

# Adventure, Inquiry, Discovery: CLIR-Mellon Fellows and the Archives

Proceedings from the CLIR-Mellon Fellows Reunion  
Symposium, May 2022

Yuting Dong, R. A. Kashanipour, Joana Konova, Seth Stein LeJacq, Ania Nikulina,  
Diane Oliva and Naomi Ruth Pitamber, editors



Council on  
Library and  
Information  
Resources

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## Foreword

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### **Twenty Years of the CLIR-Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources: The Past, Present, and Future of the Archive**

*R. A. Kashanipour, Joana Konova, and Naomi Ruth Pitamber*

What is an archive? How does its structure reflect larger societal trends and power dynamics—those stemming from the time of its inception and those at play today? Do archival holdings follow the systemic rules, the narratives they are tasked to produce, or can they elude and subvert those rules when rigorous critical inquiry exposes that which is missing, silenced, and rhetorically or physically displaced? How do the physical properties of archival holdings produce meaning as they exhibit traces of interactions that happened several decades or centuries ago and attest to the sanctions, affinities, and often very personal emotional responses of former generations? What conservation strategies can strike the right balance between preserving these holdings for future generations and encouraging interaction with them here and now? How do physical holdings differ from their digital doubles? Is digitization the answer to the threat of the physical demise of archives due to climate change and natural and political catastrophes? What can the future archive look like?

These are the central questions raised by the essays in this collection. The insights offered by the authors reflect a variety of expertise and perspectives stemming from their experiences as recipients of the CLIR-Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources.

Between 2002 and 2019, the CLIR-Mellon fellowship supported over 250 doctoral students conducting intensive archival research on six continents, in 86 countries, and at over 1,800 separate sites. This fellowship allowed for innovative research using historical sources, often in remote and underused archives. With as much as twelve months of funding and support from CLIR, fellows were afforded time to explore understudied materials and directly engage with archivists, administrators, and other researchers. For many, these immersive encounters proved to be transformative and career-shaping experiences that influenced their research and teaching well beyond the fellowship period.

Before embarking on their research trips, fellows prepared carefully, locating archives and holdings that promised the right evidence for their research questions; establishing contact with archivists and institutions; acquiring skills necessary to conduct their research (e.g., skills in paleography or art handling or advanced proficiency in the languages spoken at the research sites or used in the media they wished to consider); and grappling with the overriding questions about the structure and politics of the archive. Yet, their experiences on-site managed to surprise them despite careful preparation. The evidence they found was not always the evidence they expected to find. And with that change came the realization that initial premises needed to be revisited, and initial questions needed to be refined or redefined.

Unlike the short research trips that some doctoral programs may be able to sponsor, the generous tenure of the CLIR-Mellon fellowship allowed fellows the time to make conceptual adjustments, to follow through by tapping into alternative sources, or to ask questions about what was missing. The extensive on-site experience included fortuitous and extremely fruitful conversations with archivists and fellow researchers from around the world, which led fellows to consider new areas, sometimes decisively changing the original project and sometimes repositioning it in a way that resulted in a product far more genuine and inclusive than could ever have been imagined back home. This publication is about these surprises and discoveries, and as the program that made these findings possible comes to a close, this publication reflects on past experiences while charting paths for the future. Inevitably, there is some sense of nostalgia and much anxiety about the future and even the present state of the archive. Yet the overriding emotion accompanying this publication is the deeply felt gratitude for this program and the officers behind it.

Since the program's inception in 2002, the evolution in technology—particularly the democratization of technology and photography via handheld devices and the increasing availability of wireless internet—

has empowered researchers and archivists alike and changed the way we think of information transfer. While these changes in technology invite the question of what archives should look like in the future, the very survival of archives is at risk in areas affected by climate change, war, and underfunding.

The goals of the CLIR-Mellon fellowship program were fourfold:

- Help junior scholars in the humanities and related social sciences gain skill and creativity in developing knowledge from original sources.
- Enable dissertation writers to do research wherever relevant sources may be, rather than just where financial support is available.
- Encourage more extensive and innovative uses of original sources in libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and related repositories in the US and abroad.
- Capture insights into how scholarly resources can be developed for access most helpfully in the future.

The fellows worked with a very broad and extremely productive understanding of what constitutes original sources—written texts, material records, artifacts, artworks, architecture, photography, maps, sound and video recordings, ephemera, and more. Moreover, the CLIR-Mellon fellowship supported projects that might be considered too costly or based on archives deemed risky, avant-garde, cross-disciplinary, difficult to access, unwieldy, uncatalogued, or unknown. Fellows probed new avenues of history and literature and brought original sources into a variety of fields such as anthropology, dance, and musicology. Following research questions across national and disciplinary boundaries, CLIR-Mellon fellows served as pioneers in a variety of fields and topics, such as critical archival theory; the history of environmental change; and histories of race, gender, sexuality, and social justice. The CLIR-Mellon fellowship helped to expand ideas about the value of archival research for the advancement of the humanities and social sciences; it also facilitated ongoing dialogues about the mutual reshaping of both researcher and archive in the digital age.

In 2022, alumni from across the United States and abroad reunited virtually and in person at a symposium that brought together fellows from different cohorts, program officers, and mentors to celebrate and discuss the program's accomplishments. Participants also reflected on changes and trends in archival research over the past two decades and considered the most pressing future priorities for archives and archival research. They shared the consensus that in-person research



using original sources must continue even as they acknowledged that the conclusion of this fellowship program may narrow possibilities for such research.

This publication highlights original work performed under the aegis of the CLIR-Mellon fellowship over the past two decades. It captures the fellows' thoughts about how archival research can enrich many areas of lived experience. The essays in this collection evolved from papers presented at the 2022 symposium, organized by chapters to highlight the major questions and themes that emerged from panels and discussion groups: archival approaches, narratives illuminated by the archives, teaching and the archives, current state of the archives, and the future of archival scholarship.

Thanks to the generous support of the Mellon Foundation, the CLIR-Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources has served a unique role in the world of the humanities. For nearly twenty years, this program transformed the professional development and, often, the personal lives of its participants. Moreover, the research it made possible shaped the way scholars considered and engaged with archival collections and objects. This volume seeks to honor that legacy and to explicate, collate, and share fellows' thoughts on archives, archival research, and researchers. It aims to provide a forum for fellows to show their gratitude for an extraordinary opportunity to work with staff, mentors, librarians, and cultural heritage practitioners all over the world.

# Chapter One: Archival Approaches

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## Within and Beyond Archives

*Yuting Dong*

This chapter features CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellows who understand and approach archival materials in entirely unique ways, collectively demonstrating that archives are multi-dimensional presences that bring the past, the present, and the future together. These fellows met archives in different surroundings—different countries, buildings, or digital discovery systems—and they creatively engaged with materials in different media, ranging from written documents to images, sounds, moving pictures, and even computer code. The authors also explored various formal and informal paths to unpack the mysteries within the archival space.

The authors approached both official and private archives with the understanding that official archives are highly political spaces in which those with authority can generate and stockpile knowledge crucial for maintaining political control. As the authors' experiences show, access to archives can be threatened by many factors. As **Lisa Hollenbach** points out in "Listening to Poetry," a lack of funding casts a dark shadow over future access to the audio archives she used. Changes in social, political, cultural, and even environmental practices will affect the level of resources available for archives, thereby limiting and potentially eliminating their availability over time.

Private individuals also carve out archival spaces to commemorate a family's prestige, showcase personal memorabilia, or satisfy the owner's artistic taste. There are convergences between private and public collections. In "Archival Work as Ethnographic Encounter?" **Belinda He** mentions that during her visits to China, she used official archives, private collections, and book markets. She found that the interplay between different types of collections endows materials with new meanings.

Often, it is necessary to consider not only the presence of archival sources but also the significance of the *absence* of particular kinds of voices in archival collections. The work of **Danielle Terrazas Williams** is one example of the kind of story that can be told when a researcher reads beyond archival traces to uncover lives and experiences that official records almost completely ignore. In some cases, authorities decide not only the type of documents open to the public but also how people can access them.

The authors engaged with a diverse range of archival materials but also faced unexpected challenges. Belinda He discusses how the denial of her request to replicate an image in color influenced her research. In “Coding National Identity,” **Ania Nikulina** shares how she accidentally came across crucial material tucked in a mislabeled folder. The source in this folder was “yellow, semi-transparent” and “looked much older” than the other materials filed alongside it. Instead of merely reading poetry, Lisa Hollenbach listened to most of her archival materials—recordings of poetry originally created for radio broadcasts. Hollenbach found listening in the archives to be a transformative experience for both her research and teaching.

This chapter also sheds light on how researchers approach archives via formal and informal channels, which are often influenced by racial and gender norms. In “Analog Archives,” **Kara Moskowitz** describes how she accessed an archive in Kenya through the influence of a key figure, Richard Ambani, who mediated between researchers, archivists, and physical materials. Ania Nikulina observes how archivists—especially female archivists—helped her to navigate through materials and finally brought her attention to the crucial piece of evidence for her project, the original libretto of *Lileya*, a choreographic record of a ballet in Ukraine.

The authors’ experiences not only offer inspiration for researchers wishing to engage with similar archives, but also show how researchers can creatively overcome restrictions and limitations. Frustrated by her unsuccessful attempts to access official archives in China, Belinda He trod a new path to study Chinese cinema by building connections with unofficial parties. She describes her approach as “friendship as a method.” Securing the help of allies in the archive, she was able to excavate official and crucial private voices in her research. In sharing their personal stories, the authors hope to inspire future researchers who face similar challenges.

## Listening to Poetry in the Radio Archive

*Lisa Hollenbach*

**Lisa Hollenbach** is assistant professor of English at Oklahoma State University. With the support of a 2013–2014 CLIR-Mellon fellowship, she conducted original source research on the recording and broadcasting of post-1945 American poetry by independent radio stations and record labels, visiting eleven archives in the United States, including the Pacifica Radio Archives in Los Angeles, the Archive for New Poetry at the University of California, San Diego, and the University of Maryland Mass Media and Culture Collections. Her first book, *Poetry FM: American Poetry and Radio Counterculture*, was published by the University of Iowa Press in 2023. Other scholarly publications related to this research have appeared in *American Literature*, *Modernism/modernity Print Plus*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Twentieth-Century American Literature*.

In September 2013, at the beginning of my CLIR-Mellon fellowship year, I spent several weeks at the Pacifica Radio Archives in Los Angeles, California, listening to archival radio recordings of poets and poetry. The first listener-supported public radio network in the United States, Pacifica Radio was founded in 1946 by a group of pacifists and poets; it first went on the air on Berkeley station KPFA-FM in 1949. It later expanded to four more independent stations (KPFK-FM in Los Angeles, WBAI-FM in New York, KPFT-FM in Houston, and WPFW-FM in Washington, DC), all of which are still broadcasting today.

When I arrived at the Pacifica Radio Archives, I knew that Pacifica had attracted many poets to its stations over the years. I also knew that the audio archive, housed above Pacifica station KPFK, included among its estimated 100,000 original recordings a sizable collection of historic poetry programming. I hoped that I would find material for the last chapter of my dissertation, and I did, thanks to the archival staff who helped me to find uncatalogued recordings, taught me how to use and even digitize reel-to-reel tapes, and generously shared their desk space with me. My experience at the Pacifica Radio Archives ended up determining both the direction of my research after the completion of my PhD and the subject of my book, *Poetry FM: American Poetry and Radio Counterculture*. Over the last decade, I have also seen public and scholarly interest in the histories of radio and poetry performance blossom, as new digital collections have emerged alongside a growing awareness of the need to preserve the decaying audio materials and under-resourced collections that document an endangered sonic heritage. Here, I briefly survey some of these trends as they affect the interdisciplinary study of

radio and literature and share a few insights from my own experiences of listening to—and teaching with—poetry in the radio archive.

### Recent Trends in US Radio Preservation and Research

It is an exciting time to study radio in the United States, and this is especially true for those of us interested in expanding knowledge about American radio's cultural history beyond the so-called "golden age" of the 1930s–1940s. More than a century after the onset of mass broadcasting, there is now a growing awareness of the vital urgency of preserving radio and recorded sound histories. CLIR has been a leader in these efforts by administering the *Recordings at Risk* and *Digitizing Hidden Collections* grant programs and by publishing reports on recorded sound preservation (e.g., Council on Library and Information Resources and Library of Congress 2010). In 2014, the Library of Congress established the Radio Preservation Task Force (RPTF) "to facilitate preservation of, research on, and educational uses of radio recordings held by archiving institutions and private collectors in the United States" (Library of Congress Radio Preservation Task Force). The RPTF has been instrumental in shifting the tide in radio preservation by building a consortium of researchers and archivists and by launching two digital humanities projects: the Sound Collections Database (a publicly searchable catalog of radio collections in the US) and the Sound Submissions Project (which will preserve donated digitized radio recordings in the Library of Congress's permanent digital archive). In the academic field of radio studies, the past decade has seen a reciprocal wave of new research, much of which has increasingly focused on recovering diverse radio histories, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and women's radio histories; local and community radio histories; transnational and postcolonial radio histories; and early radio histories as well as more recent histories of internet radio and podcasting.

