist in a unique material context that may not be similar to other prints. By focusing purely on its contents, it appears that the image is only useful because of what it captured on the surface instead of the complex material relations that were engendered by it. This urge to preserve and reproduce the surface of the image through digitization creates the sense that archives only value the aesthetic qualities of the image rather than its messy and complex materiality. The postmodern sense that we live in an age of infinitely reproducible copies is supported by irresponsible acts of archival digitization that make it seem as if the study of

---

a trace upon physical materials that exist beyond our computer screens. Kirschenbaum's arguments reinscribe (pun intended) *digital writing as a material act* that leaves real traces upon physical objects such as computer disks and hard drives. This form of writing happens at such a microscopic level that seems negligible, but it always leaves a physical trace that can be detected and resurrected. Essentially, Kirschenbaum builds a *material framework for studying digital writing*: this framework is built out of the interaction between the user, the computer's software and its very material hardware.

materiality is irrelevant in digital contexts. It creates a stark schism between the material and the digital even though these categories are always entangled with each other[27].

In the context of the DALN, clearly, the contents of the photographs, the newspapers clippings, the report cards etc are supposed say or add something to the concept of literacy. These images are not meant to be viewed by themselves, but in the context of a greater narrative about somebody's literacy development. However, this view denigrates the status of visual images as documents that have the ability to communicate multiple aspects of the past to us. Even different views of the images could convey different sets of meanings to the researchers. There doesn't seem to be an identity or a history for the images in Kristine Blair's literacy narrative outside of the context of the archive itself. What we know of the images is entirely

---

[27] More and more, archivists are also asserting the materiality of born-digital records. They are also arguing that that the original environment and context of the digital record is as important as the record's content itself. Such an approach allows users to think of digital records not as easily replicable objects, but as unique artifacts that were created on real physical media. Ciaran Trace (2009) has argued that archivists should learn more about "the inner workings of the computer and the computer system" (8). This he argues will allow archivists to "more fully embrace sophisticated models of how digital records exist within computer systems." Like Kirschenbaum, Trace argues that digital records are more than just "conceptual objects": instead they exist as physical and as logical objects. By looking at the inner working of computers, archivists will be able to "more fully comprehend the relationship between computer hardware, operating system, and application software" (8). He also argues that such knowledge would let archivists "access and evaluate the different layers of abstraction that constitute the computer system… in order to preserve the records stored within it. Such work involves understanding what is contained on a computer's hard drive so that the archivist knows what is captured through a disk image (an exact copy) of the device" (8). This process would also allow archivists understand the function of "a computer's registry so that archivists do not unknowingly make changes to important recordkeeping metadata" (8). The idea of not making changes to metadata is significant: a record that is "born digital" has "metadata stored in a variety of place within a computer system. The file system contains metadata about the file, including location, size, date last modified, creation data, and owner of the file…. The document itself can store additional internal metadata which can be added whether by device, application or user. This metadata includes information on who created or saved a document and when it was created or printed." Such an understanding of how metadata works within computers systems would allow archivists to preserve this data as it *was*, instead of making modifications that would change the entire context of the record.

restricted to what we see on the screen. But what kinds of relationship do the digitized images hold to other images that are not represented in the DALN? If some of Kristine Blair's photographs were part of a material album, then what other images were they situated next to? Such context matters because it probably helps us understand the image's material relationship to other photographs. It may also give us an idea of the events that led to the production of the photograph. We may also need information about the photographer and the type of camera that was used to take the picture. However, because this information has been co-opted in the service of literacy narratives, it appears as if the photograph has no connection to other events or activities. Additionally, the photograph's materiality is also erased: we don't really know if the pictures were taken using a modern digital camera or a more-old fashioned camera. Even information about the camera would help us situate these pictures within a particular time-period. As such, since the photographs are represented as discrete objects rather than part of larger turn of events, they have a disturbing appearance of timelessness and placelessness.

Archivist Joan Schwartz has argued in her oft-quoted essay on photographic archives that "…without adequate contextual information about [the] functional origins and provenance [of photographs], or clear links to such contextual information… photographic archives are transformed into stock photo libraries, reducing photographs to their visible elements, and conflating photographic content and photographic meaning. The social and geographical implications of this transformation are exacerbated by digitization projects which aim to provide access to images on the internet" (157). Schwartz's critique is relevant to many visual artifacts: in the case of the *DALN*'s digitized visual artifacts, it is apparent that these images only have value within the context of particular literacy narratives. As Schwartz points out when visual images are archived with enough metadata to communicate the "original context of [their]

creation, circulation and viewing," they could work as records in and of themselves, and not just as supporting caste for written narratives. Visual images by themselves communicate information about particular cultures that may be valuable when they are read in context. Schwartz also makes the case that instead of making visual images "accessible only as discrete, decontextualized and dematerialized images" (157), we must start cataloging these images as material records in terms of the context of their production and circulation, instead of their content. So especially, when it comes to digitized images, we need to move beyond the illuminated screen and trace the material history of these images and provide as much contextual information as possible.

James Opp also warns us that by

"the privileging of resources for the technical process of digitization over the labour-intensive work involved in describing, contextualizing, meta-tagging, and recording archival intervention (whether as a result of institutional priorities or the demands of granting agencies), avoids rather than confronts, the wider cultural issues that face institutions in the digital era. As historians start to approach the archive as the object of their research, and not simply as a filter for results, we need to be able to make the connections between material histories of the artifact and their virtual avatars" (19).

