The archives industry perspectives on *Significance* as a collections management tool

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Introduction

Archival records[2], no matter what their format, do not exist as isolated individual objects. Their authenticity and their meaning are dependent on their provenance and their context. Their context, and thus their usefulness as evidential records, is demonstrated and preserved by ensuring they are retained wherever possible in the original order in which they were created or collected by the creator of the body of records under consideration, be that a person or an organisation. Where original order has been lost, or appears to have been lost, it is still the archivist's responsibility to do as much as possible to:

- document the order in which the records were found; and
- re-establish that order, either intellectually through documentation or physically, whichever is deemed more appropriate.

Where it is best to physically separate records in various formats for preservation storage purposes, original order must still be intellectually preserved through documentation.

Thus, while specific items in an archive may increase the significance of the whole, it is never appropriate to select an item, for example a single photograph or a document containing the signature of a significant person, and add it to another collection to stand alone. An example of the scandalous consequences of taking a photograph out of context and misusing it as an information object is provided by the 'Children Overboard' incident. Sue McKemmish (2005) provides an excellent analysis of this incident. If separated from their context, it is inevitable that records become vulnerable to use as agents of misinformation and manipulation. They only maintain their integrity if they have been kept in their original order, preserved within their context and therefore remain authentic and reliable traces of transactions. In exploring the archival nature of photographs and arguing for their documentation and treatment as archival records, Joanna Sassoon noted that:

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[2] 'Archival' is defined by Pearce-Moses in his *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* as: "Having enduring value; permanent." He adds a note: The use of archival[2] to denote records whose content has been appraised as having enduring value is fairly standard. Some archivists prefer the phrase 'enduring value' to 'permanent' when describing archival records, but permanence remains part of the vernacular understanding of the term (Pearce-Moses, 2005).

> In essence the challenge to those documenting collections is to move from understanding a photograph as a transparent representation of the truth towards an approach where the history of the truth of the image - the relationship between the structures which have served to create, authenticate and preserve an image - can be traced (Sassoon, 1998: 8).

In the context of private archives, the removal and return of Australia's earliest playbill from a Canadian scrapbook to Australia was less politically charged but no less an archival crime in terms of the removal of this item from its broader context of preservation.

It is for the reasons very briefly outlined above that archivists, represented by the International Council on Archives, expressed concerns about the *Memory of the World Register* (established in 1992), which sought to identify individual *documents* of significance.

> Many archivists have ethical objections to the principle of selecting a few items from groups of records, which have already been judged to merit permanent preservation in their entirety on the grounds of their enduring historical value. The notion of memory does not make sense if these documents are considered in isolation from the total fonds of which they are an integral part (ICA, 2007).

Since meetings in Pretoria in June 2007, UNESCO has sympathetically acknowledged the ICA position that the archives held in the national archives and other archival institutions of the world constitute an important part of the memory of the world. This important acknowledgement does not prevent particular archives from being singled out for inclusion in the register, but the examples that follow are provided because they are nominated not just for individual publications or films or one or two documents that have been singled out as particularly 'significant', but entire archives, kept together as evidence of an entire life's work or social phenomenon. Australian examples on the register include the Mabo Case Manuscripts, held by the National Library of Australia; The Convict Records of Australia, held in collections both in Australia and Britain. Examples from Sweden on the register include the Astrid Lindgren Archives; the Alfred Nobel Family Archives; and the Ingmar Bergman Archives (Unesco, 2007). These archives gain their meaning from the interactive relationship between the context, the content and the form of the records they contain.

Provenance

Context, content and structure are three crucial elements that underpin archival understanding of provenance. Pearce-Moses (2005) defines provenance as a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that and created or received the items in a collection. The **principle of provenance** or the *respect des fonds* dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context.

Citations used to extend the definition include Henson (1993: 67):

> This principle holds that that significance of archival materials is heavily dependent on the context of their creation, and that the arrangement and description of these materials should be directly related to their original purpose and function.

However Duranti (1998: 177), who is also cited, criticises a straightforward dependence on this view of provenance:

> The principle of provenance, as applied to appraisal, leads us to evaluate records on the basis of the importance of the creator's mandate and functions, and fosters the use of a hierarchical method, a 'top-down' approach, which has proved to be unsatisfactory because it excludes the 'powerless transactions,' which might throw light on the broader social context, from the permanent record of society.