These promising trends in the digital preservation and accessibility of historic audio, however, are countered by more worrying signs that reflect the ongoing challenges facing recorded sound archives, especially independent and community-based collections. Consider just one example from my area of research. In 2016, the Pacifica Foundation, responding to the network's serious debt crisis, instituted major budget cuts and staff layoffs at the Pacifica Radio Archives. These cuts led to Director Brian DeShazor's resignation and to the collapse of collaborative grant-funded initiatives that had been focused on cataloging and digitizing the archive's vast collection of reel-to-reel master audiotapes, which document more than seventy years of public radio history. The larger radio preservation community responded with alarm, and the leaders of the RPTF and the National Federation of Community Broadcasters issued open letters calling for Pacifica to transfer its

irreplaceable audio collection to an educational institution (Aguilar 2016; Shepperd 2016). As of 2022, however, the Pacifica Radio Archives is still maintained on a shoestring budget by a small, dedicated staff at its original location at the KPFF studios. Pacifica's continuing debt crisis puts the future of this collection at risk, and the archives' under-resourced *status quo* limits accessibility to one of the largest and most significant audio collections of radio history, social movement history, and, I would argue, literary history in the United States. I remain hopeful that collaborative efforts by scholars, archivists, communities, creators, and institutions like CLIR and the RPTF can improve the outlook for recorded sound and radio archives, including the Pacifica Radio Archives.

### Poetry Out of the Radio Archive

My own research is situated in the growing interdisciplinary subfield of literary radio studies, which explores intersections between literature and radio. In *Poetry FM: American Poetry and Radio Counterculture*, I tell the story of how poets helped to make Pacifica Radio into a progressive, alternative radio network by bringing experimental and radical poetry onto its airwaves. In the post-World War II United States, many poets sought to liberate poetry from the printed page and from the classroom by embracing poetry's oral roots and by utilizing new media to engage public audiences. *Poetry FM* argues that this renaissance in oral poetics both influenced and was influenced by the simultaneous emergence of public, underground, and community FM radio stations in the 1950s through the 1970s. Drawing on my research at the Pacifica Radio Archives and other media and literary archives, I highlight key moments and broadcasts from Pacifica's rich history of poetry broadcasting, including Allen Ginsberg's first radio performance of "Howl" for Berkeley station KPFA in 1956; Black Arts poet Amiri Baraka's early appearances on New York station WBAI in the 1960s; and poets' involvement in the groundbreaking feminist, gay and lesbian, and so-called "Third World" radio collectives that formed at Pacifica stations in the 1970s.

Listening to poetry in the radio archive changed the way I approach literary history, encouraging me to see (and hear) twentieth- and twenty-first century poetry as a multimedia genre that is embedded in political and social life in ways that belie dominant, perennial claims about the supposed cultural irrelevance of modern poetry. My research has also transformed my approach to teaching poetry. I conclude with one example. In an undergraduate course I teach at Oklahoma State University called "Listening to Contemporary Poetry," students collaborate over the course of the semester to produce a podcast series about post-1950 American poetry in performance. They explore digital collections of poetry recordings, conduct original and secondary source

research, learn skills in digital audio production and audio storytelling, and practice various methods for interpreting an audio text, including experimenting with “deformances” that technically manipulate a recording in order to open interpretive possibilities (MacArthur and Miller 2016). In the process, they become participants in a literary radio history that for more than a century has used audio media to circulate the sound of poetry. In my view, preserving literary radio histories is thus vital not only for remembering the past but for inspiring future creative possibilities.

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## Archival Work as Ethnographic Encounter?

Belinda Qian He

**Belinda He** is an assistant professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Program in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2018 and conducted research in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and the United States for her dissertation, "Expose and Punish: Trial by Moving Images in Revolutionary China and Beyond." She holds a PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from the University of Washington, Seattle.

I see my research trips in the past years as a way of challenging the very foundation of archival work, calling into question conventional assumptions about what it means to be an *archive*—at once fleeting and enduring—and how an image becomes a living archive. My archival work sought to give voice to the mute context behind archival access points; while these are shadowy sites, largely obscured or unseen, they expose more than conceal.

Scholars have widely cited Derrida's words in *Archive Fever* about archiving "[that] produces as much as it records the event" (Derrida 1995). Such a description of archiving points to the nature of knowledge production by archivists, librarians, news media, and professional institutes for archival preservation. I have always appreciated and benefited from archival research less as a project of fact-finding through textual examination and more as self-archiving coproduction with and among multiple stakeholders, and as a fundamentally ethnographic encounter—an active process defined by space, materials, and people. Such research consists not merely of ethnographic works and oral history interviews, but also archival research that is founded on friendships and human bonding. An ethnographic understanding of archival research honors the voices of the people with whom I speak within and beyond archival sites. It honors both the original and mediated voices of the archives themselves as well as the uncanny, parallel, and contradictory elements in my encounters with spaces, materials, and people. Three key terms help to organize my experiences of such archival work across different sites: *spatial exploration*, *file knowledge*, and *friendship as method*.

### Spatial Exploration

One of the most productive and memorable aspects of my archival research was spatial exploration. I engaged with various spaces: the



neighborhood of an archival site, the physical organization of holdings, and the material spaces that I occupied (work stations) and shared with others (communal spaces). As I explored archival sources, I also envisioned spaces within, beyond, and across archival texts as well as between the texts and people (what may be called an “inside-out” view of the archive). The archives turned out to be more than simply repositories for original sources; instead, they were sites for engendering spatial experiences.

Holding much potential for spontaneous detours and unexpected adventures, the local space around the archival site was crucial. I tried to see where and what I could eat in the vicinity of the archive while also noting other places (such as galleries, bookstores—particularly used bookstores, antique shops, movie theaters, and cafes) where I might relax after my visits to the archive. Talking to local people in these places was one of the most useful and interesting ways to learn about the place itself. In some cases, my curiosity about people’s perceptions of the archival site (either as a landmark or as a vernacular embodiment of common knowledge that was not to be commonly known) in the neighborhood led to unexpected conversations and, in turn, to more resources and connections. For instance, in the store next to a small archival site in Guangdong, I heard about a local community of private collectors, one of whom had worked for the archive I had visited; this person had contributed many items to a folk historical collection. Later I was able to find the collector’s anonymous online store and visit his place where I found useful booklets and photographs.

Some archival sites that I found helpful fit into mixed categories due to transformations over time: a former workers’ club that had become an industrial repository; a museum town that encompassed both a theme park and a cluster of nontraditional archives; flea markets or art studios that are also storage spaces for rare sources (daily objects and sound recordings); and a family database of trash footage and film stock. I was once brought to an amateur collector’s secret stockroom, which turned out to be their quiet office—the safest place to keep politically taboo materials. Apart from written sources in multiple physical sites, I also investigated online databases, oral histories, and other virtual archives (e.g., newsreel footage, photo essays, documentary clips, and audiovisual memoirs); these enrich and mediate the meaning of archival space.

### **File Knowledge**

Archival knowledge emerges not only from the files within the archive but also from the material encounters with the files and ways in which those encounters are organized and documented. As I dealt with countless hand-drawn or hand-written files and other physical artifacts yet to be digitally reproduced, I started to think about the kinds of media

that the *document* form had come to inhabit in a more refreshing and self-reflexive way. Material details—from water-stained paragraphs, faded footage, or misspelled words to the dust released as I flipped pages—all constituted the un-reenactable moments of my experiences in the archives. A mode of typological reflection on the archive emerged in my own field notebook as I noted institutional closures and restrictions of access to archival materials from a certain theme or period (e.g., 1949–1978); these notes inspired me to compile a list of potential replacement options. I shifted my focus from what was inaccessible to what was informally and alternatively available. Throughout the process, the notions of the archive, archival genres, and archivable categories remained in flux and were being redefined. I learned to cross the material and methodological borderline between the official and the unofficial and eventually got to work with a set of everyday objects as unconventional sources for my research. Those included ephemeral media such as popular prints, slides, newsreels, outtakes, home videos, vernacular photographs, stock images, and so forth. Many belong to the category of artifacts with orphan status (i.e., it is unclear who created them because the materials are either anonymous or credited as a collective work without individuals' names in the metadata). In the end, my exploration of access to, in, and through the archive, both materially and conceptually, constitutes a form of sensible, shared knowledge.

### Friendship as Method

Inspired by what anthropologist Priti Ramamurthy addresses as a possible research framework, I would like to suggest “friendship as a method” for archival work.<sup>1</sup> None of my research field trips would have been possible without friendships—not just with my initial friends, peers, colleagues, archivists, collectors, and librarians, but also with strangers who happened to become friends and their friend networks. For example, by chatting with a used bookseller, her friend, and another buyer at a flea market in Beijing, I luckily found some rare books I needed. Both the seller and buyer who shared their collecting experiences turned into friends and long-term interlocutors. I learned from their stories that archival work was not merely an object lesson but an affective practice of working through labor, failures, limits, emotions, relationships, community-building, and interpersonal dynamics.

Friendships taught me to question my own ongoing search for stories, storytelling, and self-narrations through the methodological lenses of the “popular” or the “unofficial.” One of the local archivists I met and exchanged materials with became a friend and decided to visit a museum

<sup>1</sup>I appreciated Ramamurthy's presentation about her work on male friendships in Delhi, India, and the follow-up group discussion, at a recent Society of Scholars meeting (University of Washington Seattle, October 16, 2019).

town with me as a tour guide. As we walked, she helped me connect with her colleagues and the villagers. Her description of the museum space “as a sort of self-customization and autobiography of the museum founder” was so compelling that it helped me to reflect more critically on the personification of alternative archival sites. The experience reminded me of the need to recognize the roles of ordinary people who are living bodies of memories labeled as “grassroots,” “folk,” “amateur,” or “personal”—all of which originate beyond the scope of the state, in the realm of *minjian* (literally, “among the people” in Chinese), or at a blurred boundary between the two. Without the friendships mentioned above, I could never have acknowledged the dynamics between the human and the nonhuman as key to my archival work, nor could I have continued problematizing the private museum as a testing ground for contradictions—a space that does not rely on the state for subsidies but is still subject to state/party oversight, containing silenced photos that speak up, lifeless objects with a public life, insentient texts that wonder and desire, and the embodied presence of absence.

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## The Capital of Free Women: Race, Legitimacy, and Liberty in Colonial Mexico

*Danielle Terrazas Williams*

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Imprisoned, the young and beautiful Soledad stood alone in a jail cell in the island fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, located just a few hundred yards from the shores of Veracruz. Accused of witchcraft, she awaited her fate. Rumors of Soledad’s otherworldly powers had flared before her arrest. People in her town of Córdoba had long believed that she had made a pact with the devil because the *mulata*’s youth never appeared to dim even as the years progressed. And, while she caught the eye of many a disappointed suitor, her life changed when the judge of Córdoba began to pursue her. Soledad rejected the powerful man’s advances, and, in retaliation, he reported her to the Holy Office of the Inquisition. Condemned for demonic communication, Soledad anticipated her punishment in the darkness of a damp chamber inside the fort. As dawn began to break, she found a piece of coal on the floor of her cell and set about drawing a small mural on the wall. When the guards finally checked in on Soledad, she was gone. All that remained was a charcoal image of herself sailing far away from San Juan de Ulúa and those who had sought to control her.

The most famous free Black woman in the history of central Veracruz, “the Mulata de Córdoba,” might not have existed at all. The story of Soledad’s life, unjust treatment, and eventual escape have been memorialized in books, paintings, statues, movies, and even in an opera. And yet, the lives of actual Black women in Veracruz have not garnered the visibility that the Mulata de Córdoba has inspired. While none of the free women examined in my book, *The Capital of Free Women: Race, Legitimacy, and Liberty in Colonial Mexico*, made quite as dramatic an entry onto the archival stage as Soledad, they nonetheless made history through their mobilization of capital.

<sup>1</sup>The text in this section is a lightly edited excerpt from the introduction to *The Capital of Free Women: Race, Legitimacy, and Liberty in Colonial Mexico*, which Terrazas Williams published in 2022.

Often only one generation removed from slavery, free Black women in central Veracruz owned businesses and land, served as influential matriarchs, managed intergenerational wealth, and even owned slaves of African descent. *The Capital of Free Women* highlights the histories of Black women who mobilized strategies to defy beliefs of their subjugation. When a Spanish royal magistrate decreed laws to affirm the rights of slaveowners, for example, he likely never imagined that in 1661 a free Black woman named Catalina de Morales in Xalapa, Veracruz, would use the same legal protection to free her two enslaved daughters. In his last will and testament, Spanish slaveowner Juan de Bera Betancourt donated Catalina's children to a convent nearly 200 kilometers away. He stipulated, however, that if the convent refused their presence, then both girls would be granted their freedom. As it turned out, the girls were rejected, and Catalina marched into the office of the notary public in Xalapa and demanded that the executors of Juan's estate legally acknowledge that a slaveowner had the right to determine what happened with his own property. Catalina had declared that slaveowners held absolute authority. With her daughters' liberty weighing in the balance, Catalina de Morales arrived before authorities well-prepared not only with the physical documentation to secure her family's freedom but also with the language to make her case, even if it meant reifying the supremacy of a slave owner—freedom had its costs. *The Capital of Free Women* examines how women like Catalina navigated life as free Black women while confronting the cruel realities of slavery, fighting for the safety of their families, and asserting their right to basic dignities.