Opp's warning is especially relevant for digital archives such as the *DALN*. In this context, by not giving us enough of the history surrounding the various digitized artifacts available in the DALN, the archive has in effect literally "flattened" these artifacts. They are available to us merely as flat texts rather than as three-dimensional object. They are separated from their originals and from the other material artifacts that presumably surrounded them. As Opp also

points out, with material artfiacts "the paper, the binding, the style of the font, all serve as sensory cues that the viewer would recognize (12)" However, in the case of "flattened" digitized representations, such sensory cues are expelled, not allowing us to experience any of the subtleties and nuances of the original objects themselves. In the case of the DALN's digitized artifacts, these three-dimensional artifacts have been turned into texts and have therefore lost their material nuance and complexity.

In a sense, the DALN itself acts as a massive *text*. It collects evidence about the existence of various literate practices around the world: by privileging narratives or stories about literacy, it foregoes or ignores other meanings that might be embedded in these narratives. Since it is more interested in content rather than context, it tends to flatten and decontextualize all artifacts in the pursuit of narratives about literacy. What appears in front of visitors is simply a textualized narrative about literacy that has almost nothing to with the material contexts or circumstances beyond the screen. In a recent webtext published by the *DALN* collective, Lewis Ulman provides a lengthy explanation of the "messy metadata" practices encouraged by the *DALN*. He argues that such practices allows participants in the archive to build contexts around their own recordings. They are also asked to determine their own self-identifications (in terms of gender, race, class etc). From Ulman's explanation, it appears that the DALN is indexed in terms of content rather that context: by focusing their meta-data and tagging practices in terms of subject matter, the *DALN* encourages visitors to "read" the archival narratives as demateriacted *texts* rather than as *material archival records.*

I stare again at the images that were part of Kristine Blair's literacy narrative. However, this time, I am viewing them as a JPEG file downloaded on my computer. I have named the file

"KrisBlair-DALNJune162012[28]." This file now has an existence outside the context of the

DALN and lives on my computer. If I hadn't included the tag "DALN" in the file's name, it

would probably not mean anything to me if I come across it a few months later. Now that the file

is circulating outside the archives, it has a whole new context and even a new name assigned by

me: since the DALN also has not assigned metadata to these images, I have assigned metadata

that has nothing to do with the original context of its production. The file and its associated

images now float freely in the digital wilderness, with an uncertain identity and history. I can

make as many modifications to it as I like and return it to the world wide web from whence it

came. Clearly, these images are someone else's property, but given how little proprietorial

information I have been provided, it is easy to rename and change aspects of this digital record.

In the context of archives, naming and contextual information are important because they allow

us to cite things in a responsible manner and provide archival records with a history and identity

that can be retained even when records are removed from the physical space of the archives. It's

true that Kristine Blair's images on my computer are only copies, but making copies is a regular

part of archival practice: this is why in physical archives, researchers are exhorted to take down

information about the pertinent folders and boxes when they make copies of archival materials.

Information about folders and boxes works as metadata as well and helps keep information in the

context in which they were found. When it comes to the downloaded images on my computer,

other than the "DALN" tag on the saved file, I have almost no other information about the

context surrounding Kristine Blair's images.

---

[28] I first downloaded the pictures on June 16, 2012.

A Brief Look at *The Blake Archive:*

The Blake Archive is a good example of an online repository that deals mostly with digitized images and artifacts. This online archive is, first of all, quite conscious about its own status as an archive. As the editors of the Archive explain:

> "The Blake Archive is *not* a physical repository of Blake's collected works, nor is it a clearinghouse through which users can obtain reproductions of those works […] The William Blake Archive is an online hypermedia environment that allows its users to access high-quality electronic reproductions of a growing portion of Blake's work. These reproductions have been prepared according to the highest technical and scholarly standards, with the cooperation of a number of the major museum, library, and private collections. By eventually incorporating as much of Blake's pictorial and literary canon as possible—with both images and texts organized, interlinked, and searchable in ways that only hypermedia systems will allow—the Archive will for the first time give scholars and students access to the major intersections between the illuminated books and Blake's other creative and commercial works. Though "archive" is the term we have fallen back on, in fact we envision a unique resource unlike any other currently available for the study of Blake—a hybrid all-in-one edition, catalogue, database, and set of scholarly tools capable of taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by new information technology" ("What do we mean by an 'Archive'?").

This explanation provides users with an understanding of the term "archive" in the context of *The Blake Archive.* In digital contexts, understandings of the term archive must be necessarily

reimagined: mimicking the features of a physical repository is not quite possible in digital spaces. Additionally, digital archives often don't resemble each other because each archive must caters to very different sets of interests and materials. What *The Blake Archive* does offer is a good understanding of the possibilities and potentials of digitization: as an "online hypermedia environment" each image and object in the archive is provided with painstaking "copy information"; this includes information about each item, its provenance[29] and its present location. By providing users with the above information, the digitized object's materiality is preserved: whilst users do have access to an enhanced digital version of Blake's works, we are able to understand those works in the original context of its production and circulation. Users who may wish to track down the object itself are also given detailed information about its current location. Additionally, this information also includes details about blemishes on the object's surface, its dimension, the printing style, ink etc. Such information allows users to understand that the object had a long, material history before it was digitized: the digitized image is not presented as a discrete object divorced from the material realities of its production and circulation. Instead all of these details are incorporated into the description. Even though the digital image is extensively detailed, users understand that it stands in for the original and is not equal to the original. In some ways, the digitized copies in *The Blake Archive* are still only traces of the originals, but given the wealth of details the copy information provides, users will still be able to experience the complexities of the original images.