Joanna Sassoon (2007) explores recent developments and explorations of the concept of provenance:

> Provenance is a dynamic concept. We have moved beyond simply identifying who created the body of records through nominating the single person or corporate body as creator, to understanding that relationships between the creator and the records need to be documented (Hurley, 1998). But does provenance only happen once, is it exclusive, and what other ways are there of thinking about provenance?

> Tom Nesmith (2007) takes a cross-cultural approach and encourages thinking about the provenance of winners' sources. Where, he asks, does our traditional idea of provenance leave the Indigenous archives of knowledge which are at the core of the archives of colonial Europeans? How can we think about documenting archives written *by* the winners but *containing* the knowledge of Indigenous people?

> These questions require us to shift our ideas about provenance to be more inclusive of the complexity of the creation of archival sources and the multiple stories they contain. Within the 'Mandela Model'[3], the social causes and frameworks which influence the records creation are part of the societal provenance – for example, the systems of justice, politics and resistance. So if we *think* that we should document societal provenance in the moral defence of the record, then how do we go about *doing* this? (Nesmith, 2007)

> Chris Hurley's parallel provenance provides another way of thinking. Hurley sees provenance as more than simple relationships between units which tell stories of context and structure (Hurley, 2005: 79). Hurley writes that, 'Parallel provenance is neither a partial, nor a compromised, nor a winner's view. It recognises wholeness, contestation and ambiguity' (Hurley, 2005: 85). Thinking through why this kind of approach is important, Hurley writes that 'different perspectives on the past … provide … the whole contextual meaning, as well as enriched discovery pathways' (Hurley, 2005: 85).

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[3] Earlier in her article, Sassoon quoted the authors of *Prisoner in the Garden*, who suggest that:
> While a conventional archive has a single location and a finite number of documents, the Mandela archive is an infinite one, located in innumerable places, it is also not confined to documents, but includes sites, landscapes, material objects, performances, photographs, artworks, stories and the memories of individuals. (The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005: 35)

From this perspective, the Mandela archive contains a dispersed and infinite number of related objects in a wide range of tangible and intangible formats, and it paints a broad canvas of a cultural product called 'an archive' (Sassoon, 2007).

The 'Mandela Model' builds on the idea that provenance can be more than what Mandela himself created. It looks to the complex web of interrelated systems in which records *about* Mandela were created. Interrelated parts of this system include the dominant culture at particular moments itself, judicial systems, and systems of social resistance, and Truth and Reconciliation.

Our thinking about cross-cultural, multiple and parallel provenances, within a model which acknowledges relationships akin to an ecosystem, challenges us to devise documentation practices which acknowledge the original and multiple sources of knowledge in our archives. This thinking may well lead us towards a more sustainable moral defence of the archives. (Sassoon, 2007)

Jeannette Bastian also explores the idea of widening ideas about provenance in the paper she presented at the ICA CITRA meeting in Curacao (2006) in which she suggested "strategies both within the conventional construct of 'archives', as well as outside traditional concepts that make it possible to rethink archives and their relationships to the communities they represent".

Government Recordkeeping Authorities and Business Records

CAARA represents the national, state and territory recordkeeping authorities on the Collections Council of Australia[4]. Government agencies of all types have records services that advise on the development and management of systems for business records, working with the appropriate recordkeeping authority to ensure that their retention and disposal schedules and systems are compliant with archives legislation and the standards adopted and promulgated by the authority. The retention and disposal schedule identifies the record series that are archival and will be kept indefinitely and the appropriate retention period for those records that are not archival. Retention periods are often governed by legislation other than that relating specifically to archives legislation, such as acts governing the establishment and function of an agency, corporate activity, financial management, workers' compensation, privacy, freedom of information and many other matters. It is the responsibility of the professional recordkeepers to identify relevant legislation and ensure that retention and disposal schedules for records across the whole organization are compliant.

Although they are not governed by national or state recordkeeping legislation, businesses and not-for profit organisations must keep records in much the same way as government agencies to be compliant with specific legislation and to ensure their businesses remain viable. They often use similar recordkeeping strategies to government agencies. Some establish their own special archival repositories and allow access to researchers from outside their organisations. Archival records of some businesses or organisations that have made a significant contribution to society, through social or cultural contribution or economic development are deposited with or actively sought by institutions which collect private archives.