The space in which this history unfolds was an Atlantic crossroad. The majority of enslaved Black people transported to Mexico first disembarked at the port of Veracruz and then were forced into the interior via the Camino Real (the Royal Road), stopping in the way station town of Xalapa. Not all free Black women in Xalapa owned houses and dowered their daughters, although some certainly did. For seventeenth-century Black women, their social capital—their networks—included local, regional, and even colony-wide power players, such as influential landowners, regional slave-sellers, parish priests, and judges. Free women also amply demonstrated their cultural capital—their know-how—by documenting their knowledge of legal processes, rhetorical devices, and the importance of a religiously-grounded identity. The breadth of their economic capital varied, which is why I use the term “women of means” rather than the more delineating category of “women with wealth.”

And, not unlike Black women of means in other areas of the Americas and the Caribbean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, free Black women in seventeenth-century Mexico accomplished similar feats of capital management through the acquisition of land, businesses, and profitable family ties, but they did so nearly one hundred years prior. Importantly, free Black women in central Veracruz did not live in a time

of the Atlantic's most spectacular revolutionary moments—the end of slavery was not in sight. They lived in a region where sugar was king and where slave traders from the port of Veracruz regularly strolled the streets of their town with people who looked like them in shackles.

As free women, how could they ensure that their rights were recognized? Who would believe them if they needed to dispute a business arrangement? Wisely not trusting verbal agreements or informal promissory notes, free Black women sought out the legitimizing apparatus of the *notary public*. A survey of their cases establishes that Black women employed strategies similar to other colonial subjects when dealing with this royal apparatus, but they also had uniquely gendered and racialized experiences, such as having their marriages questioned or having enslaved family members. Over and over, notaries scribbled near the conclusion of their documents that these same women “did not sign their names because they did not know how.” But this did not stop them from turning to the power of the notarial office to produce the documents that legally acknowledged their rights. Importantly, once the notary graced the papers with his signature, which officially declared that he believed the statements therein to be true, so it was. Who would believe free Black women? If the notary did, few others would matter.

Free women in Xalapa did not need to hear the legend of the Mulata de Córdoba to understand that they remained vulnerable as they stood before Crown authorities. Black women could not afford to hope that their account would be trusted; they needed contingencies in place. For years I have imagined the Mulata de Córdoba sitting in that cell with a knowing smile. I like to believe that she knew she would outwit them—that she had a plan to survive. I like to think that whether she ever aged or not, she continued to live an unapologetic life, even if that meant never having her choices documented by someone like a notary or a parish priest. Soledad's Great Escape from the fort of San Juan de Ulúa captivates readers, but so too should the lives of free Black women of means in colonial Mexico who sought to live as autonomously as she did. They both have something to teach us about women made invisible.

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## Coding National Identity in Ukrainian Ballet Librettos of the 1930s

Ania Nikulina

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**B**allet performances are commonly theorized as ephemeral—disappearing in the moment they are (re)created on stage, never to be repeated or captured in the archive (Phelan 1993; Schneider 2011). Within this framework of disappearance and ephemerality, ballet librettos serve as unique time-specific and highly contextual documents that attempt to capture the choreography, technique, and acting on stage. First appearing as literary companions to ballet productions of nineteenth-century France, librettos were written as short narratives capturing the central plot of the ballet, to provide choreographic guidance to artists and to serve as a roadmap for audiences (Smith 2000). In the early Soviet cultural context, ballet functioned as a tool of both imperial propaganda and national resistance. The Soviet librettos, in turn, served to connect Russian imperial power and Soviet literary culture with the ballet repertoire, helping the state to depict and define communities and nationalities on ballet stages across the USSR. The Soviet libretto became a literary vessel to present and rationalize Soviet policies related to national identity across Soviet republics, introducing these policies through dance and effectively controlling a ballet’s message and physicality from the initial stages of production. In this essay, I describe the cultural significance and some of the challenges related to my experiences gaining access to the original librettos of Ukrainian national ballet. I hope my observations will inform both today’s readers and generations of future scholars.

For the multidisciplinary project that I completed as part of my CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellowship, I sought out Soviet-era librettos of the Ukrainian National Ballet and revealed that these performative documents were targeting a double audience: the state and the public. As such, these librettos are of critical cultural significance because they functioned as a platform for both conformity and resistance. As a specific case study, I focused on the original libretto of *Lileya*, the main national-themed ballet authored by Vsevolod Tchagovets and performed annually by the National Opera of Ukraine. The libretto of

*Lileya* is based on nineteenth-century poems by Taras Shevchenko. It details the conquest of Ukrainian lands by a foreign imperial power, such that the reader (and viewer) can easily see parallels with Russian and Soviet expansion. I sought to trace the narratives of suffering and survival, incorporated in *Lileya* and echoed in other major nation-themed librettos, to show that together, these themes define both the archive and the repertoire of Ukrainian national ballet. To accomplish this task, a critical piece was needed—the original libretto of *Lileya*. This document remained unseen to the world, despite acting as the anchoring point of past and present Ukrainian national ballet productions.

My first encounter with the original libretto of *Lileya* was a serendipitous result of a long and largely frustrating effort to locate primary materials on the history of Ukrainian ballet. At the outset of my archival study in Kyiv, Ukraine, I found that the task of locating primary sources, or, in fact, *any* materials on Ukrainian ballet was not easy, even in close spatial proximity to the subject of my research. Most of the materials I located in publicly accessible archives in Kyiv were either Soviet-era, Russian-language monographs on ballet history in the Soviet Union or the biographies of famous Soviet artists such as Galina Ulanova, Maya Plisetskaya, and others, which were also readily accessible across the US university library system. While I had access to a larger archive housed at the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, I soon discovered that the university's library collections on ballet were just as limited and rigidly defined as the archives I had encountered in the United States.<sup>1</sup> While having an abundance of Soviet-era monographs on Soviet and Russian ballet and a few on ballet in Ukraine, the university had extremely limited primary source collections.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The collection of the materials, kept by the Kyiv State Ballet School's library, includes: Boris Asaf'ev. *O Baletе. Stat'i. Recenzii. Vospominaniya. [About Ballet. Articles Reviews. Memories]* Ed. A. H. Dmitriev (Moscow: Muzyka, 1974); N. E., Arkina. *Balet i Literatura [Ballet and Literature]* (Moscow: Znanie [Knowledge], 1987); Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovskii. *Stat'i o Baletе [Articles About Ballet]* (Leningrad: Sovetskii Kompozitor [Soviet Composer], 1962); Lidiya Blok, *Klassicheskii Tanets: Istoriya i Sovremennost' [Classical Dance: History and Contemporary Times]* (Moscow: Iskusstvo [Art], 1987); Urii Bakhrushin. *Istoriya Russkogo Baleta [The History of Russian Ballet]*. (Moscow, Enlightenment, 1977). The last text by Bakhrushin had a preamble on the title page "Recommended by the Ministry of Culture's Management of Higher Education Institution for the Art Colleges, Theatre and Choreographic Colleges and Culture-Enlightenment Colleges." I suppose that the collection partially depended on state sponsorship and the Ministry of Culture's recommendation to use particular materials.

<sup>2</sup>During my work at the university library in Kyiv, I found that the collections of materials on Ukrainian folk dances were more developed than the ones about ballet, and these materials often drew connections between Ukrainian folk dances and Soviet ballet. As the possible balleticization of folk dance and its mutual influence with ballet are outside my main research area, I copied these texts and left my ideas and observations for the benefit of future users of the collection.



At a moment of near surrender, I witnessed how the system of insider access to primary sources in Ukraine operated as an informal, invisible, yet powerful network of archival gatekeepers, all of whom were women. I further realized that a librarian's ability and desire to guide a researcher through the formal bureaucracy of the archives depends highly on the researcher's first trip to the archives and the researcher's introduction to the librarian. My archival approach was shaped mostly by an invisible yet functional system of archival access, control, and protection that effectively shielded key ballet archives from outsiders. I used my previous ethnographic training to try to understand this living network and responded by researching and listening to each interlocutor carefully; these interactions informed my moves between ethnography and the archives.

Ultimately, I found the *Lileya* libretto hidden in plain sight: in a folder simply marked "1955," which the Director of the Archive gave me permission to view. While the document itself had no date of publication, *Lileya's* yellow, semi-transparent paper looked much older than the other librettos of the 1950s that I had previously encountered. It was also of a different length: extending to twenty-eight pages, longer than any of the collection's librettos, which ranged from four to eight pages in length. The *Lileya* libretto further stood out due to the significantly more detailed and prolonged narrative on its twenty-eight thin pages, having no apparent production or archival accession date. Quite possibly, it was deliberately "misplaced" as a way of hiding and protecting this work. At the moment of discovery, I felt I had been admitted into a small group of researchers who have had access to Ukraine's archival treasures. It appeared that without fully realizing or registering this in any formal way, I had participated in a carefully coordinated routine, in which I was vetted at every stage by female archivists and ultimately granted access to *Lileya*, which is commonly recognized as the very symbol of Ukraine as a woman, a symbol that became even more recognizable in 2022.

Thus, I would suggest a theoretical intervention to recognize how female archivists and librarians choreograph community negotiating through personal and professional contacts to protect historic ballets and the stories about them documented in archival materials. In past work, scholars have highlighted dance in general and ballet in particular as an ambiguous sphere for women, where empowerment or gender equality is not guaranteed or considered beyond the troubling notion of virtuosity (Daly 2002; Garafola 2011; Meglin and Brooks 2012; Casey 2012; Harris 2012). In terms of specific considerations, Ann Daly showed that ballet gender structure did not change much, as the societal roles did not change much (Daly 1997). Susan Foster argued that ballet involves a sense of perpetual loss for dancers, constructing and

increasing the gap between a dancer's body and an "ideal body" (Foster 1997). This argument, which is deeply resonant for anyone who has had long-term dance training, further separates dancers, mostly female, from choreographers, mostly male.

Judith Hamera emphasizes that dance technique functions as a prerequisite and a facilitator for community-building processes across various dance genres (Hamera 2011, 5). I would like to extend her notion of dance technique as a key part of community-building to the network of female archival workers who practice and implement archival protocols daily, working with dance historians, former dancers, administrators, and readers in politically contested cities like Kyiv. I propose a perspective wherein women librarians and archivists are cultural actors not necessarily employed as "choreographers," but who nevertheless participate in ballet production, archiving, and preservation. Critically, this network may choose to protect a particular part of the archive, "disappear" it for an outsider perceived as hostile, or make it visible to a trusted confidant. Every dancer who danced and every dance librarian and archivist who worked with the archival record of *Lileya* ultimately defined, refined, and protected the collective story of Ukraine, as embodied in *Lileya*. This redefinition is particularly important, as these women can be theorized as archival guardians of Ukrainian ballet, where the stage image of a Ukrainian woman is central. I argue that this unseen archival support and protection is a core element of both Ukrainian ballet as an independent dance form and as a central piece of Ukrainian national identity. Preserving dance in its archival forms requires resilience, technique, *and* choreography.

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## Analog Archives: Non-Digital Research and the Importance of Institutional Personnel

Kara Moskowitz

**Kara Moskowitz** is an associate professor of History at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2012 and visited archives in both the United Kingdom and Kenya, including the National Archives of the UK; the special collections at Oxford, Cambridge, and the School of Oriental and African Studies; and the Kenya National Archives. Based on this research, Moskowitz published her first book, *Seeing Like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya (1945–1980)*, in 2019 with the New African Histories series at Ohio University Press. She holds a PhD from Emory University.

**A** July 2021 article in Kenya’s widely circulated newspaper, the *Daily Nation*, reads, “Any historian . . . who has been at the Kenya National Archives, knows Richard Ambani—the walking archive and, perhaps, the most knowledgeable soul about the bowels of this citadel of knowledge” (Kamau 2021). Ambani worked as an archivist at the National Archives from its founding in 1965 and, despite retiring in 1998, he continued voluntarily assisting archival researchers until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. He passed away in July 2021. A cursory examination of the acknowledgements sections of Kenyan history writing reveals the extent of Ambani’s significance. I am among the countless scholars over the last fifty years who benefited from Ambani’s institutional knowledge and intellectual and personal generosity.

While historians, librarians, and archivists have emphasized the transformative impact of archival digitization, many repositories, particularly in the Global South, remain little changed by new technologies. Many of these institutions have suffered from austerity measures as a result of neoliberal policies. With underinvestment, technological transformation is unlikely, and the basic functioning of the archives can come under threat. In such instances, archival staff become especially integral to the preservation, organization, storage, and accessibility of records. In this essay, Kenya serves as a case study to investigate the operation of archives in these circumstances, with special attention to archival staff. I also hope to pay tribute to Richard Ambani, whose contribution to the production of knowledge about Kenya’s history is immense.

The Kenya National Archives reading room provides a momentary escape from the frenetic bustle of Nairobi. With its polished parquet floors, high ceilings, broad windows, and long tables crowded with piles of archival folders, the reading room initially feels like an oasis in the heart of this, at times, exhaustively dynamic city. The building's yellow-cream facade and large maroon pillars are a conspicuous landmark in Nairobi's central business district. The front exterior is emblazoned in black typescript with the words *Kenya National Archives*, thus preemptively resolving any confusion about the function of the edifice. Nairobi's main bus and matatu (minibus) stages surround the archives, and the building overlooks some of the city's busiest intersections, hemmed in by Tom Mboya Street on one side and Moi Avenue on the other.