In addition to copy information about the image itself, *The Blake Archive* also provides extensive metadata about the digitized image. In this instance, information about the copy is not the same as image metadata. As the editors explain: "Each and every image in the Archive also

---

[29] Provenance literally means origin or source

127

contains textual metadata comprising its Image Information record. The Image Information record combines the technical data […] with additional bibliographic documentation of the image, as well as information pertaining to provenance, present location, and the owning institution" ("The William Blake Archive: Technical Summary") The editors also note that the information about the image travels with the images themselves. So even if the images are downloaded from the Blake Archive, they would carry information about the image no matter where they go. By coding this information into the images, the editors of *The Blake Archive* ensures that the image's material history and identity remain intact outside of the context of the archive itself. The images in *The Blake Archive* therefore do not depend on the archive to give them a context. These images had a context long before the archive and will continue to do so as long as they are coded with enough information. Also, by making sure the images' context is preserved, the editors of the archive allow us to understand that digital archival preservation is not simply a matter of capturing content alone; context matters on two levels: first, there's the context of the image's material production and circulation (which is captured by the "copy information"). And secondly, the digitized image also has a unique context that is captured by its technical metadata. By asserting the importance of the image's metadata, we are allowed to see that each digitized image also has a unique identity. If a copy of the digitized image is made, that copy will be coded with metadata of its own. So, in other words, each digital object can also be differentiated (Kirschenbaum).

In reference to his own work on the Blake Archive as a graduate student, Matt Kirschenbaum (1998) has noted that "Electronic editing is work, and I mention this because a project like the *Blake Archive* is, truth be told, a long way from the desktop cottage industries imagined by early cyber-enthusiasts. Despite its 'virtual' home on the World-Wide Web, the

Archive requires a *real* institutional infrastructure, as well as real scholarly labor and expertise, real technical labor and expertise, and, finally, real money…" (n.p.) Kirschenbaum demystifies a lot of the material effort that went into creating *The Blake Archive*, even before anyone "went near a scanner or a keyboard." He details the extensive discussions among editors about how to digitize images, what kind of information to include, how to troubleshoot problems that may arise as users interact with the Archive. Digitzaition is not an easy process of replicating an image's content: instead it is a complex process of understanding an image's multiple contexts of production, circulation and reception. Additionally, this information also allows us to understand that *the Blake Archive* doesn't merely provide a flattened textual representation of William Blake's works. Instead, users who want to interact with the images online have a variety of tools (such as the virtual "light box") that allows them to examine the images in detail. Such tools allow them to experience the complexity of each image, albeit through a digital medium. The copy and image information that is provided alongside each image doesn't limit users interpretation: i.e. it is not limited to a theme or a concept (such as say power or sexuality or gender): in other words, it doesn't suggest information about the images that they may not contain. Instead the copy information provided by *The Blake Archive* merely provides enough context about particular images that helps users come to their own conclusions and interpretations.

Ultimately, as Sassoon reminds us, digitization is a cultural process. Decisions about what to digitize and how to digitize are culturally-mediated. Curators and archivists of digital archives and collections have a responsibility to offer more insights about how and why certain materials were digitized. It is always assumed that digitization offers enhanced access to images and artifacts that are usually not available to researchers. By digitizing things, researchers are

able to view images through the screens of their own computers. And yet, as Sassoon has also pointed out, the process of digitization is never a clean process of translation: something is always lost in the process of creating a digital image. Digitization has the potential to defer our understanding of the materiality of artifacts: once an object is digitized, it cannot be touched or felt in the same way as its material counterpart. It becomes a mere trace of the original object: the digitized object merely stands in for its material counterpart. As researchers then, we need to recognize that digital archives could offer us a greater sense of the material object by providing us a fuller narrative of its material history. And while descriptions of the material object would depend on language (which by itself defers meaning and understanding), we would still be empowered with information that cannot be divulged by the digitized object alone. Digital curators and archivists could also be more transparent about the language they use to describe objects: they could be more reflexive about the linguistic choices they make to write about the object in their collections. Such transparency and reflexivity would go a long way in helping researchers interpret digitized images.

In the next chapter**, "Afterword and Implications for Rhetoric and Composition,"** I argue that my framework for understanding archives would allow us to create better archival research methodologies and also help us better train students who are interested in archival research (at the graduate and undergraduate level). This chapter also synthesizes findings from my dissertation and sketches out future publications and projects that will emerge from this work.

CHAPTER 6
AFTERWORD AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

> "When I first began seriously digging into the archives, a senior scholar casually told me that I wouldn't understand what my dissertation was about until about three years after I had written it. I take the sentiment to suggest that scholarship is an ongoing process. One is never really finished. The work always leaves unanswered question, which is actually a blessing. Unanswered questions are the fuel of the scholarly process."
> -David Gold, 2008

In June 2012, while I was in the midst of writing this dissertation, *The Atlantic* published an article by Suzanne Fischer (snarkily) titled "Nota Bene: If you 'Discover' Something in an Archive, It's not a Discovery." Fischer wrote the article in the aftermath of the publication of the Leale Report. Briefly, Charles Leale was the Surgeon-General when President Abraham Lincoln was shot. He was the first doctor to arrive on the scene after the shooting. His report of the shooting was found by Helena Iles Papaioannou, a research assistant who has been working on a project titled "The Papers of Abraham Lincoln." The Leale Report has the potential to change the way historians write about the days following Lincoln's assassination.

Fischer's contention is a simple one: the Leale report was "discovered" by researchers within the National archives because "(a) 19th-century professional knew about the Leale report and decided that, as a part of the Surgeon General's correspondence, it was worth keeping in the nation's collections." For Fischer, nothing can be "discovered" in an archives because it has already been found by an archivist who then makes materials available to researchers. She further points out that, given the scope and volume of the collections under their care, it would be difficult for archivists to know every minute item contained within a particular collections. Archivists, she explains, describe materials not at the item-level, but at the level of the collection. Such collection-level description gives us an idea of the "shape of the collection, who owned it,

and what kinds of things it contains." She also adds that "with the volume of materials, some collections may be undescribed or even described wrongly." Fischer ends her piece by adding that "archival discoveries" quiet often depend on the labor of archivists and that researchers should be willing to acknowledge this labor rather than "devalue" it for the "sake of an exciting narrative."