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[4] Members of the Council of Archives and Records Authorities of Australasia are: the Archives Office of Tasmania, Archives New Zealand, the National Archives of Australia, Northern Territory Archives Service, Queensland State Archives, State Records Authority of New South Wales, State Records Office Western Australia, State Records of South Australia, the Victorian Public Records Office and the Territory Records Office of the Australian Capital Territory.

Collecting Archives

There is a wide range of institutions that collect archives to preserve cultural heritage and contribute to the memory of society. Larger libraries have a long tradition of collecting personal archives, sometimes called manuscript collections. These archives often extend to the records of associations and enterprises of importance to the community, including service organisations, unions, churches and businesses. The National Library of Australia and the State Libraries all maintain such private archives, seeking and preserving the personal papers of eminent Australians and Australian non-government organisations.

Examples of other outstanding archival institutions in Australia include The Noel Butlin Archives Centre in Canberra, which collects business and industrial archives. and the prime ministerial libraries, the first of which was the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, notable for its innovative approach to developing and managing a digital collection and a virtual collection through links to significant archival records about John Curtin in other collections and for its extensive outreach and user education programs (Pederson, 2001). The Australian War Memorial is unique amongst Australian institutions in having the authority to collect both government and private archives which relate to war. This tradition is more prevalent in Canada, and is known as the Total Archives approach.

Appraisal

Appraisal is the process that archivists use to evaluate records. It is the methodology used in deciding which records have enduring value: the method for deciding what to keep or what to collect. Appraisal focuses on series of records which have been created and used, rather than individual items within these broader series. Approaches to appraisal are central to archival theory and influence contemporary practice. They are well developed particularly for government archives, but even in this context they are still the subject of debate. Given that not everything can or should be kept, it is the task of professional archivists to develop and implement appraisal methodologies that will identify and capture those records that will provide the best evidence of our society and culture. There are differences in approaches between government archives and other archival institutions due in part to the legislative environment and the lack of control over the records creation process in the private and business contexts. The professional importance of appraisal is emphasised in the Australian Society of Archivists *Appraisal Statement*. "This Statement by the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) -
- indicates what principles and practices guide recordkeeping professionals when undertaking appraisal,
- informs employers of standards of behaviour they can expect from recordkeeping professionals and contractors when undertaking appraisal, and
- sets out the standard of conduct which society and interested third parties can expect from recordkeeping professionals when undertaking appraisal.

  It is intended that this document will be the basis for the development and implementation of appraisal methodologies and practices by recordkeeping practitioners and organisations, and serve as a benchmark for judging appraisal practices" (ASA, 2007: 1).

Traditional appraisal

The traditional approach of the past for both government and private archives, usually in dealing with paper-based formats, was to leave appraisal until records were considered to be at the end of their active life. This post-hoc approach is a methodology for dealing with what survives and is still the strategy adopted for the preservation of private and business archives. A decision has to be made as to whether the surviving records are worth keeping longer and if so where they should be kept – which would be the most appropriate repository organisation. This traditional approach to appraisal is the one that most nearly matches the structured approach of assessing material against the *Significance* criteria. It is well described in the second edition of *Keeping Archives* (Ellis, 1993) and is centred around identification of:

- Evidential values, including administrative, financial and legal values, that provide evidence of the origins, structure, functions, policies and operations of an organisation or life and career of a person

- Informational or 'secondary' values for reference or research, deriving from the information the records contain, rather than the evidence they provide

- Historical values, arising from exceptional age and/or connection with some historical event or person.

Nevertheless Ham (1994) notes that:

> Determining significance is among the most elusive objectives of archival appraisal. To use Schellenberg's words, it is "in the realm of the imponderable." One criteria that can be used to define significance is how well the information in the record meets acquisition goals defined in the institutional collecting policy.