History is constantly being produced here, not just by the researchers and archivists toiling away, but by other important activities in the center of this capital city. The appropriation of a former colonial building—previously, the Bank of India—for record keeping, and the renaming of streets to honor Kenyan nationalist heroes are but the most overt instances of the collision and confusion between past and present. While the archives might seem to provide a retreat, the city—its sounds, smells, and energy—creeps in. Protestors frequently weave their way down Moi Avenue, and researchers and archivists alike break from their work to look out the window into the street below, intrigued by the commotion. In 2013, the relentless din of a jackhammer interrupted the hum of the city for weeks as laborers erected a statue honoring the late Tom Mboya—famed nationalist, trade unionist, and Luo politician assassinated in 1969. The clamor eventually died down, but the figure of Mboya persists, bringing the past into the present for the thousands of Kenyans who walk by every day.

Anyone who has worked in the Kenyan archives will be familiar with the above scene, which attests to the fluidity of past and present. It attests as well to the diverse actors who shape both historical events and the creation of historical narratives. Perhaps more so than elsewhere, Kenya's archival staff contributes profoundly to the production of history.

With the Public Archives Act of 1965, the Kenya National Archives (KNA) was established. Prior to this act, colonial record keeping had been largely haphazard, so the independent government inherited a poor repository infrastructure. During the next twenty years, the archives moved twice and increased its staff dramatically, while expanding the institution's role into non-archival services (Musembi 1986). Despite the relocations, UNESCO consultants, archival staff, and Kenyan legislators have commented on the inadequacy of the latest building. Stakeholders have made frequent entreaties for a purpose-made archival building, and the government has, on occasion, even contracted architectural firms to plan and design a new site, but the Kenya National Archives has not moved again (Kenya National Assembly Official Record 1994).

Staff continue to contend with inadequate capacity and assert that a new building is the uppermost priority, but such a possibility cannot be realized without public or private funding (Carotenuto and Luongo 2005).

Though the KNA catalogs were computerized in the 1990s, manual finding aids still offer the clearest guide to the holdings. Not all the holdings have been entered into the computer system, and due to typos, it is often challenging to conduct keyword searches or to find references for documents. David Anderson has described the computer system as “clunky and near-obsolete” (Anderson 2015, 150). Reliance on manual finding aids is time-consuming and arduous. Still, these finding aids contain accurate information and can also provide new insights, as researchers may stumble upon documents of interest or new lines of inquiry.

Given the shortcomings of the building, the lack of funding, and the overstretched staff, the determination and generosity of a single archivist to help retrieve documents or provide advice to researchers can change the trajectory of a project. Archivist Richard Ambani did just that for visitors to the archives. I described the archival reading room and the surrounding city above, but the portrayal feels incomplete without the “*mzee*” (a respectful name for an elder)—a constant, energetic, friendly, and helpful presence.

Ambani was always at the archives, including on Saturdays. He greeted every researcher, inquired about their interests, and gave them suggestions about where they might find useful information. Ambani’s ability to find missing archival documents—it is not uncommon to be informed that a file cannot be located—provided me with some of the most important sources for my first book. Ambani always said, “nothing is lost, it is just misplaced,” revealing not only his expertise in archival organization, but also, his dedication to the institution and its researchers.

“Acknowledgments,” Emily Callaci has written, “dismantle the myth of the lone, self-contained genius-at-work” and “offer a glimpse of the political economy of academic life” (Callaci 2020, 127). Richard Ambani is likely named in more Kenyan history acknowledgments than anyone else (beginning at least as far back as the 1980s). He has been described as being “of inestimable help,” a “patron saint of researchers,” and “the one who knows where everything is” (Robertson 1997; Schauer 2018; Shadle 2015). His legacy was discussed during a roundtable at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association in 2021. And yet, none of this seems enough, never fully capturing the labor he contributed or his wider impact on the production of Kenyan history.

Despite the posthumous academic recognition with acknowledgments and conference panels, prior to his death, Ambani remained publicly unacknowledged in Kenya.<sup>1</sup> As Basil Ibrahim wrote in his tribute to

<sup>1</sup>Indeed, a search for Ambani’s name in the *Daily Nation* newspaper from 1943 until 2016 produced only a single result, a “lost and found” advertisement about a purse he had found, offering to return it to the rightful owner (Ambani 1984).

Ambani published in Kenya's most read paper, the *Daily Nation*, "Never a great man, a boss, or a priest, he did not accumulate material wealth, nor achieve personal glory. He did not accumulate prestige either. . . . Yet his life of work is exemplary expressly for the contribution it made to the success of others, and to the wider project of public remembrance" (Ibrahim 2021). Richard Ambani's kindness, generosity, and joyfulness will be greatly missed. He is irreplaceable. But his absence will also certainly mean a deterioration in the archives' operations, and thus, in Kenyan history writing, if there is not greater financial investment in the institution itself.

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## Chapter Two: Narratives Illuminated by the Archives

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### Touching, Watching, Questioning: Eliciting Evidence from the Archives

*Joana Konova*

The essays in this chapter show how archival evidence can bring the past to life, opening up possibilities for new or more complex and nuanced historical narratives. Naturally, the CLIR-Mellon fellows represented here reflect on how history has been written and how we can write history. They further reflect on the conditions of the archive and the often unexpected interplay between archival structure and archival evidence.

What happens when a coveted token of past life disintegrates to dust in the archive that seeks to preserve it? As irreversible corrosion defaces the shapes of metal objects, **Andrew J. Welton** tells us, those objects can no longer support the historical narrative that drives the processes of collecting, restoring, and classifying. And so, the narrative is exposed as a modern projection onto the past, one that purports to be natural and objective but cannot withstand the natural forces in the objects that it presents as evidence.

**Elizabeth Woodward** looks, among other things, at the physical change of the archived object. She explains how abrasion on the page of an illuminated manuscript, the result of repeated tactile interaction prior to archival preservation, is not the loss it appears to be. Rather, it is a depository of people's engagement with the illustrated story. Flaked or smudged pigments record emotional and ethical responses and invite researchers to touch once more. This added meaning, accessible in the immediate handling of the manuscript, is not attainable in the digital version, which flattens and "normalizes" the image.

Reading that which is missing is **Susie Woo's** prime strategy vis-à-vis the documents she considers. Woo shows that during and after the Korean War, US propaganda highlighted US soldiers' charitable acts toward Korean children to obscure the devastating destruction and death caused by the US army. Manufactured, disseminated, and neatly archived by the US military, such evidence was directed to American soldiers and Korean civilians alike. The voices of the latter, however, are excluded from the archive and remain silent long after the US occupation. An archive designed by the occupiers gives no agency to the occupied.



When investigating the British Royal Navy's war on homosexuality, **Seth Stein LeJacq** arrives at a similar conclusion: the archive suppresses the very evidence we hope to access. In charge of the archive, the perpetrators seek to erase their crimes by enveloping them in silence, euphemisms, and jokes. An important and extremely painful chapter in the history of homosexuality needs to be uncovered against the limitations set in place by those who sought to suppress it.

**Jang Wook Huh's** essay brings us back to the era of the Korean war to point to parallels between the simplistic rhetoric of Japanese anti-Korean propaganda and the rhetoric employed to denigrate Black people in the United States. He follows responses of Black intellectuals to the Korean war to show how they used simple language to oppose US participation in an imperialist, racially underpinned conflict. Though most of their writings could not be published at the time, studying them now, along with their Korean translations, helps recover a more nuanced account of the pursuit of civil liberation in each specific context.

Thus, the essays in this chapter shed light on two major sets of transformative processes that are possible in the archive. The first is a response to those forces in the archive that seek to mortify the life it purports to evidence and preserve. Archives produce narratives in line with the agendas of those who established them—narratives that obscure or truncate evidence. Researchers must recover and reassemble evidence by reading against the grain, connecting the dots, or filling the gaps. They can derive additional meaning from physical changes in the original materials.

The second set of transformative processes occurs when researchers revisit evidence that was suppressed by dominant political forces in times past but survived in archives mostly intact, though dormant and hidden from public view. Revisiting such evidence brings subtlety and context to already-accepted narratives. A more complicated and truthful account of the past emerges—an account not suitable for simplistic propaganda but for apprehending history in a way that can help us learn for the present.

New, more complex narratives emerged as the authors in this chapter critically engaged the sources they had chosen and adjusted their own expectations and research questions to better address the long and complicated lives of the documents they studied. The essays gathered here invite us to consider the past as much as they invite us to consider our own attitudes toward the remains of the past—our approaches, methods, and underlying notions and assumptions. They set examples of vigilance and intellectual curiosity that we can transfer to other contexts of academic and civic inquiry.

## Iron and Entropy: Rusted Spearheads and the Objectivity of Archives

*Andrew J. Welton*

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In 2014, I sat down at a long table stacked with clear Tupperware boxes full of iron spearheads excavated thirty years prior from a fifth-century British cemetery. Drawings of these spearheads had been published eight years before. Although iron can rust quickly when buried in soil these artifacts had survived in fair condition for more than a millennium, and I was excited to see the real objects in person. I planned to record traces of wear on their blades, to better understand how people had made and used these weapons.

Inside the Tupperware boxes, each spearhead had been carefully wrapped in acid-free paper. I peeled back the wrapping from the first, but all I found were shards of rust. Every spearhead in the collection had fallen to pieces during its decade in storage. Iron is a precociously reactive element (cf. Bennett 2010, 52–61), notoriously difficult to conserve: iron continues to rust from the moment it is removed from the soil. Conservators try to slow this process; best practices dictate x-raying the artifact, sand-blasting corrosion away, and placing the restored artifact in dry storage to prevent further change. But these methods can only slow the corrosive processes that ultimately tear iron apart (Keene 1994). Iron artifacts buried in the soil reach a delicate chemical equilibrium, and the disturbance caused by removing them to a new environment sets off a chain reaction of corrosion that ensures their ultimate destruction.

Curators are acutely aware of this problem, and staff at almost every collection I visited were striving to hold back iron’s entropy. One collection rescheduled my visit so they could send their artifacts for a second round of professional conservation before I arrived. Others, having funding to do so, had moved their iron collections into climate-controlled storage. The best-preserved collection I saw was caked in impenetrable nineteenth-century lacquer that, though preserving the metal, made the spearheads very difficult to examine.<sup>1</sup> Several curators refused to allow me to visit their collections at all; they would not risk removing the spearheads from storage. What, I wondered, was the point

<sup>1</sup>The Faussett Collection, held by the Liverpool World Museum.

of preserving iron artifacts so carefully if preservation requires them to be inaccessible?

Artifacts like these iron spearheads occupy a special place in archaeological research. Most archaeological research focuses on long-term processes rather than individual moments of time (cf. Binford 1981). Human activities leave physical traces in the soil, which gradually accumulate over years or generations. Archaeologists study these accumulations to reconstruct long-term social processes. We rarely get to see anything so specific as a slice of life: Pompeii, where volcanic ash froze a single awful moment, is exceptional. Mostly, archaeologists analyze mundane things like middens (trash heaps), the accumulated byproducts of years of daily life.

Artifacts promise something different. Unlike accumulated layers of soil, you can hold in your hand an artifact that was also held by someone in the past. Artifacts say to us: *Someone made me, used me, and lost me; your hands are the first to touch me since theirs.* Artifacts let us time-travel; they connect us tangibly to people and specific moments of time, not just social processes in the *longue durée*.

Artifacts are still connected to processes, however. Every artifact is the consequence of multiple processes of creation, use, corrosion, and decay as well as the effects of excavation, conservation, and archival storage (cf. Joyce 2012). As artifacts age, they change; some changes, like layers of soil, accumulate as scratches and patina on an artifact's surface; others, like the metamorphic pressures that turn soil to rock, transform artifacts' materials into something new. Rust that permeates an iron spearhead cannot be peeled back to reveal an original artifact beneath the corrosion; the artifact, over time, has *become* rust. When we touch an artifact, therefore, we are not touching the past, a moment frozen in time. We are touching a contemporary thing, a living object that will continue to change as it flows through time (cf. Joyce and Gillespie 2015).

Museum collections and archaeological reports fight back against change and the flow of time. After things that have been removed from the ground and entered into a museum's collection become artifacts, they undergo processes that arrest change and create distance between artifacts and their observers. Conservators clean artifacts so their original shape can be observed and protected from future decay. For some types of artifacts, this conservation is minimally invasive. For iron artifacts, however, conservation requires removing significant rust (usually with a sandblaster) to try to recover the artifact's original shape. The cleaned artifact is then stored behind glass that both protects it and reminds viewers that the artifact, now curated, belongs to a separate world: the past (cf. Lucas 2005, 128).

Museums' objectification of artifacts encourages us to treat artifacts as time travelers, obscuring the fact that they remain part of our contemporary world and that their continuing existence as an archival

collection or “cultural heritage” depends more on modern political forces and social trends than on any inherent qualities the objects possess. Artifacts’ contingency slips into view, however, when materials resist curators’ best efforts at preservation. Iron artifacts’ tendency to change, even when locked behind glass, reminds us that the visions of the past we see in museum collections—those moments of past time frozen on display—are illusions whose maintenance requires ongoing effort.