Two days later, *The Atlantic* published a rebuttal by Helena Iles Papaioannou with an even more snarky title: "Actually, Yes, It *Is* a Discovery If You Find Something in an Archive That No One Knew Was There." Iles Papaioannou argues that while she is cognizant of the important work done by archivists, it does not mean researchers cannot make archival discoveries. As she puts it: "if someone uncovers something unknown in living memory (or in the historiographical record) this counts as a discovery." Since archivists do not process everything at the item-level, they did not know of the existence of the Leale report. Iles Papaioannou concedes that while it would be inappropriate to call something a discovery if an archivist knew of its existence, in the instance of the Leale Report, this was not the case. She also points out that there is no evidence that a 19th century archivist actively made the decision to preserve the Leale Report since it is likely that the National Archives received the document as part of the Surgeon-General's entire correspondence. Instead, what is more likely is that *all* of the Surgeon-General's letters were kept and the Leale Report was simply one among those letters. Lastly, Iles Papaioannou also points out that since the Leale Report was not cataloged in any of the National Archives' finding aids, it was entirely unknown to researchers. Thus, the finding of the Leale report indeed qualifies as an archival discovery.

I see good arguments being made by both writers: on the one hand, Fischer is calling out the conceit of discovery. The idea of "discovery" has often been used to justify colonial

conquests and erase the existence of people and knowledge that existed before those conquests. I

see vestiges of the same attitude towards archival discoveries: it negates the labor of archivists

and glorifies the labor of the historian or researcher. Archives are often seen as "unchartered"

territory for researchers to discover or illuminate through their work. On the other hand, there is

some weight to Iles Papaioannou's argument as well: something *can* be discovered if no one

knows of its existence. On a fundamental level, however, I see this as a debate about archival

context versus historical context. As Joan Schwartz has pointed out, what is deemed important

by historians may not be as significant to archivists and vice versa. The Leale Report may have

just been another letter to the archivists who originally filed it[30]: it may have been preserved

because it supplied information about aspects of Charles Leale's work as the Surgeon-General.

But for the researchers studying the Leale Report in the context of the life and death of Abraham

Lincoln, its significance is amplified in a very different manner.

This debate between Fischer and Iles Papaioannou opens up significant implications for

those of us in Rhetoric and Composition: first, it asks us to think critically about those "exciting

narratives" that we create about archival research. So many narratives depict archives as inert

spaces simply waiting to be illuminated by the intrepid researcher. And yet, archives are deeply

hegemonic spaces reflecting the power and the politics of the institutions/communities that built

them. While archives depend on users for support, they are largely constructed to mirror the

values of the communities they live in. They are unique socio-political sites that are part of larger

societies that keep them alive. So when we craft our "exciting narratives" about our archival

---

[30] It should be noted that even though the Leale Report may have been deposited in the National
Archives many decades after Charles Leale's death, it would still not have been possible for the
archivists of that period to predict its historical value: so much of history/historiography is about
having a long view of the past that is often not available to those archivists who are under
immense pressure to appraise and make sense of the large number of documents that flood their
workplaces every day.

research experiences, we should be talking about these spaces not as isolated pockets of information, but as rich resources that are embedded in very particular cultural formations. We should start undertaking critical ethnographies[31] of archives themselves because such a lens might allow us to understand how access to materials is mediated in these sites. Lastly, a critical view of our narratives of archival research might help us become more aware of how we write about people who work within archives every day and make these spaces inhabitable for researchers.

In general, we need to account more account more for the labor carried out by archivists every day. We need to account for the material presence and practices of archivists[32]. As I have illustrated in the previous chapters of this dissertation, archives are not inert sites where documents are dumped: turning those documents into meaningful collections takes a great deal of work and time. Phaedra Pezzullo has pointed out that our experiences as tourists or visitors in different places are dependent on the labor of people who remain largely invisible to us. Similarly, as researchers, our success within archival spaces depends on the seemingly invisible labor of archivists. The debate between Fischer and Iles Papaioannou also illustrates that the

---

[31] This is a call that has already been issued by writers such as Charles Morris, Barbara Biesecker, Cara Finnegan etc.

[32] In Rhetoric and Composition, Shirley Rose and archivist Sammie Morris have already started this conversation in their recent article "Invisible Hands: Recognizing Archivists' work to Make Records Accessible" (2010). In this article, they work with James Berlin's papers at Purdue and create a portrait of how archivists process materials and create finding aids for those materials. They also make an argument for the importance of context in archival work. They point to the importance of building context for archival collections so that researchers are aware of the original circumstances under which particular archival materials were created. Awareness of context would also allow researchers to know more about the original creators/authors of archival materials.

work of the archivist and the historian are not the same: these two roles cannot be conflated[33].

While an archivist must utilize her power of interpretation as she describes and narrates the context surrounding the records in her care, she certainly cannot come to conclusions about the historical value of those records. Such historical value must be decided by individual researchers in the context of their own projects.

Next, Fisher and Iles Papaioannou help us re-assess how we conceptualize what is archival and what is historical. In the introduction to this dissertation, I argued that not all documents are meant to become archival. Similarly, not all archival documents have historical value. Documents become archival when they have been appraised to have possible value to future generations of researchers. Archival appraisal usually takes place once such documents are no longer being used or have not been in regular circulation for a long period of time. Such documents are then preserved as a collection that together communicate something about their creator or the organization they came from. Hence archival appraisal, description, preservation etc are processes of preserving documents in the context in which they were created. Certain documents are kept not because they are valuable in and of themselves, but because they provide supplementary information of some kind. In other words, an archival collection is a complex network of documents that depend on each other to be understood. Some of these documents become historical when they are used to interpret a larger cultural phenomenon. History is largely a matter of interpreting archival documents that work as clues to the past. During this interpretation process, some documents – such as the Leale Report about Lincoln's death - tend to stand out over others and are therefore deemed to have greater historical value.