Furthermore, This end of life cycle model is most clearly unsustainable in digital environments for both private and government archives, where it is not feasible to sift through, appraise and dispose of digital records when they are no longer 'active', or too late to identify; let alone rescue records rendered inaccessible by their lack of physicality, poor system design and management and their dependence on software and hardware that is short-lived. This approach leaves archivists with no opportunity for input into the design of recordkeeping systems, nor the opportunity to appraise records as archival at or before their creation.

Modern recordkeeping appraisal methodologies

The national and states' government archives in Australia have developed strategic approaches to appraisal which reflect the role required of them by their enabling legislation. They act as recordkeeping authorities, taking an active role in government recordkeeping by creating policy for recordkeeping in their respective government's agencies, setting jurisdiction-specific standards and providing advice to agencies on professional records management strategies that will enable them to implement the policies and meet the standards.

The recordkeeping profession in Australia adheres to *AS ISO 15489-2002 Records Management* as the guiding standard for its work. This standard is the Australian endorsed version of the International Standard *ISO 15489*, which in turn was inspired by an earlier Australian Standard *AS4390-1996*, the world's first standard for records management (Stephens and Roberts, 1996). The standard is published in two parts: *AS*

ISO 15489.1 Records management – General and *AS ISO 15489.2 Records management – Implementation Guidelines*. Standards are, by their very nature, confined to definitions and principles. The application of standards in actual recordkeeping programs requires careful strategic planning and a thorough approach to implementation and regular evaluation as the process proceeds. The *Implementation Guidelines* in *AS ISO 15489.2* provides an 8-step guide to *Developing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems (DIRKS),* which is soundly based on systems planning and design methodology. A more detailed guide to working through the *DIRKS* process is available in the *DIRKS manual*, available on both the National Archives of Australia's and the State Records Office New South Wales' websites. The *DIRKS manual* was jointly developed by NAA and SRNSW and the DIRKS methodology was subsequently incorporated into *ISO15489*.

If they are to be of any use, guiding standards must be woven into practice. In Australia, each recordkeeping authority has endorsed *AS ISO 15489* and the jurisdiction-specific suites of standards and guidelines mentioned above are all cognisant with AS ISO15489. State and National records authorities undertake this advisory role, with most providing introductions to recordkeeping principles, the mandatory standards developed for their jurisdiction and advice on implementing those standards on their websites. State Records New South Wales and the National Archives of Australia both provide comprehensive information for recordkeepers in government agencies in the sections of their websites entitled *Recordkeeping* and *Records management* respectively. The NAA's (2003) document entitled *Why records are kept* clearly sets out their approach to appraisal and the five objectives used to evaluate whether records should be retained as national archives. The Victorian Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) website is another provider of a comprehensive suite of standards, together with a toolkit and guidelines for their implementation. The VERS suite consists of a standard for *Management of electronic records*, a set of specifications for system requirements, metadata, long-term preservation formats, the electronic record format and export of electronic records. Each *Specification* has an associated *Advice*, providing guidelines for implementation.

Government agencies may not destroy records without the approval of their respective archival authority. This is generally done by the approval of retention and disposal authorities which may be specific, applying to the business records of a government agency; or to groups of agencies which all undertake a common function, for example cemetery boards, schools or hospitals; or they may be general disposal authorities, ie applying across all agencies for common functions such as financial records, human resources records and so on. These functions-based records retention and disposal authorities are the basic tool for appraisal of government archives in Australia.

This functional approach is an important aspect of capturing and documenting the context of archives. Joan Schwarz makes an important point about functional context in her article *We make our tools and our tools make us* when she comments:

> …photographs are documents, created by a will, for a purpose, to convey a message to an audience. To understand them as the product of actions and transactions, either bureaucratic or socio-cultural, we must return them to the action in which they participated. It is their functional context that transforms photographic images into archival documents (Schwarz, 1995:42).

She emphasises this point later in the article, pointing out that:

> archival values reside in the inter-relationship between photographs and the creating structures, animating functions, programmes and information technology that created them. It is for this very reason that we must preserve the functional context which transforms the photographic images into photographic documents (Schwarz, 1995: 50)

Although she is discussing photographs as archival records, her comments about the relationship between function and context are applicable to archival records in all formats. Terry Eastwood makes the point more succinctly when he writes: "the original purpose of an archive is forever part of its meaning" (Eastwood, 1992: 73)

When appropriate, records identified as archival in the retention and disposal authorities may be transferred to the state archival authority or the National Archives of Australia for permanent storage, which may be in a physical or a digital repository. Alternatively, archival records which are still regularly used by the agency are kept in the agency. Their location is not an issue in defining their archival nature: archival records are archival from the moment of their creation, or even before creation, because the function itself will have been identified in the retention and disposal schedule as one that generates records of enduring value.