Archaeologists who study artifacts have similarly sought to objectify the past into something easier to study from the position of an outside observer. Artifacts, after they have been conserved, are carefully sketched, measured, and recorded using typologies: classificatory schemes that identify an artifact’s cultural and historical origins. Aided by typologies, archaeologists can reduce artifacts to data arrays with simplified, idealized properties that lend themselves to statistical analysis. These methods, developed since the nineteenth century, have, however, been difficult to apply to iron artifacts as corrosion so frequently obscures the artifacts’ original proportions that archaeologists cannot agree on reliable iron artifact typologies (e.g. the attempts to create new typologies for iron artifacts in Hines and Bayliss 2013).

For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, objectified artifact data formed the groundwork for ethno-nationalist historical narratives. New artifacts were classified on the basis of their ethnic and chronological types: a potsherd might be recorded as a *fifth-century Saxon urn*, and an iron blade fragment as a *sixth-century (pagan) Anglian spear*. The association between artifacts and distinct ethnic groups allowed historians to use archaeological material to write a new kind of nationalist history that traced the origins of modern nation-states to people groups in the early Middle Ages (Geary 2003). British historians, for example, argued that the purportedly Angle and Saxon artifacts found across England’s lowlands demonstrated the early medieval arrival of the “Anglo-Saxon” culture that made the British Empire uniquely suited to rule the world (Lucy 2000). France used archaeology from Antiquity to justify its conquest of North Africa (Effros 2018), and German scholars cited early medieval “Germanic” burials in Alsace Lorraine to justify that territory’s annexation at the Treaty of Versailles (Haßmann 2002).

These ethno-nationalist narrative frameworks continue to haunt early medieval archaeology. At their heart, they rest on the assertion that artifacts preserve some timeless, essential connection with the people who made them, such as their shape or artistic style, which can be identified via typology. This timeless element is ostensibly carried forward from the past: a spearhead, for example, preserves proof of the Germanic warriors who forged it and used it to seize land in England or Northern France. In fact, this essence is projected backward as modern political identities are inscribed onto archaeological materials, inventing connections between present and past identities that justify modern

political (cl)aims (Harland 2021, 115–158). This backward projection has often been concealed, however, by the illusion of archival objectivity. Artifacts are presented in museums and archaeological reports as frozen moments of past time. This illusion of temporal distance naturalizes the ethnic labels used in archaeological typologies; categories such as “Saxon urn” and “Anglian spear” are distanced from the nineteenth-century ethno-nationalist historiographic projects that coined them, gaining an air of objectivity or historical fact.

This objectification of Britain’s early medieval artifacts as “Anglo-Saxon” culture has kept nineteenth-century nationalist historical frameworks alive into the present. Early medieval artifacts have become popular symbols for the modern far right, who use them as proof that Britain once had a White, Germanic, ethnically homogeneous past. When new artifacts are published using the old ethnic categories (“Saxon urn,” etc.), these discoveries are seized upon by the right as further proof of Britain’s ancient Germanic heritage. It has proven difficult to break through this politicized framework because its politics are hidden within the classificatory systems that lend artifacts their apparent objectivity. Furthermore, the archive collections that objectify artifacts also sustain, in their data structures, the nationalism and racism of previous centuries.

Iron artifacts offer an interesting chance to challenge this status quo, precisely because they are so difficult to archive. Archaeologists have struggled to agree upon typologies for iron artifacts largely because the artifacts are too rusted to classify; for example, we still do not have a reliable typology for iron spearheads (Welton 2018, 95–150). A spearhead from the Peterborough Museum, recovered from a burial (Patrick et al. 2007), illustrates this. When I viewed the spearhead in person in 2016, it had a leaf-shaped blade, a type more common in the seventh century when social, political, and religious changes in Britain made burial with weapons increasingly rare. The archive, however, has an earlier x-ray of the same spearhead, which shows a concave-sided shape typical of the “pagan” burials of two centuries earlier. Whether through accidental corrosion or restorative conservation, the spear’s profile changed—and so, too, did its ability to contribute to a historical narrative. These changes make it difficult to declare with any certainty what history this spearhead belongs to.

Iron artifacts’ incompatibility with the traditional methodologies favored by older, often nationalist histories justifies closer study of these artifacts. By refusing to exist in the timelessness of the archive, by resisting simplistic classification, and by rusting away despite all efforts at conservation, iron artifacts break the illusion that the past persists in the simplistic way favored by nationalist and racist historiographies. Iron artifacts remind us that archive time is artificial: the objectivity of artifacts in a display case is contingent on curation; consequently, its unexamined politics must be more closely interrogated.

Iron artifacts cannot be preserved forever. Their fragility can, however, remind us that all artifacts are in truth our contemporaries. We collect and preserve artifacts because they have value to us in our present, just as our nineteenth-century forebears collected and preserved artifacts with their own agendas in mind. Artifacts' histories are part of their materiality. We must examine these histories and the agendas they serve and not be content to leave artifacts locked behind glass or within the "objective" classificatory schemes that structure our collections. Lest we forget this, iron will remind us that our collections are contemporary and alive.

Iron artifacts can tell us much about the early Middle Ages if we approach them as contemporary, changing, and ultimately "unpreservable" things. Scientific analyses of iron, using destructive tests, have begun to reveal a wealth of data about the manufacture and use of these artifacts and about the scientific expertise of the artisans who made them. These tests cause irreparable harm to the artifacts, but if they are delayed, the artifacts will rust away on the shelves anyway (Starley 1996). Kent Flannery famously wrote that archaeology is "anthropology where we kill our informants in the process of studying them" (Flannery 1982, 275). Iron artifacts will die in storage; perhaps we should be more willing to destructively test them first.

Archives seek to hold back time, preserving things from the past so the future can have them. But as museums catch fire and wars threaten irreplaceable collections, we are constantly reminded that all archaeology is a scarce and vanishing resource. Most archaeological sites in the United Kingdom today are excavated because the land is being developed for commercial use. Archives promise to mitigate this harm; but the timelessness they curate is an illusion. Our informants have already been killed—or rather, they are already changing as they get on with their (after)lives and, through decay, become something new. Artifacts come from the past, but they are processes moving always toward future transformation. We cannot stop these processes, but we might change how we exploit, develop, pave over, and exhaust the finite cultural resources of the land we live upon.

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## Objects of Desire

*Elizabeth Woodward*

**Elizabeth Woodward** earned her PhD in 2018 from the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Art and Visual Culture at Bates College. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2014 and visited France and England to conduct research for her dissertation titled, “Le Roman de la Poire: Constructing Courtliness and Courtly Art in Gothic France.”

### The Research Project, Then and Now

In 2014, I received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship to fund my PhD dissertation project, entitled “*Le Roman de la Poire: Constructing Courtliness and Courtly Art in Gothic France.*” This project involved research at a number of cultural institutions in France and England. I spent a large part of my time in Paris examining medieval manuscripts in person at the Bibliothèque nationale, but I also conducted research at French municipal libraries and regional museums as well as at the British Library and the Bodleian Library in England. The ability to examine objects up close, to view them from different angles, to understand their physical size and texture, and to observe details not visible in photographs fundamentally altered the scope and focus of my project. My dissertation was initially concerned in a somewhat abstract way with examining the concept of “courtliness”: investigating why and how scholars use the term courtly art, and what courtly even means. Gradually, however, the project expanded and focused increasingly on questions of materiality and agency of objects; this shift was unanticipated but ultimately highly productive and stimulating.

The primary object in this research is a thirteenth-century manuscript containing the text of an Old French poem called *Le Roman de la Poire*, or “The Romance of the Pear.” It is a beautiful, unique, and complex manuscript; some of its illuminations are widely reproduced in art historical publications as quintessential examples of “courtly art” of the thirteenth century, despite the fact that we have no evidence for its association with a specific court and the very concept of “a court” is problematic for this time period. Before embarking on my research trip, I had access to some, but not all, of the manuscript’s images, in books and in online image databases.

While in Paris, I initially spent a lot of time examining older black-and-white microfilms before I requested access to original manuscripts. Fortunately, I was allowed to examine a large number of secular romance manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and I was



eventually granted permission to view the *Roman de la Poire* manuscript itself, although for just half a day (!). Seeing it in person led me to observe details of the images' iconography and painting techniques, the book's facture and materials, and, crucially, physical traces of past viewers' interactions with the book's pages and its images.

The marks made by past readers prompted me to consider the importance of embodied viewing experiences and the ways that medieval audiences were attuned to the power and agency of artfully crafted physical objects in their lives. An example of such embodied viewing appears on folio 5 verso: a full-page painting depicts the poet and his beloved lady twice, in two vertically aligned roundels. In the upper roundel, the lovers sit together on an elaborate bench, and the lady presents a golden ring to the poet as a sign of her loyalty. The roundel below depicts the escalation of the lovers' relationship to a more physical stage: their bodies entwine in an embrace and their faces merge in a kiss. The lower roundel exhibits various signs of damage, including worn or tarnished gold leaf and loss of pigment. The damage is most extensive and visible on the faces of the embracing lovers, perhaps indicating the wear and tear to the image's surface in this area resulting from deliberate action on the part of a past reader-viewer. Whether defaced by an offended reader or smudged by the repeated touch of more enthralled viewers, it is clear that this image elicited an affective response from its audience.

The page with the lovers exchanging first a ring and then a kiss also touches on another key direction that my project has taken, namely the role of gift exchange in medieval art and culture.

My research led me to conclude that the text and images of the illuminated *Roman de la Poire* and those shown in many related works of "courtly" art and literature, thematize erotic love through the exchange of gifts. Gifts become sites for focusing, intensifying, and crucially redirecting the lovers' desire. In other words, the gifts take on the role of erotically-charged, fetishized objects. The poet's love for his lady is presented, in both text and image, as continually deferred and fixated by intermediary objects.

The *Roman de la Poire*, its author says, is a poem composed by a male poet in order to please his beloved lady. The text begins with a prologue and a series of first-person monologues delivered by the poet and other characters, including exemplary lovers from classical and medieval legend. The rest of the poem narrates the protagonists' love story proper, starting with the titular pear tree episode.

The pear-tree episode firmly establishes the importance of intermediary objects in the Poire manuscript, as it is through the mediation of a piece of fruit that the poet and the lady first fall in love. The text and image portraying this episode recount in meticulous detail

how the lady peels a pear with her teeth, bites into it, then offers the fruit to the poet, who takes a bite and immediately falls in love. He describes the fruit as a holy object containing some supernatural force, animated by physical contact with the lady's mouth, which changes the course of his life forever.

Elsewhere in the illuminated Poire manuscript, the poet receives a ring from the lady as a token of her love. At another point in the poem, as he prepares to fight in a tournament against "mesdisants," or slanderers, the poet is prompted by the lady to affix items that she gives him—her own headscarf and a cloth pennant—to his body as well as weaponry as visible signs of her romantic affection.

The poet later removes his heart from his body and has it delivered via messenger to the lady, who accepts it into her own body. The lady then returns the favor, sending her own heart to the poet to keep in his care. The hearts exchanged by the lovers are not merely metaphors; the text and images in the manuscript confirm that real pieces of flesh—pear-shaped and red-tinted—are removed and transferred, still living, into new bodily receptacles.

Arguably, the most fascinating and complex object exchanged between the lovers is the poem itself. In the prologue to the Poire, the poet explains that he is the vassal of Amors, the God of Love, and that he composes the poem in order to please his beloved lady. He describes his work as a gift ("presant," v. 265) and a book ("livre," v. 293); the poem appears as both book and present in a painting that depicts the poet kneeling and presenting a bound codex to his beloved lady, and it appears in book form in the hands of anyone who is lucky enough, as I was, to turn the pages of the illuminated Poire in the manuscripts reading room of the Bibliothèque nationale (BnF) in Paris.

In an ironic twist of fate, the entire Roman de la Poire manuscript was digitized in high resolution and made available online precisely during the period I was in Paris attempting to gain access to it (January 2015). The entire manuscript, including images of its wonderful original thirteenth-century stamped leather binding, is now visible on the BnF's digital library Gallica. Having ready access to the digital images after I returned to Chicago and continued writing the dissertation was of course an immense benefit. However, as we all know, nothing compares to examining an object in person: the sensation of turning a manuscript's pages with one's own hands, smelling the scent of old parchment, and understanding the physical reality of a material object is a haptic experience that simply cannot be replicated in a virtual format.

### **Teaching Pre-Modern Art with Digital Sources**

I began thinking about the problems and opportunities presented by online image collections and digital humanities projects while I was

in graduate school, especially since I was combing through databases of digitized medieval manuscripts and perusing museum collections online. My interest became a more significant focus once I moved from Chicago, with all its museums and libraries and universities, to a small town in southern Maine to teach at Bates College. I initially incorporated digital images and three-dimensional renderings of architecture and art objects into my classes as a way to supplement and expand students' comprehension of faraway places and objects, all from the comfort of our Maine-based classroom. Once the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020 and we transitioned to online and hybrid formats, such digital resources have taken on an even more prominent role in my teaching.

For their part, museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions have ramped up their efforts to make their collections remotely accessible, and new and exciting image-based digital humanities projects are continually being created. It's an exciting time! In my courses, students are asked to use online databases to find images for their research projects, and I have them make virtual visits to museums, churches, mosques, and other sites around the world in order to gain a more robust understanding of, for example, an exhibition's arrangement, a building's layout, or an object's physical dimensions or original appearance. Students have even used digital tools to create their own hypothetical virtual museum exhibitions; I prompt them to think about how their imaginary museum might incorporate real digital resources.