---

[33] David Gold's essay in *Beyond the Archives* is a good illustration of such a conflation. The narrator in that essay is a researcher, and not an archivist and yet the title of the essay "The Accidental Archivist" suggests something entirely different and confusing.

Broadly, however, the two articles in *The Atlantic* also pose a larger question to those of us interested in archival research: how much do we really understand about how archives are constituted before we begin our work? More and more instructors in Rhetoric and Composition – at the graduate and undergraduate level – are requiring students to engage in some form of archival research. And yet, I am not sure we provide our students with enough information about what archival records are and how they function in this context. We've developed a great deal of instructional materials and resources when it comes to research in libraries, but we haven't done enough when it comes to archival research. This dissertation creates a better understanding of how archivists describe and catalog their holdings in order to help researchers. It also highlights the status of archival records as material objects rather that are cataloged in the context of their creation rather than as isolated artifacts. I believe even such a basic understanding of archival objects and catalogs is essential before we send our students out to do archival research. This awareness might help make archival research less frustrating for our students and for archivists.

When I call for a greater awareness of how archives are constituted, I am also calling for a greater awareness of their material realities. When I think about how I imagined archives when I started this project, I am keenly aware of how I had turned away from material archives towards more discursive or metaphorical archives. We also live in an age where almost everything is being deemed an "archive." In a recent issue in *Quarterly Journal of Speech* on the ACT UP movement, Charles Morris poetically writes:

> "In the cityscape of my queer mnemonic imagination there shines on a well-trod thoroughfare of quotidian lives an 'ACT UP lamp shop,' like the one that used to be on Hudson Street in New York: 'For several years its colorful street-front

windows have contained a constantly changing panorama of framed photos,

newspaper obituaries, and other mementos of local people who have died of

AIDS.' For me, the ACT UP lamp shop represents the HIV/AIDS archive; its

always shifting displays curated by archival queers appear in windows by which

we daily pass in village, town, and metropolis, always mingling among and

interrupting our preoccupations, always bringing forth some feeling or another,

naughty or noble, dark and light" (52).

I do not want to claim here that what Morris calls the "ACT UP" archive is not an archive at all.

As I have pointed out in this dissertation, there are many differing conceptions of archives, but

that does not mean that each of these archives can be easily conflated with one another. Here

Morris' conception of the ACT UP archive bears very little resemblance to some of the material

archives that we visit as researchers. In fact, Morris' archive functions more as a memorial. All

archives do have some memorial purpose, but memorials are curated differently for very

different audiences. Memorials often isolate particular objects and place them on display to

evoke –as Morris rightly points out- some feeling or reaction in the viewer. Archives, on the

other hand, do not necessarily isolate documents or artifacts: they collect and preserve them as

part of a larger whole so that they may together communicate something about the context of the

collection's creation. Archives often create exhibits that display parts of a larger collection, but

an exhibit is not an archive in the way archivists understand it.

The larger purpose of this dissertation has been to clarify how it is that archivists

understand archives. In order to do this, I analyzed archivists' material practices such as writing.

By turning to such practices, I have demonstrated that archives are constituted via a series of

unique communicative practices that are meant to capture an archival record's entire context,

materiality and identity. While writing is only one aspect of these communicative practices, archives depend on language to create context and meaning. Language mediates what gets represented in archival catalogs and finding aids. It mirrors the values of a given culture: when a particular cultural phenomenon or practice is suppressed to the extent that there are no words for it, archives mirror this reality as well. So for instance, given the absence of the word "lesbian" from mainstream culture a few decades ago, there were literally no archival records about lesbian lives. The absence of archival records created the reality that lesbians did not exist. Archives do influence this tautological cycle of cultural presence and erasure. As Joan Nestle explained to me, no archive is ever a comprehensive representation of the past. And no archive can ever be final arbiter of power. As Lacan and Foucault have explained, power always shifts and is never a stable formation. When cultural power shifts, so do archives. Such shifts in power allow archival records to be coded with vocabulary that was previously "forbidden."

In this dissertation, I have also tried to underscore the cultural nature of archival projects and also their utility in the construction of particular identities. Given that archives are used to mobilize particular formations of identity, issues of power can never be ignored in the study of these spaces: archives are always political, no matter if they are institutional or community-based. And yet, abstract questions of politics and power should not lead us away from the material spaces of archives: instead, we can learn a great deal about how institutions and communities manage their politics by looking at the concrete artifacts that they preserve and how they describe these artifacts. Archival description inevitably exposes how cultures create narratives around archival objects in order to preserve particular aspects of their identities. Indeed, archives help us understand that identity is a rhetorical process of embracing particular narratives and rejecting others.

In this dissertation, I have looked at a range of archives, including physical and digital archives. However, in each case, I have emphasized the materiality of these archives. That is, I have argued that each of these archives has a material presence even if they exist in the digital/virtual sphere. In general, our conversations about digital archival records need to emphasize their existence as material objects. The common conceit holds that if something is digital, it is also "dust-free" (Sullivan, Graban 2010). However, the notion that born-digital records are material objects has been an ongoing conversation within Archive Studies for a while. For instance, in a special issue of *Archivaria* (2011), digital archivists made the argument that there is a greater need to understand the internal structures of computers and electronic machines; such an understanding would allow us to see that born-digital records are material artifacts that are physically encoded within the micro-structures of computes. As Ciaran Trace explains: " If the [computer's] black box is opened for examination, we can find the equivalent of the record, the file folder and the filing cabinet, even if they exist at the most basic level as material traces in electronic and magnetic form. Indeed, as anyone who has opened a computer case recently will attest, even the dust is still there!" (27). The computer's hardware and software collude to create a material presence for the record. This awareness of the materiality of born-digital records seems to be missing in scholarship in a lot of fields, including Rhetoric and Composition. In the next stage of my work with archives, I hope to create an intervention that will allow researchers to think of born-digital records as material artifacts.