Records in most organisations are now created and managed digitally. This in itself requires that archival records are identified before creation. Digital records are highly dependent on the systems that created them, so archivists must take an active interest and role in design and implementation of recordkeeping systems and records creation rules. This involvement at the front end of recordkeeping systems design is essential to ensure that systems include the necessary design criteria for ensuring that records produced in them can be verified as authentic, reliable and therefore evidential. Part 2 of *AS-ISO 15489* and the *Dirks manual* provide a methodology for ensuring that systems are appropriately designed and implemented in such a way that the records produced and kept in them can be trusted.

In the case of digital archives, strategies must be in place to capture, preserve and accumulate metadata in compliance with an appropriate recordkeeping metadata standard. Capturing and managing metadata is an essential strategy in managing electronic records for present and future access. Because records must provide evidence, that is they must conform to standards acceptable as evidence in courts of law, recordkeeping metadata must be able to provide information that demonstrates that a record is the authentic record and has not been altered or tampered with in any way. To ensure this, recordkeeping metadata sets must provide more information than that available in both the Dublin Core set and the AGLS set. A collaborative Recordkeeping Metadata Project set out to provide a comprehensive specification that could be understood within and beyond the recordkeeping metadata community. It focused on records produced and maintained in an electronic networked environment. The Project was led by Sue McKemmish at Monash University and including as industry partners the National Archives of Australia, State Records Authority New South Wales and the Australian Council on Archives / Australian Society of Archives Descriptive Standards Committee.

The *Recordkeeping Metadata Schema (RKMS)* produced by the Project did something much more important than provide a set of metadata elements. Rather than treating records as "passive, document-like information objects", it viewed them through the perspective of the Records Continuum theoretical model as:

> "active participants in business processes and technologies, dynamic objects which need to be associated throughout their life span with ever broader and richer layers of contextual metadata in order to maintain their reliability and authenticity, and to be meaningful and accessible through time and space"(McKemmish et al, 1999).

The *RKMS* is a highly structured schema that documents a complex and continually growing set of contextual relationships and groups metadata into subcategories about:

1. Business, defined in a very broad way to include all kinds of organisational and social activity;
2. The agents or people conducting or involved in the business
3. The records; and
4. The relationship of each of the above to business recordkeeping.

It provides a standard for developing other recordkeeping metadata standards and the RKMS framework acts as a metadata mapping tool. It is an overarching standard that can be used to map fields of other metadata standards to the very comprehensive RKMS Metadata Schema. Thus it is an aid to translating *between* metadata sets, or in metadata terminology, for providing crosswalks. One of its uses is as a tool when migrating records from one system to another. The results of this research were reported by Sue McKemmish, Glenda Acland, Nigel Ward and Barbara Reed in *Describing records in context in the Continuum: The Australian recordkeeping metadata schema* (1999).

A further project undertaken by the Records Continuum Research Group, entitled *Clever metadata* aims to solve problems associated with implementing recordkeeping metadata standards, using a principle expressed as "Create once, use many times". When systems rely on the manual addition of metadata to records, the resulting metadata quality can be very variable, or it may not be added at all if the process is avoidable by busy records and website creators. Aspects of this research project have been reported in two articles in *Archival science* by Joanne Evans et al (2005; 2004).

In summary, government archives in Australia use strategic tactics for appraisal that are driven by centrally developed policies, standards and tools. Their strategies are largely based on analysing the functions of government agencies and appraising those functions and the activities undertaken to fulfil them, rather than taking a 'bottom-up' approach to examining and appraising the records themselves. Nevertheless, a criticism of this approach to appraisal is that it is driven by individual agencies' views of and needs for their own business recordkeeping, rather than providing an appropriate overview of the functions of the government as a whole.