A sampling of the many online resources that I have used this past academic year includes the wonderful Mapping Gothic France, which is about the next best thing to visiting a Gothic church in person. I've also sent students to examine the fascinating and enigmatic grave goods of the Oseberg Ship Burial in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, Norway. Students have also explored topics on Islamic art (like the role of water and sound in Islamic architecture) thanks to the videos available on Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online, and students have virtually toured the Sistine Chapel and Raphael's Stanze in the Vatican in order to better understand the size, physical setting, and coloristic effects of these famous paintings.

One interesting problem that the use of such digital resources has inadvertently raised (or more likely, is intersecting with existing issues of digital literacy among traditionally college-aged students) is that using these resources can give students a false sense of the availability and accessibility of information. I thus see it as imperative to emphasize to students that only the  *tiniest*  portion of the world's historical objects, images, and texts have been digitized, and the work has only just begun.

Furthermore, the act of digitization itself is fundamentally tied to larger economic, political, national, and cultural ideologies. What gets digitized and why? How are digital materials described and cataloged?

Who makes such decisions, and what agendas, unacknowledged privileges, and systems of beliefs might be at work in making those decisions? As digital sources become increasingly available, it is even more important for researchers and teachers to keep asking those questions and to keep encouraging students to think critically about them.

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## Reading Archives Against the Grain

Susie Woo

**Susie Woo** is an associate professor of American Studies at California State University Fullerton. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2005, which supported her research in the United States and Korea. Her book based on research conducted during this time is titled, *Framed by War: Korean Children and Women at the Crossroads of US Empire* (2019). Woo holds a PhD from Yale University.

**M**y parents both lived through the Korean War but rarely spoke of their experiences. It wasn't until I was in college and began asking them questions that their stories began to unfold. I learned that my mother lost two older sisters and her father in the war. My father spent time on US military bases, where American GIs would give him chewing gum and chocolate. He found weathered copies of *Look* and *Life* magazines, and it was there, amidst the destruction of war, that his American Dream began. It was their stories that made me want to write about Koreans who had survived the war.

The Korean War took place between 1950 and 1953 and is still not technically over as an armistice ended the fighting but not the war. It claimed an estimated 34,000 American; 900,000 Chinese; and over 3 million Korean lives, the majority of whom were civilians. Although the United Nations fought in Korea, the United States made up 90 percent of all UN troops. During the war, the United States dropped 635,000 tons of bombs on the peninsula, which is the size of Minnesota. Entire cities were wiped off the map. These data points clarify how this war forever changed the lives of millions of people.

As a graduate student, I began searching the stacks at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library to find anything I could about Korea that was published between 1945—when US commanders divided the peninsula and the United States occupied south of the 38th parallel—and the 1970s. I found US government and State Department pamphlets and booklets filled with photographs of Korean temples and Korean people, introducing American readers to Korea. I then turned to US media to see how news of the war reached American audiences. I was struck by how frequently images of and stories about Korean children appeared across multiple sources. During the war, news of children receiving donations from Americans and images of children alone amidst rubble with captions like this one from *McCall's* communicated the desperation of Korean children: "This young girl, whose entire family may have been killed, clings desperately to all that she has left—the ruins of her home in

Seoul.” Once combat ended in 1953, news arrived of Americans adopting Korean children. Stories of US servicemen formally adopting Korean children and bringing their little “charges” to the States offered glimmers of hope on the heels of a devastating and unpopular war.

Stories like these raised questions about how the Korean child came to occupy not only American understandings about US involvement in the Korean War, but also about how Korean children actually arrived in the United States as adoptees in predominantly White American households. In particular, I wanted to know how these interracial and international families came about amidst ongoing racial segregation in the United States and restrictive immigration laws; Asian exclusion only ended in 1952, and even then the US allowed a very limited number of visas from Asia annually.

With the support of the Mellon Foundation and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), my first stop was the National Archives (NARA) in College Park, Maryland. NARA houses the US Department of State, Department of Defense, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, and the US Army Records. Here, I found correspondence that added new dimensions to the stories I had been seeing in popular publications. US Army Chaplain logs showed that scheduled into the daily activities of US servicemen were visits to local orphanages where the men delivered donated goods and played with the children. Officials noted that contact with Korean children boosted the morale of soldiers and gave them purpose in the war. Military correspondence further clarified that the visitations were developed with the soldiers in mind. For example, American Christmas traditions were entirely unfamiliar to Korean children but carried great significance for homesick men. American GIs dressed up as Santa Claus and delivered toys and hot chocolate to orphanage children. The Department of Defense hired its own cameramen to capture these tender moments on film, images that were then relayed to the American public.

Raw film footage shows that the Department of Defense even tried its hand at creating short films, like the one titled, “Orphanage Story.” In the film still on the following page (figure 1), a Korean boy is crouched and alone on the side of the road when a US jeep rolls into the frame and stops. A soldier steps out of the jeep to talk to the boy. The next scene shows the men bringing the child to a local orphanage.

The documents and film reels in the state archives demonstrated that Korean children figured into regular US military activity in Korea. Korean children were also central to the Department of Defense’s strategy to narrate the war as one of American rescue, a storyline that helped obscure the destruction caused by US bombs and military tactics, like destroying dams to flood entire villages or strafing Korean refugees to eliminate enemies hiding within.



**Fig. 1.** US Department of Defense, “Orphanage Story,” 1952 (raw footage). National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

The records revealed something else. American servicemen began going beyond the military-prescribed points of contact with Korean children. Men began housing Korean “mascots” in their barracks, and some tried to formally adopt the children. Unit officers kept monthly tabs on adoption requests. Commanders responded by ordering regular sweeps of the barracks and creating obstacles to prevent their men from adopting Korean children. Military officials noted that such measures were necessary to keep the servicemen from getting too caught up in the care of children when they should have been focusing their energies on the war.

The archives also show that the tactics used to delay requests for adoptions were similar to those used to deter US servicemen from marrying Korean women. Marriage applications that I found in this collection included character references from family, neighbors, and the local police chief as well as medical examinations that included extensive STD screenings. The documents revealed the extent to which couples had to go to debunk assumptions that Korean women were prostitutes. Together, military efforts to prevent the men from bringing home Korean children and women revealed moments of fissure—when military commanders could not control the sentiment and actions of their men, when Koreans and Americans became intimately intertwined, and when war abroad threatened to become an issue of immigration. All this was occurring when most states upheld anti-miscegenation laws and most neighborhoods across the United States remained segregated.

Postcolonial scholar Ann Laura Stoler examines the anxieties and tensions that emerge in the colonial administrative archive. She explores the “unsure and hesitant sorts of documentation and sensibilities that gathered around them” (Stoler 2009, 1). Inspired by her methodology, I approached the archives planning to read what was missing as much as what was included. I read the documents not only for their intended purpose, but also against the grain. By doing so, the questions at the heart of my project shifted. The National Archives showed me that my project would not just be about adoptees in the US, but also about Korean women. I saw how directly the US military helped script the versions of war that appeared in US media, and how these narratives shielded military efforts to keep Korean children and women outside the United States and hid the increasing numbers of mixed-race children fathered by US soldiers.

These lessons from the National Archives altered which US archives I needed to visit next and where I needed to begin once I landed in Seoul, Korea, for the second half of my fellowship year. The records also taught me that Korean War migration to the United States—of Korean adoptees and brides—began with the US military and was intimately tied to state projects that were inherently unequal. Reading the archives in ways unintended by the original authors revealed US military practices that forever changed the lives of Korean civilians. Embedded within US military memorandums, applications, tallies, and schedules were the Korean children and women who did not choose war, but found themselves suddenly and intimately tethered to the United States.

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## Unspeakable Crimes: Repressing and Recovering Queer History in the Naval Archives

*Seth Stein LeJacq*

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In 2012, I was doing research in London at the UK National Archives when I found the records of hundreds of trials for same-sex acts that were previously unknown to historians. They were hidden in a massive collection of old legal documents created by the British navy’s criminal courts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the time, I was working on a dissertation that had nothing to do with the history of homosexuality. I was researching surgeons serving in Britain’s navy in the age of sail. Yet queer history fascinated me, and I had already read everything I could find on sexual relationships between sailors. It was a modest list—several articles and a recent book.

This reading taught me that the navy violently repressed such relationships, putting many sailors on trial. I had not set out to explore those records, but as I delved into the navy’s vast judicial archives in search of sea surgeons, I kept finding “buggery” trials that I did not recognize from my earlier reading. Before long, they had become the focus of my dissertation. As I continued to find evidence for new trials, I discovered that the navy waged a war against same-sex relationships, cracking down with a zeal unknown elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

This war occupies a curious place in popular memory and scholarly narratives. While few know the details of this repression, pop culture depictions of the navy often imagine it filled with men who desired shipmates and suffered for it. This is the vision novelist Patrick O’Brian offers in his bestselling *Master and Commander* books (O’Brian 1969). A quip often attributed to Winston Churchill (who twice served as First Lord of the Admiralty) holds that the navy’s traditions were no more than “rum, sodomy, and the lash.” The joke has enjoyed enduring popularity; it has titled everything from a Celtic punk album to a naval history documentary, showing that memory of this repression lingers (The Pogues 1985; Crombie 2005).

Academic research into the navy's crackdown made important contributions to early gay history. In the 1970s, Arthur Gilbert published the first research on these trials, beginning with an article in the very first issue of the *Journal of Homosexuality* (Gilbert 1974). A handful of additional papers followed (Gilbert 1976, 1977). These were valuable additions to the new wave of scholarship that came with the gay liberation movement. Gilbert won "immediate fame," or perhaps I should say "instant notoriety" (Burg 2009, 174).

Although they were widely read, Gilbert's articles had an oddly muted impact. No further research followed for decades. Historians of sexuality did not integrate his findings into their accounts. Naval historians concluded that what he had documented revealed little about the lives of sailors apart from a supposed bone-deep hatred of same-sex intimacy. A leading social history pronounces the records Gilbert found "a very insignificant total" (Rodger 1986, 80). One observer went so far as to conclude that "English naval historians have found it emotionally difficult to deal with the subject of sodomy" in their nation's naval history (Eder 2004, 113). Only three decades after Gilbert's publications did new research on the topic appear (Burg 2007, 2009, 2017).

Pop culture keeps probing the memory of this trauma like a tongue worrying a toothache. Yet the actual history behind it has remained lost despite that research. The repressive nature of the naval archive explains part of this loss. A powerful ideology of unspeakability shrouded same-sex intimacy. Those who created and archived records often destroyed evidence of "unnatural" acts. Even when they did not, they regularly hid it with euphemisms and evasions. Clerks used descriptions like "drunkenness &c [etc.]" or "off his watch" (not present when scheduled on duty) when archiving records that actually concerned sexual relationships (Royal Navy 1801, 1809).

The naval collection in the UK National Archives is itself also a significant barrier to research. It is large and byzantine, requiring familiarity with the ways in which long-dead bureaucrats organized records. It is navigable—there are many good resources and experienced researchers who can help—but the archive can be forbidding. Limited funding and short research timeframes have pushed scholars to rely on standard sources and digitized collections. The neoliberal university discourages the sort of open-ended exploration that is needed to plumb this mammoth collection of records.

I suspect that this history has also gone unexplored for another reason: the nature of much of what the archive documents. The Royal Navy's crackdown on buggery did not target all types of same-sex relationships equally. Voluntary and consensual connections caused authorities little concern. They seldom brought them up for trial. Instead, the courts focused on exploitative relationships, particularly those between adult sailors and youths—boys, adolescents, and young men. In cracking down

on these types of relationships, the navy revealed that sexual abuse was common and in fact generally tolerated at sea.

The navy also left a great trove of evidence that consensual relationships were a common and accepted feature of sailors' communities as well. But this was not the main focus of the trials. Queer history has tended to avoid engaging with the history of sexual violence against men and boys. About a decade ago, a leading historian of rape observed that despite large literatures that deal with same-sex relations between men, "the history of male rape is yet to be written" (Walker 2013, 437). Her conclusion still holds today. The queer historiography has focused instead on stigma, policing and punishment, identity and subculture formation, and on representations and self-fashioning.

This avoidance is not surprising. The reality of the navy trials—and of those on land, which follow a similar pattern—unfortunately echoes vicious libels that queer people are all sexual predators, that they prey on the young. We are in the era of yet another new lavender scare, of moral panic about "grooming" and efforts to ban and criminalize queer history (Rosky 2021). What the archive appears to reveal could give ammunition to those who spread such lies.

In truth, careful study of this history does not support modern efforts to vilify queer people. Instead, it shows that the young, especially the socially marginal young, were vulnerable to abuse by adult men, as they still are today. Many more girls appeared in court making such allegations (Jackson 2000, 18–22). Yet today's moral panics make it dangerous to study and write about this history, particularly for those outside the tenure system who enjoy little job security and no protections for academic freedom.

The naval archive captures more than sexual exploitation. It also allows glimpses into queer pasts that were seldom documented. Consensual relationships did not interest the authorities as abuse did, but they still gathered much evidence about them. They also collected evidence of gender performance that did not conform to prevailing norms. Sailors spoke of sharing lust and romance with shipmates, of building deep bonds, and giving mutual pleasure. Others justified and defended their stigmatized desires. Some acted in ways associated with women; some assumed new gender identities. In a remarkable and well-documented case from 1803, a sailor declared they were neither male nor female, but a member of a third, non-binary gender (Liddel 1805, 137).