And what about me? Where do I stand at the "end" of this dissertation? Aside from being exhausted, I see this work opening out in several new ways. In general, do I know more about archives than I did almost a year and a half ago when I started this process? Yes. But I believe

there is so much more that I need to learn, read and understand. I am excited that this project has opened up possibilities for more learning and more research.

There are at least three strands that I hope to follow in the next phase of my life as a scholar. The first strand is the process through which archives build and sustain identities and communities. As a scholar working at the intersections of cultural rhetorics, historiography and rhetorical theory, I see this as a logical strand to follow. I also believe this dissertation has already laid that groundwork for it.

The second strand is one I have mentioned about: creating resources for scholars within rhetoric and composition that allows us to see digital archives and records as material artifacts. I believe such a view of digital records might help us create better methodologies for digital archival research.

The third strand pertains to my interest in better understanding the links between archives and writing. This dissertation has ironically taught me as much about writing as it has bout archives. I emerge from this process as a more careful researcher and writer, deeply aware of how my writerly choices create and impose particular narratives and identities about my chosen area of study. These are dilemmas that archivists grapple with on a daily basis. I hope to have more conversations with me about these ideas.

WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology." *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies.* 12: 4. (2006). 543 - 74. Web. <http://enculturation.gmu.edu/queer-rhetoric-and-the-pleasures-of-the-archive>

Alexander Jonathan and Jacqueline Rhodes. "Queer Rhetoric and The Pleasures of the Archive." *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing and Culture* 13 (2012). n.p. Webtext.

Archer, Louise. "'It's Easier That You're a Girl and That You're Asian': Interactions of 'Race' and Gender between Researchers and Participants." *Feminist Review* 72 (2002): 108-32. Web.

Barthelme, Donald. *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968. Print.

Biesecker, Barbara. "Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9.1 (2006): 124-31. Web.

Blair, Kristine. *Kristine Blair's Literacy Narrative. Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives.* N.p., 2008. Web. 25 June 2012. <http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/12>.

Brothman, Brien. "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice." *Archivaria* 32 (1991): 78-100. Web.

---. "Declining Derrida: Integrity, Tensegrity, and the Preservation of Archives from Deconstruction*." *Archivaria* 48 (1999): 64-88. Web.

Burton, Antoinette, ed. *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History.* Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.

Carruthers, Mary J. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture.* Cambridge [England: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.

Collins, Dana. "Performing Location and Dignity in a Transnational Feminist and Queer Study of Manila's Gay Life." *Feminist Formations* 24.1 (2012): 49-72. Web

Conference on College Composition and Communication Publications, 1957-. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Archives, n.d. PDF.

Cook, Terry. "The Concept of Archival Fonds and the Post-Custodial Era: Theory, Problems and Solutions." *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 24-37. Web.

Cruikshank, Julie. "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada." *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies.* Ed. Nancy Shoemaker. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

---. *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998. Print.

---. "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada." *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies.* Ed. Nancy Shoemaker. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Kindle.

Davy, Kate. "Cultural Memory and the Lesbian Archive." Eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan. *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. 128 − 135. Print.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Writing of History*. Trans. Tom Conley. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. Print.

Denecker, Christine, Kristine Blair, and Christine Tulley. "The Role of Narrative in Articulating the Relationship Between Feminism and Digital Literacy." *Stories That Speak to Us: Exhibits from the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives*. Ed. H. Lewis Ulman, Scott Lloyd DeWitt, & Cynthia L. Selfe. Logan, UT: Computers and Composition Digital Press, 2013. Web.

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever*: *A Freudian Impression.* Trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1996. Print.

Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 June 2012. <http://daln.osu.edu/handle/2374.DALN/12>.

"Donating Materials: Special Collection." *The Lesbian Herstory Archives*. LHEF, Inc, 2012. Web. July 2012. <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/supmater2.html>

Driskill, Qwo-Li. Yelesalehe hiwayona dikanohogida naiwodusv / God taught me this song, it is beautiful : Cherokee Performance Rhetorics as Decolonization, Healing, and Continuance*.* Diss. Michigan State University, 2008. Web.

Duff, Wendy, and Catherine Johnson. "Accidentally Found on Purpose: Information-Seeking Behavior of Historians in Archives." *The Library Quarterly* 72.4 (2002): 472-96. Web.

Duranti, Luciana. "Origin and Development of the Concept of Archival Description." *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 47-54. Web.

Eaves, Morris, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi, eds. *The William Blake Archive*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 June 2012. <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/>

---. *The William Blake Archive. What Do We Mean by an "Archive"?* N.p., n.d. Web. 25 June 2011. <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/archive.html>

---. *The William Blake Archive: Technical Summary*. *The William Blake Archive*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 June 2011. <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/public/about/tech/index.html>

Eliassen, Knut Ove. "The Archives of Michel Foucault." *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices*. Ed. Eivind Rosaak. Oslo: Novus, 2010. 29-53. National Library. Web. 25 July 2012.

Encoded Archival Description Application Guidelines: Version 1.0. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1999. Print.

Enoch, Jessica. "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chican Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35.3 (2005): 5 – 30. Web.

Feeney, Kathleen. "Retrieval of Archival Finding Aids Using World-Wide-Web Search Engines." *The American Archivist* 62.2 (1999): 206-28. Web.

Fischer, Suzanne. "Nota Bene: If You 'Discover' Something in an Archive, It's Not a Discovery." *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic Monthly Group, 19 June 2012. Web. 25 June 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/06/nota-bene-if-you-discover-something-in-an-archive-its-not-a-discovery/258538/>

Finnegan, Cara. "What Is This a Picture Of?: Some Thoughts on Images and Archives." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9.1 (2006): 116-23. Web.