Macroappraisal is a methodology developed for appraising government records that attempts to capture the significant activities of government and its interaction with the society in which it exists. That is, it attempts a more wholistic and strategic approach to appraisal of government records. Macroappraisal adds a layer of appraisal methodology that sits above the appraisal of individual agencies' functions through the use of

retention and disposal authorities outlined above. Terry Cook, a leading developer of macroappraisal theory and methodology, sets it out as follows:

"… macroappraisal assesses the societal value of both the functional-structural context and work-place culture in which the records are created and used by their creator(s), and the interrelationship of citizens, groups, organizations – ''the public'' – with that functional-structural context" (Cook, 2005).

Candace Loewen summarised the macroappraisal methodology in her editorial introduction to the special issue of *Archival Science* in which Cook's reflective overview appeared:

> ….macroappraisal's main characteristics are the following: it is both theory and strategy; it involves a top-down approach; it is research-based; it demands an analysis of functions (structures) before records; archival value is primarily found in the evidence of functions; representations of contemporary society form the documentary heritage; future researcher use is unimportant; and ''hot spots'' are found in the interaction between citizen and state. (Loewen, 2005: 94)

None of the Australian government recordkeeping authorities have implemented a macroappraisal strategy, although Adrian Cunningham and Robyn Oswald (2005) documented an account of the National Archives of Australia's project to explore a macroappraisal methodology for Australian Commonwealth records.

Although one traditional appraisal criterion for records may be their informational content, the purpose of that criterion is not to second-guess how records may be used in the future. Most importantly macroappraisal does not seek to predict future possible uses of records, it attempts to provide an authentic evidential record of the functions of government. "The best archivists can do is to acknowledge their position in the social reality in which they live, articulate their assumptions and work within those documented boundaries" (McKemmish, Reed & Piggott, 2005).

A strategic 'top-down' approach to appraisal of private archives is the Minnesota Method, so-called because it was developed by the Minnesota Historical Society. It is described in an essay by Mark A. Greene and Todd J. Daniels-Howell (1997). In a review of the anthology that contains the essay, *The records of American business*, Randall C. Jimerson gives an excellent succinct description of the methodology:

> The "Minnesota Method" they developed is based on the assumption that "all archival appraisal is local and subjective" (p. 162), but that, through careful analysis of both records creators and the records themselves, archivists can establish appraisal and selection criteria that are "rational and efficient relative to a specific repository's goals and resources" (p. 162). The strategy they propose includes: defining a collecting area; analyzing existing collections; determining the documentary universe, including relevant government records, printed and other sources; prioritizing industrial sectors, individual businesses, geographic regions, and time periods from which records will be sought; defining functions performed by businesses and the collecting levels needed to document major functions; connecting documentary levels to priority tiers; and updating this process every three to seven years. They outline priority factors used in making these decisions, documentation levels, and decision points to refine the priority levels. This Minnesota Method combines features of archival

approaches to collection analysis, documentation strategy, appraisal, and functional analysis. … The essay's greatest value, however, is in outlining the complex issues that must be addressed in making appropriate and effective decisions regarding archival selection and acquisition. (Jimerson, 1998)

Other modern appraisal approaches also include active collecting projects and documentation strategies. These strategies aim to create or redress the existing archival records through active intervention in the traditionally passive approaches to the collecting of private archives, and work towards the specific creation or collecting of records to document recognised silences which are a natural consequence of passive collecting strategies. Documentation projects use strategies such as gathering oral histories, written records and visual records created by filming current events. Examples include building an 'archive' for minority groups who are either neglected in official records or who feel that they are poorly or partially represented, or entirely misrepresented; or government documentation strategies such as those adopted by the National Archives of Singapore. This has been an approach adopted by social historians since the 1970s, and among the archival theorists exploring this phenomenon and its implications for theory and definitions of archival provenance are Jeannette Bastian and Andrew Flinn.

Collecting archives, whose acquisitions policies aim to preserve cultural heritage which complement the memories contained in government or business records, must increasingly deal with records that have been created in a wide range of digital software and hardware environments, as well as those on the paper-based formats that have traditionally been the focus of their collections. Whether they are collecting the records of authors, people who are eminent in their target community, sporting or community service associations, or individuals' personal and family histories, all are now likely to be created and kept on a computer. The challenge for traditional collecting archives is to move away from a paper worldview, in which even digital objects are versions of static traditional paper formats and prepare to manage the products of the technological revolution that is transforming the way we think and work and consequently transforming the formats of records we generate. Thus collecting archives must also adopt the modern appraisal methodologies that require planning at or before creation of the records in order to ensure that they can be captured along with the metadata that provides evidence of their context and authenticity.