It is important to recover this history, which promises to deeply enrich our understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality, as well as life in the military organization that established global naval dominance and built and enforced the largest empire in history. We need to confront academic discomfort and cultural pressures against recovering and teaching queer history. We must also contend with material conditions that deter archival research.

Digitization of these records is not a solution to all these challenges, but it does promise to finally make this rich archive widely available. I have been developing a transcription and digitization project that takes inspiration from two successful digital public archives: the Old Bailey Online and the Radio Haiti Archive. The first contains a large body of reports from London's central criminal court; the second contains the surviving audio recordings from Radio Haiti-Inter, Haiti's first politically independent radio station.

Both projects allow any interested member of the public to access historically significant bodies of primary sources that would otherwise be difficult or impossible for most to use. Their online platforms are designed to be accessible. The Old Bailey Online provides extensive historical context for visitors (Hitchcock et al. 2012); the Radio Haiti Archive includes detailed archival descriptions and metadata in three languages—English, French, and Haitian Creole (s.n. 2020). Most importantly, they are both freely available online, not gated behind corporate paywalls like many other digital primary source collections.

Such projects take money, of course, when little is available. But this is work that needs to be done. We are witnessing attacks on queer communities, including attempts to suppress and criminalize queer history. Now is the time to push back, to invest in resources and strong scholarship to ensure that this history is not made unspeakable again.

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## Archives for Liberation: Rethinking Black Radicalism and Korean Literature

Jang Wook Huh

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In 1933, as the Hawaii-bound steamer *Taiyo Maru* was leaving Yokohama Harbor, Japan, Langston Hughes (1902–1967), one of the most emblematic figures of the Harlem Renaissance, began reading a bundle of newspapers that he had purchased in Japan. This leisure reading was meant to relieve the fatigue of a long journey that he had undertaken through the Soviet Union, Central Asia, and East Asia. Instead, some of the headlines unexpectedly grabbed his attention: “Korean Wire Thief Caught,” “Korean Steals Watch,” and “Korean Captured with Bike” (Hughes 2003, 274–75). What attracted Hughes to these petty thefts was the way in which the Japanese media highlighted the ethnicity of the people involved. The act of racially tagging Koreans in the Japanese crime reports reminded him of how African Americans also bore the stigma of criminality in the United States. Recalling a similar headline in an American newspaper, “Negro Arrested for Crime,” Hughes concluded that “the Korean subjects of Japan were in somewhat the same position as Negroes in the United States” (Hughes 2003, 275; Huh 2017, 201).

Hughes’s analogy provided me with a new perspective on the contours and scope of Black internationalism. As a Korean international graduate student studying African American literature, I felt uneasy with the prevalence of discussions centered around so-called “Black Orientalism” or “Afro-Orientalism,” which refers to a literary subgenre in which African Americans depict Asians in stereotypical terms as their allies (Mullen 2004, xi–xliv). For example, Black leaders sought to unify people of color by praising the rise of Japan after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Despite its political impetus, their pro-Japanese provocation has been criticized for condoning Japanese imperialism. Although Afro-Orientalism is useful for characterizing the unity between African Americans and the Japanese, this line of inquiry overlooks the Black radical tradition that disaggregated Asian nations and peoples from Japanese Pan-Asianism. Furthermore, Afro-Orientalism diminishes the creativity of Asians in their exploration of Black culture. Hughes’s

comparison between the racialization of Koreans under Japanese rule and that of African Americans under Jim Crow rule motivated me to write about the literary and cultural connections between Black liberation struggles and Korean anticolonial movements during the Japanese and American occupations.

I set out to locate two distinct yet interconnected archives. One archive contained documents that would offer insight into how Black intellectuals called attention to Koreans under Japanese and American domination. The other consisted of Korean texts that engaged with African American history and literature. I began my archival research at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which holds the largest collection of Langston Hughes papers. While sifting through a stack of manila folders, I came across Hughes's itineraries for his trip to Asian countries. These documents revealed that his first stop in East Asia was in fact Korea. During his time there, Hughes was followed by Japanese police, and he came to realize that the experiences of Koreans under Japanese colonization were similar to his own experiences as a Black person in the United States. As I continued my research, I read through Hughes's research notes for his second autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander*, and considered the possibility that the colonized condition of Korea may have influenced his literary work. As an archival "sleuth," I traced Hughes's significant impact on Korea from the 1930s to the 1960s. In his underexamined poem "Wait," Hughes describes Japan as an empire and invokes Koreans as "Japanese Conscripts" in "Colonial Asia" (Hughes 1933, 3; Huh 2017, 209). I also discovered letters from Hughes to a Korean professor of English in the 1960s, which helped me tell a previously untold story: Hughes had sent books and other sources to South Korea, which contributed to the publication of "the first book of the Negro literature series" entitled, *Heugin munhak jeonjip (The Selected Works of African American Literature)*, in Korea (Huh 2021, 115–16).

Conducting archival research is essential to historical redress, making it possible to challenge previous, limited assessments of Black internationalist writing. Archives reflect the evolving political positions of Black figures. For instance, while it has been widely known that George S. Schuyler (1895–1977), an African American journalist and Harlem Renaissance writer, supported pro-Japanese sentiment, his unpublished essay, "Japan and the Negro," which I read at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, sheds new light on his views. In this piece, Schuyler criticizes the Japanese colonization of Korea, highlighting the presence of racism among Asians: "The Koreans are a colored people and closely akin to the Japanese. Do the Koreans enjoy greater economic, political, and social freedom under Japanese rule ... ? Not at all" (Schuyler n.d., 5). Schuyler was likely aware of the potential consequences of publishing such an essay at a time when the Black-Japanese coalition was shaping the direction of Black radicalism. As

Schuyler's text exemplifies, archives provide a glimpse into marginal discourses that contest the established narratives and voices of Black internationalism.

Korean archives, on the other hand, played a key role in helping me understand how Korean writers produced subversive knowledge in relation to the democratic politics of African Americans. At the Beinecke Library and the Schomburg Center, my examination of how Harlem Renaissance writers represented a colonized Korea led me to explore how Koreans elaborated on the New Negro Renaissance. Although I did not encounter any archival documents that show direct contacts between African American and Korean writers, the absence of such records prompted me to consider a few critical issues. First, I noticed that while there is an institution named the National Archives of Korea, African American culture is not one of its main areas of focus. Second, the interactions between African Americans and Koreans took place through translation. During my research at the National Library of Korea, I had the opportunity to read the first Korean account of the Harlem Renaissance, which the Korean writer Heuk-gu Han (1909–1979) published in a general interest magazine. Han's translation is particularly noteworthy because he subtly adds patriotic slogans to Hughes's original poem "Our Land" to signal resistance to Japanese colonization (Huh 2017, 211–12). This provocative act suggests that Koreans were active interlocutors of human liberation and that textual production served as a medium for communication between African Americans and Koreans.

Archives are valuable sources that capture the complex and multifaceted relationships between African Americans, White Americans, and Koreans in a transpacific context. The documents I investigated demonstrate that the convergence of Black and Asian peoples was driven not only by political alliances but also by religious efforts and personal desires. For instance, in the early twentieth century, White American missionaries used African American texts to lump together African Americans and Koreans in the name of "civilization." During the American military occupation of South Korea (1945–1948), Korean men felt empathy for Black soldiers who suffered under US racism, but this attachment was sometimes fueled by homoerotic longing. By revealing these heterogenous aspects of cross-racial interaction, the archives I examined encouraged me to approach my project with a more nuanced understanding, rather than simply accepting celebratory notions of solidarity.

In closing, I want to reflect on how archives have inspired me to rethink how we read. After the outbreak of the Korean War (1950–1953), Black communists disseminated pamphlets, newspapers, and speeches to oppose US intervention in Korea as part of the Cold War. While these materials insightfully linked US imperialism in Korea to domestic racial violence in the United States, some of their rallying cries relied



on sensational slogans and overused tropes. One such example is Eslanda Goode Robeson's unpublished poem, "Which Side in a War?" which I found in the reading room of the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University. One might argue that this is a "weak" literary text without poetic artistry: "The War of the US in Korea / is a continuation of the war of Conquest" (Robeson, n.d., 3). However, this text raised crucial questions for me: How are we to read outspoken political poems? What is the importance of producing "simplistic" texts? Is it possible that Robeson did not publish the poem due to surveillance by anticommunists during the McCarthy era? Still, Robeson's straightforward style can be seen as appropriate for circulating a political consciousness during wartime. Robeson needed to avoid convoluted rhetoric to motivate people to take timely action. With the United States sending large numbers of Black soldiers to the Korean peninsula, Black intellectuals felt a sense of urgency to quickly convey antiwar messages to prevent Black soldiers from continuing to serve as agents of US imperialism. Robeson's archival documents helped me understand the context for her literary practice and see the intersection of the limited citizenship of African Americans and Koreans' lack of freedom during the Korean War. Archives teach us how knowledge production in the past can inform our pursuit of a more equitable future, a project of global civil liberation that continues to this day.

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## Chapter Three: Teaching with Archives

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### Connecting with Archives in the Classroom

*Seth Stein LeJacq*

Archives are essential for researching and teaching about the past. All the contributors to this chapter began the archival work they describe as graduate researchers. But as their essays show, their experiences in the archives also profoundly shaped their work as educators. For students, visiting the archive and conducting research with special collections has many benefits. These visits, which can take many different forms, let students learn from original sources and better understand and contribute to the fields they are studying.

Learning in the archives can give students unique and valuable experiences. For some, the archive becomes the site of powerful, often unexpected emotional reactions. Many researchers find a sense of connection to the past; some discover ways to support their communities, become activists, and find and tell stories that matter deeply to them. I see this happen each semester when I supervise research projects with groups of non-history majors. Students become passionate about exploring history they care about. They report back excitedly about what they have learned, for example, about reproductive medicine, queer health activism, or medical racism. They share remarkable finds from their trips to special collections such as ACT UP fliers, records of Black “granny” midwives in the Jim Crow south, and a rare early twentieth-century dissection portrait from Howard University’s College of Medicine.

The essays in this chapter explain how some CLIR-Mellon fellows use the archive as educators. They explore what the archive can offer teachers and students and examine challenges to providing such experiences. Among other factors, they highlight the extreme and worsening levels of inequality in American higher education. Wealthy institutions and securely employed faculty can more easily provide what are sometimes called “course enhancements” (an indication that such learning is seen as a bonus that the average student should not expect). Poor schools and precariously employed teachers often cannot offer their students anything similar.

In “Teaching Physical Archival Research in the Digital Age,” **Nicholas Johnson** writes of bringing groups of students to explore original primary sources in person. With the right preparation, these archival sessions let students experience the “magic” of archival encounters, allowing them to discover that “there is something enchanting about

holding a piece of history.” In “Undergrads at the Archives: Suggestions for Promoting Inclusive Archival Research in Undergraduate History Courses,” **Juandrea Bates** describes how she provides similar teaching in very different circumstances, working with students studying in rural Minnesota, far from well-resourced special collections. But with creative use of digital archives and her own research materials, she is able to invite her students into the archives in other ways.

As teachers, many of us have turned to creative uses of our archival research materials in the classroom to achieve similar ends. In “Roman *avvisi*: Bringing Art to Life,” **Joana Konova** describes how her study of Roman *avvisi* has informed her understanding and teaching of Renaissance art. She shows how she brings the archive to the classroom to help her students understand the past. And the archive can enter and inform our teaching in many other ways as well. In “Small Altars: Ethnic Studies in California and a Living Archive,” **Jose Emmanuel Raymundo** describes how communities themselves are “living archives” that can ensure that Ethnic Studies remains true to its “radical history and tradition” and serves as a “tool for freedom.”

Learning in the archives gives students unique experiences, unlike anything that they will find in other educational settings. These essays explore ways we can continue to provide this sort of teaching to our students while showing why it is so valuable to do so.

## Teaching Physical Archival Research in the Digital Age

*Nicholas Johnson*

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**W**atching the stunned faces of my students as they examined an original manuscript by Ludwig van Beethoven proved to be one of my most fulfilling moments as a musicologist. These music students had primarily encountered original music sources through digital media (scores, recordings, videos), but turning the pages of the manuscript and witnessing the creative process by inspecting the scribbles and cross-outs on the score, brought the music to life like never before. Suddenly, some of Beethoven’s decisions seemed more progressive when a more conservative option had been marked out and replaced with daring harmonic modulations.

I have had the opportunity to accompany dozens of students on archival trips, mostly at the Musiksammlung of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, Austria. These students have been of two types: master’s students in musicology who are likely to continue archival research, and undergraduate music majors taking study abroad courses for whom this experience is likely to be their only encounter with an archive. In both cases, I found that students who have only known a digital world crave opportunities that feel more authentic and tangible and that archival trips stimulate engagement that far surpasses any classroom or online experiences.

### Recommendations when Advising Physical Archival Projects

I offer four recommendations for making the most of archival projects and visits. First, as with any research project, it is vital to encourage extensive pre-research, even for study abroad courses in which an archival visit is a component of a larger educational undertaking. Music students typically have little understanding of what materials are held in an archive, or why their inspection might be worthwhile. I find it useful to describe the various sources a musicologist might encounter and how each provides vital clues to the past. These might include manuscripts in the composer’s or a scribe’s hand, printed scores of the same music

with different editorial decisions, ledger books, theory treatises, and instruments. In my preparatory sessions, I have students design a mock-research project and use the online archive catalog to amass a body of potential sources. For a study abroad visit, it is unlikely students will have time to view all their selected materials, but I find it valuable to begin stirring their imaginations of potential research projects that are possible within archives.