Foucault, Michel, and Alan Sheridan. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon, 1972. Print.

Fredriksson, Berndt. "Postmodernistic Archival Science - Rethinking the Methodology of a Science." *Archival Science* 3.2 (2003): 177-97. Web.

Gold, David. "The Accidental Archivist: Embracing Chance and Confusion in HIstorical Scholarship." *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*. Ed. Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. 13-19. Print.

Greene, Mark. "The Power of Meaning: The Archival Mission in the Postmodern Age." *The American Archivist* 65.1 (2002): 42-55. Web.

Haas, Angela. *A Rhetoric of Alliance: What American Indians Can Tell Us about Digital and Visual Rhetoric*. Diss. Michigan State University, 2008. Web.

Ham, F. Gerald. *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*. Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 1993. Print.

Harris, Verne. "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa." *Archival Science* 2.1-2 (2002): 63-86. Web.

Head, Randolph. "Mirroring Governance: Archives, Inventories and Political Knowledge in Early Modern Switzerland and Europe." *Archival Science* 7.4 (2007): 317-29. Web.

Hedstrom, Margaret. "Archives, Memory, and Interfaces with the Past." *Archival Science* 2.1-2 (2002): 21-43. Web.

"History and Mission." *The Lesbian Herstory Archives*. LHEF, Inc, 2012. Web. Jan. 2012. <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/history.html>

Hoang, Haivan. "Asian American Rhetorical Memory and a 'Memory That is Only Sometimes Our Own." Eds. LuMing Mao and Morris Young. *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*. Logan, Utah: Utah State UP, 2008. 62-82. Print.

Holmes, Donna. "Passive Keepers or Active Shapers: A Comparative Case Study of Four Archival Practitioners at the End of the Nineteenth Century." *Archival Science* 6.3-4 (2006): 285-98. Web.

Jenkinson, Hilary. *A Manual of Archive Administration including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making,* Oxford: Clarendon, 1922. Print.

Kaplan, Elisabeth. "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity." *The American Archivist* 63.1 (2000): 126 - 151. Web.

Kirsch, Gesa. "Being on Location: Serendipity, Place and Archival Research." *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Processs.* Eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. 20-28. Print.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew. *Managing the Blake Archive. Romantic Circles*. University of Maryland, n.d. Web. 25 June 2011. <http://www.rc.umd.edu/dispatches/column7/>

---. *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008. Print.

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. Trans. Héloïse Fink, Bruce Fink, and Russell Grigg. New York: W.W. Norton &, 2006. Print.

Leon, Kendall. *Building A Chicana Rhetoric for Rhetoric & Composition: Methodology, Practice, & Performance.* Diss. Michigan State University, 2010.

"Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter." *Michigan State University Libraries*. Michigan State University, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2012. <http://magic.msu.edu/search~S39?/tlesbian+herstory+archives/tlesbian+herstory+archives/1,5,7 ,B/frameset&FF=tlesbian+herstory+archives+newsletter&1,1,/indexsort=->.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print

MacNeil, Heather. "Picking Our Text: Archival Description, Authenticity, and the Archivist as Editor." *American Archivist* 68 (2005): 264-78. Web.

---. "Trust and Professional Identity: Narratives, Counter-Narratives and Lingering Ambiguities." *Archival Science* 11.3-4 (2011): 175-92. Web.

Maher, William J. *The Management of College and University Archives*. Metuchen, NJ: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow, 1992. Print.

---. "Archives, Archivists and Society." *The American Archivist* 61 – 2 (1998): 252 – 265. Web.

---. "Interview with William Maher." Personal Interview. 10 Jan. 2011.

Matienzo, Mark (anarchivist). "library authority control is almost exclusively about control of names of bibliographic entities; archival auth focuses on context #naac2012." 21 May 2013, 8: 05 a.m. Tweet.

---."Contextual Futures: The Meaning, Structure, and Use of Archival Description." Digital Dialogues. University of Maryland, College Park. 08 Aug. 2012. Lecture. <http://mith.umd.edu/podcasts/contextual-futures-the-meaning-structure-and-use-of-archival-description/>

McKemmish, Sue, Shannon Faulkhead, and Lynette Russell. "Distrust in the Archive: Reconciling Records." *Archival Science* 11.3-4 (2011): 211-39. Web.

"Metadata." *Minnesota State Archives*. N.p., 18 Mar. 2003. Web. 25 Mar. 2012. <http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/metadata.html>.

Monahan, Jim, and Joan Nestle. "An Early Conversation about Gay and Lesbian Archives: From the Pages of The Gay Insurgent, 1978." *Outhistory.org*. Outhistory, n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2011.

Monberg, Terese. "Listening for Legacies; or How I Began to Hear Dorothy Laigo Cordova, the Pinay behind the Podium Known as FANHS." Eds. LuMing Mao and Morris Young. *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*. Logan, Utah: Utah State UP, 2008. 83-105. Print.

Morris, Charles E. "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; Or, The Archive's Rhetorical (Re)Turn." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9 – 1 (2006): 113 – 115. Web.

---. "Archival Queer." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9-1 (2006): 145 – 151. Web.

---. "ACT UP 25: HIV/AIDS, Archival Queers, and Mnemonic World Making." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 – 1(2012): 49 – 53. Web.

Morris, Sammie L. and Shirley K Rose. "Invisible Hands: Recognizing Archivists' work to Make Records Accessible." Eds. Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L'Eplattenier and Lisa

S. Mastrangelo. *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2010. 51 – 78. Print.

"NCTE/Conference on College Composition and Communication Publications, 1957- | University of Illinois Archives." *University of Illinois Archives*. University of Illinois, n.d. Web. 24 June 2012. <http://archives.library.illinois.edu/archon/index.php>.

Nesmith, Tom. "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives." *The American Archivist* 65.1 (2002): 24-41. Web.