Documenting documentation and professional accountability
Issues surrounding the accountability of archivists themselves for the decisions that have been made and their diligence (or the lack of it) in documenting those decisions have been raised by Chris Hurley and Joanna Sassoon. Hurley asks:

- How do archivists document and account for their decisions about what is kept and not kept, what is collected or rejected?
- Are these strategies adequate?
- To whom should archivists be accountable?
He further notes:
- There is no 'forum' in which archivists are accountable for appraisal;
- There are no criteria … by which their actions can be judged (Hurley, 2005, p.230).

In institutions where choice of what to preserve lies outside legislative purview and formal and documented processes of retention and disposal schedules, collecting processes do not always leave an accountable audit trail. Joanna Sassoon has argued that in order to understand the way that private archives are constructed that it is important to 'penetrate the internal operations of institutions in order to gain insight into how and why decisions relating to the selection and acquisition of the raw materials of history are made'. However, the difficulty is that 'few archival institutions have a history of thoroughly documenting how selection decisions are made, much less recording the rejection of materials or explaining their weeding policies' Sassoon (2004: 41). Documenting these decisions in both the government and private contexts (when it is done) provides an essential layer of information about custodial context and through that enables insights into the social, institutional management and economic drivers that influenced them.

This is an issue that writers of *Significance 2.0* should also consider. Decisions about 'significance' must also be documented in such a way that future professionals, users and historians of institutional practice can see the drivers for the decisions taken, the reasoning behind the strategies and decisions adopted and thereby provide explanation as to why the collections silence or privilege specific kinds of stories.

Conclusion and Recommendations

> Archives constitute the memory of nations and of societies, shape their identity, and are a cornerstone of the information society. By providing evidence of human actions and transactions, archives support administration and underlie the rights of individuals, organisations and states. By guaranteeing citizens' rights of access to official information and to knowledge of their history, archives are fundamental to democracy, accountability and good governance. (ICA, nd)

Archives are by definition 'significant', as pointed out in the quote above from the ICA website and argued in the case put by the ICA to Unesco in 2007. However, the range of approaches to appraisal outlined in this paper and the lively debate that surrounds it point to the fact that the results of appraisal inevitably vary in quality. Because appraisal is itself a complex process, seeking to capture and document archives with all their meaning derived from context and structure as well as their content, archives will not be easy to insert into the *Significance 2.0* framework. Nevertheless, it is important that archives are included in the *Significance* framework for a range of reasons.

- First, many small cultural heritage collections that include archival records in their collecting policies are run by, or are dependent upon, volunteers. We know that a large proportion of the archival collections across Australia, in number at least, are part of museum collections or are consciously hybrid collections that are run on museum lines. This means that the primary target audience for *Significance*: small, often volunteer-run, museums; really need good guidance on understanding the thinking that underpins developing and managing their diverse collections that include archives. These volunteers need a clearly set out handbook to guide them. It may be that *Keeping Archives* 3rd edition will be particularly helpful to the authors of *Significance 2.0,* as a source to assist them to embed the archival way of thinking into their work, or at the very least as a

handbook that can be recommended for more detailed guidance on managing archival collections.

- Second, traditional appraisal methods used by many collecting archives find a worthwhile near-match between the approach they use and the *Significance* principles, so there is a partial fit. However, the wider archival profession cannot offer a simple equivalent to Significance. Rather they have a range of methodologies and approaches to choose from according to context and wider range of methodologies cannot be ignored in an attempt to squeeze archives into a one-size-fits all framework.

- Finally, the notable proportion of small archival collections that exist within museums will find it advantageous to use the same regimes to value their collections as are used to value collections of cultural heritage objects.

Thus, *Significance 2.0* must ensure not only that it includes archives, but that it gives equal weight to archival appraisal and management decisions as that given to the *Significance* framework. It will be a challenge to do so, but the *Significance 2.0* framework will be stronger and more useful if the challenge is met.

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