---. "Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate: Some Thoughts on the "Ghosts" of Archival Theory." *Archivaria* 47 (1999): 136-50. Web.

Nestle, Joan. *A Restricted Country.* Ithaca: Firebrand Press, 1987. Print.

---. "The Will to Remember." *Feminist Review* 34 (1990): 86-94. Web.

---. *A Fragile Union.* San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. Print.

---. "Interview with Joan Nestle." Online interview. 27 Oct. 2011.

Octalog. "The Politics of Historiography." *Rhetoric Review* 7.1 (1988): 5-49. Web.

Octalog. "Octalog II: The (Continuing) Politics of Historiography." *Rhetoric Review*16.1 (1997): 22-44. Web.

Octalog. "Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography in 2010." *Rhetoric Review* 30.2 (2011): 109-34. Web.

Opp, James. "The Colonial Legacies of the Digital Archive: The Arnold Lupson Photographic Collection." *Archivaria* 65 (2008): 3-19. Web.

Papaioannou, Helena. "Actually, Yes, It *Is* a Discovery If You Find Something in an Archive That No One Knew Was There." *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic Monthly Group, 21 June 2012. Web. 25 June 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/12/06/actually-yes-it-is-a-discovery-if-you-find-something-in-an-archive-that-no-one-knew-was-there/258812/>

Pearce-Moses, Richard. *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. *Society of American Archivists*. Web. 20 Sept. 2011.

Pezzullo, Phaedra C. *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2007. Print.

Pitti, Daniel. "Encoded Archival Description An Introduction and Overview." *D-Lib Magazine: The Magazine of Digital Library Research* 5.11 (1999): n. pag. Web. <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/november99/11pitti.html>

Powell, Malea. "Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural Memory, Autobiography and Geography in Indigenous Rhetorical Histories." *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Processs.* Eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. 115-27. Print.

---. "Rhetorical Powwows: What American Indian Making Can Teach Us About Histories of Rhetorics." Hutton Lecture Series. Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. Nov. 2010. Lecture.

Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005. Print.

Reid, Graeme. "'The History of the Past is the Trust of the Present.': Preservation and Excavation in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa." Eds. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid and Razia Saleh. *Refiguring the Archive.* Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002. 193 – 208. Print.

Rhodes, Jacqueline, and Jonathan Alexander. "Queered." *Technoculture* 2 (2012): n. pag. Web. <http://tcjournal.org/drupal/vol2/queered>

Richards, Thomas. *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire.* London: Verso, 1996. Print.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Rossaak, Eivind. "The Archive in Motion: An Introduction." *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices*. Ed. Eivind Rossaak. Oslo: Novus, 2010. 11-26. Print.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. *Traces of the Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African-American Women*. University of Pittsburgh, Press: 1994.

Sassoon, Joanna. "Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction." Eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart. *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images.* New York: Routledge, 2004. 186 – 202. Print.

Sarris, Greg *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts.* Berkeley: University of California, P, 1993. Print.

Schellenberg, T. R. *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1956. Print.

Schwartz, Joan, and Terry Cook. "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." *Archival Science* 2.1-2 (2002): 1-19. Web.

Schwartz, Joan. "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Linguistic 'Othering,' and the Margins of Archivy." *Archivaria* 54 (2002): 142-71. Web.

---. "'Having New Eyes': Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power."*Archivaria* 61 (2006): 1-25. Web.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, and Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001. Print.

Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.

Stewart, Kathleen. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton, 1996. Print.

Stoler, Ann. "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance." *Archival Science* 2.1-2 (2002): 87-109. Web.

Sullivan, Patricia, and Tarez Graban. "Digital and Dustfree: A Conversation on the Possibilities of Digital-Only Searching for Third-Wave Historical Recovery."*Peitho: A Publication of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition* 13.2 (2012): 2-11. Web.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.

Thistlethwaite, Polly. "Donating Your Collection to the Archives." *LHA Newsletter* 15 (Jan. 1995): 4-5. Print.

"The Lesbian Herstory Archives." *The Lesbian Herstory Archives*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2011. <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>.

"'The Lesbian Herstory Archives Virtual Tour: The Archives By Floor'" *The Lesbian Herstory Archives*. LHEF, Inc, n.d. Web. 7 Sept. 2012. <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/tourfloor.html>.

Trace, Ciaran. "Beyond the Magic to the Mechanism: Computers, Materiality, and What It Means for Records to Be 'Born Digital'" *Archivaria* 72 (2011): 5-27. Web.

Tschan, Reto. "A Comparison of Jenkinson and Schellenberg on Appraisal." *American Archivist* 65.2 (2002): 176-95. Web.

Tuhiwai-Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin: Otago UP, 2006. Print.

Ulman, H. Lewis. "Reading the DALN Database: Narrative, Metadata, and Interpretation." *Stories That Speak to Us: Exhibits from the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives*. Site designed by Daniel Carter. Ed. H. Lewis Ulman, Scott Lloyd DeWitt, & Cynthia L. Selfe. Logan, UT: Computers and Composition Digital Press, 2013. Web.

Vance, Carole S. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984. Print.

Villaneuva, Victor. "Memoria Is a Friend of Ours: On the Discourse of Color." *College English* 67.1 (2004): 9-19. Print.

Walch, Victoria, Marion Matters, and Stephen Miller, comps. *Standards for Archival Description: A Handbook*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1994.*Http://www.archivists.org/catalog/stds99/*. The Society of American Archivists. Web. 25 Mar. 2012. <http://www.archivists.org/catalog/stds99/>.

Wu, Hui. "Historical Studies of Women Here and There: Methodological Challenges to Dominant Interpretive Frameworks." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (2002): 81-98. Web.

Yakel, Elizabeth. "Archival Representation." *Archival Science* 3.1 (2003): 1-2. Web.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2005. Print.