Second, it is vital to partner with the archive in advance and describe the types of students who will be visiting and their academic goals, and to suggest a few potential sources that might be of interest, chosen from the previously described mock-research projects. As anyone who does archival research knows, any trip is far more fruitful and expedient with the help of an archivist. When I first took a group of twelve students to the Musiksammlung, I was worried that they would be unwelcome. Happily, I have found the opposite to be true. Each time we arrived, an archivist had not only already pulled a few of the sources I had suggested but had also brought out several more for the students to investigate. He or she then led the students through close examination of the materials, while explaining archive etiquette and best practices. I have always been thanked for bringing young scholar musicians to the archive and encouraged to continue doing so in the future.

Third, in the archive itself I have found it vital for students to be free to explore based on their own intellectual curiosity. Once the archivist and I trust that the students understand how to safely handle potentially fragile material, I prefer to give them adequate time and space, while making sure the students know I am available for questions. I often do not know in advance what specific aspect of a document may catch a student's attention, and therefore I allow their own intuition to guide their initial observations.

Finally, after any day in the archives, I believe it is valuable to hold a debriefing session with all students present. I ask them individually to describe the sources they examined, what research question was driving their efforts, and what they hope to explore in the following days. These sessions often spark ideas among the other students and help to keep archival work fresh and exciting for the duration of short research projects. I also use this time to comment on aspects of the materials they may not yet have noticed (watermarks, script, ink, binding, corrections, wear, etc.) to stir their interest in a subsequent visit.

### **Potential Challenges**

I have been fortunate to teach in an archive that accommodates student projects, but I can foresee some potential challenges, depending on the field. The best solution is to work closely with an archivist in advance. First, there may be limitations of space. For my academic research I have

frequented the Musiksammlung, so I know roughly how many students can comfortably attend without disturbing scholars or endangering resources. Second, there are likely to be language limitations with archival sources. For music students, therefore, I concentrate on scores and manuscripts, rather than ledger books or treatises. Third, some archives require specific training or passes before allowing entry. An archivist on staff can likely be helpful in this situation. Finally, it is important to discuss with the archivist any potential issues regarding accessibility.

### **Benefits of Physical Archival Projects**

I have observed numerous benefits from introducing students to physical archives. First, it can engender a high level of excitement. College-aged music students usually have already spent years, if not decades, studying and performing music by famous composers. They develop deep emotional attachments, but at times their passion can fade amidst the barrage of academic work, life developments, and responsibilities. Holding the manuscripts of their heroes seems to enliven something deep within them; after their exposure to the archives, several students have commented to me that they felt “reinvigorated” or were “desperate to go practice.” Likewise, during one three-week study abroad course, a few students asked if they could use their free time to return to the archives and continue to explore. This may not hold true in all disciplines, but I suspect students in many fields develop passionate connections to their subject matter, and accessing physical archival materials can therefore be an emotional and enriching experience.

Next, I have witnessed an increase in comprehension of class materials in study abroad courses. As evidenced by exam grades, students seem to retain far more information about composers and historical moments if we have investigated relevant documents in the archive. This is, of course, a familiar pedagogical strategy of employing primary sources to increase student understanding; I have simply noticed that this technique is more effective when the primary sources in question are physical archival materials as opposed to digital renderings, perhaps because a tangible object is more memorable.

Finally, I continue to be impressed at the creativity students demonstrate when crafting research projects in the archives. Although I always encourage musicology students to do significant research with secondary sources beforehand, which culminates in a project proposal, once they encounter the sources, they often find new angles to explore. As an example, in 2019 at the Vienna Summer Music Festival, I worked with students who wrote on topics ranging from domestic dance music in the 1780s, to Freudian interpretations of Gustav Mahler, to the interactions of music and the Vienna Pride movement.

I believe utilizing physical archival materials can have a profound impact on student learning and motivation. I have not been able to lead an archival research trip since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I suspect that the outcomes would be even more impressive. COVID-19 forced us all to engage more with online sources, which certainly have their benefits, but immersion in the digital world likely has increased our students' craving for the physical. There is something enchanting about holding a piece of history, and even students of the digital age are not immune to that magic.

## Undergrads at the Archives: Suggestions for Promoting Inclusive Archival Research Practices in Undergraduate History Courses

*Juandrea Bates*

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**A**rchival research is the center of historical craft. It is time we make it the center of our teaching. Undergraduate research in the humanities has been linked to a host of benefits, including increased critical thinking skills along with improved student satisfaction, retention, long-term career achievement, and the decision to pursue graduate school (Craney et al. 2011; Behar-Horenstein et al. 2010; Lopatto 2010; Gregerman 1998). The benefits of mentoring undergraduates through archival research have not been lost on historians. Universities in urban areas showcase assignments that take students on day trips to local depositories such as the New York Public Library or the Schomburg Center (Roff 2007; Godfrey 2016; Manly et al. 2019). Scholars at research universities explain the benefits of introducing undergraduates into the vast archival collections on their own campuses (Toner 1993; Frusciano 2002; McCoy 2010). Other well-endowed schools support undergraduate research through travel research grants or integrate it into faculty-led study abroad programs (Johnson and Harreld 2012; Hauhart and Grahe 2015).

As an instructor, I want my students to have the same thrill of archival discovery that I had in Buenos Aires as a CLIR-Mellon fellow—the same as their peers have in urban and elite universities across the country. Teaching at Winona State University, a state school in rural Minnesota, has required developing a different approach. Many of our students are isolated from major archives due to structural factors beyond their control. The university is located in southeastern Minnesota—two hours from Minneapolis, and six hours from Chicago. Many of our students are the first in their families to attend college, and even more work long hours to pay for their education. Growing budgetary restraints restrict our department’s ability to provide research travel grants for most students.

Considering the impacts that undergraduate research has on learning, retention, and the pursuit of graduate studies, I often consider how



these factors hold back the next generation of historians. Considering the benefits offered by faculty-student research collaborations and the structural realities that limit archival access for students across the country, this essay offers two strategies that allow students facing similar constraints to participate in undergraduate research using archival records.

First, digital depositories featuring oral histories have proved amazingly useful. In 2020, I created an assignment for a United States History survey course in which each student analyzed oral histories from the Arizona Memory Project, a digital repository that includes six hundred oral interviews curated through a collaboration between the Arizona State Library and the State of Arizona's Archives and Public Records Division. Each student listened to five oral histories with the goal of pulling out repeated or notable themes presented in the interviews. The students then entered their observations into a collaborative Google Doc, creating an index of eighty-five oral histories. After reviewing the Google Doc index, students brainstormed the type of research questions they could answer using these oral histories. Each student developed a historical research question and used oral histories from the Arizona Memory Project along with secondary sources to complete a final research paper.

Working with oral history repositories like the Arizona Memory Project has several major benefits. First, it allows instructors to relinquish the role of expert and engage in a collaborative process of historical knowledge production alongside students. I had never used the Arizona Memory Project before I introduced it to my class. Students could not wait passively to receive information, and I could not provide them with a digested synopsis of the past. We experienced the joy of historical finds, the frustration of unanswerable questions, and the process of revising our hypotheses about the past together. As a result, students expressed a better understanding of history as a contested, and continuously evolving process.

Second, scholars who bring their students to the archive often note an increase in student engagement and excitement. I certainly found this to be true. Students delighted in hearing the actual voices of historical actors. They compared the accents, slang, pauses, and mannerisms of the people in their recordings with an attention to detail I sometimes found lacking in their close readings of documents. The audio experience also helped them pick out nuances that typewritten documents might have obscured. For example, the class might have missed a chance for historical empathy in reading a man's description of his young son's death, but on tape, the father's ragged breath made the continued grief unmistakable.

Finally, while some of the oral interviews include national senators and state legislators, the vast majority of interviews in the Arizona

Memory Project described life from the perspective of ordinary people: teachers, ranch hands, migrant workers, and miners. These narrators sometimes mention the events students learn about in our lectures, but most of their discussion centers on issues of personal importance: marriages and deaths, labor relations, property disputes, family life, and community. Students noted that even when several men mentioned World War II, they did so in the context of how their departure affected their families and communities. Generating research questions from these oral histories pushed students past the typical big-name, big-event approach to developing historical research topics that often plagues undergraduate history courses. Starting with these narratives then led to more interesting questions, better evidence integration, and more nuanced interpretations of the past.

While using oral history depositories has allowed me to simulate archival research in my survey courses, assignments in my History of Childhood course provide an example of how instructors might use photographed document collections to imitate archival research in an upper-division course. In 2019, I brought in translated transcripts of the court cases I used in my research into family courts in turn-of-the-century Argentina, along with photographs of similar documents procured from Chicago's Progressive Era Juvenile Court. I photographed boxes of the Chicago juvenile court documents without reading the contents and organized them in Google Drive folders the way they were organized in the archive. While I led students through a close reading of the translated cases from Argentina, having the boxes of documents from Chicago's juvenile records again allowed me to step back from the role of expert professor and engage alongside students in approaching these documents as novices. One of my favorite teaching moments came as I listened to students excitedly call out their findings to one another as they went through the photographs. We made our own in-depth index of the material, read some of it together, and let this index guide us in developing group research topics.

In this project, too, undergraduate research originating in the examination of primary sources resulted in nuanced research questions, rigorous research methods, and arguments that engaged with existing scholarship even as students incorporated more secondary sources and other primary sources to complete their research project. For example, one group of students noted that juvenile court records frequently mentioned children appearing as vendors and messengers on the streets of Chicago. The research team then paired material they found in these court records with newspaper reports and a 1911 Vice Commission Report to trace the shifting geography of street vending among Chicago's youth between 1899 and 1917. Their final essay argued for the importance of social networks among young people in navigating growing restrictions on the informal economy in the Progressive Era.

Another group of students was taken aback by the flippant language used to describe what appeared to be sexual assault against a twelve-year-old Black girl. This finding pushed the students to develop a project that explored the racialization of Black girls in Chicago court records, the press, and medical journals in the early twentieth century. Their final paper suggested that the school-to-prison pipeline for young Black girls had roots in Progressive Era child protection agencies who deemed Black youth as unworthy of protection or a threat from which society needed protection.

As much as the scholarship on teaching extols the benefits students receive from experiences in undergraduate research, there are benefits to faculty as well. Historian Christopher Corley utilized a similar strategy of engaging undergraduates in research projects based on photographs from archives in other parts of the world. As he aptly notes, collaborating with students on research with primary sources benefits faculty by providing new perspectives from a group of people with different interests and analytical frameworks (Corley 2013). In this way, it might be helpful to consider the benefits to the field of finding novel ways to engage students in primary source research from the very beginning of their college experience. Profound inequities in postgraduate enrollment in the humanities, degree completion, and employment remain. Not providing opportunities for all students to engage in the kind of high-impact learning that leads to higher content mastery, skill acquisition, graduation rates, and graduate school enrollment stands as a barrier to diversifying and creating equity in the knowledge professions, and it deprives our fields of vital perspectives that people of color and those in underserved backgrounds could bring to our scholarly and learning communities.

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## Roman *avvisi*: Bringing Art to Life

Joana Konova

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I held a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2013–2014, when I was preparing a dissertation on the reception of Antiquity in Renaissance Rome. Looking beyond the reception of ancient narratives and forms in the artistic production of the time, I was interested in the lesser studied but very representative Renaissance practices of reframing, reuse, and restoration of the actual remains of ancient Rome. I was fascinated by the nonchalance with which early modern artists rearranged and recut the ancient remains, uninhibited by post-Romantic concepts of originality. In sixteenth-century Rome, I argued, the restoration and display of antiquities reflected the very modes of sculptural production and display in ancient Rome.



**Fig. 1.** Torso in Armor, late 1st–2nd century CE. Marble. H 119.4 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, anonymous loan. Photograph by the author.

Roman sculptures exhibit what I call a loose connection between head and body, a phenomenon exemplified by a cuirassed torso on view in the Art Institute of Chicago (figure 1).

The front side of the torso is well preserved, and we can enjoy a great amount of detail in the carving of the breastplate, the leather flaps, tunic, and kneecaps. Taking a closer look at what is missing, we are bound to notice a difference between the line where the cuirass meets the neck and the fractured surfaces of the limbs: the neckline sits at the ridge of a regularly carved concave opening designed to house the neck and head, which were likely carved separately. In Antiquity, statues like this one were

kept as stock in stone-carving workshops waiting for a family who wished to commemorate a deceased relative. Upon commission, the statue body was joined with a head bearing the features of the deceased.

In 1593, this very procedure was used to erect a statue of Alessandro Farnese in the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Roman Capitol where it still stands today (figure 2).



**Fig. 2.** Statue erected in honor of Alessandro Farnese in 1593. Torso 2nd century CE. Head by Ippolito Buzzi. Marble. Rome, Capitoline Museums. Photograph by David Macchi, Romapedia's Pictures.



**Fig. 3.** Fig. 3. Statue erected in honor of Marcantonio Colonna in 1595. Marble, H 240 cm. Rome, Capitoline Museums. Photograph: Lalupa/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA

Born into the powerful Roman house of Farnese, Alessandro earned fame as a general. Rather than commissioning an entirely new work for the purpose, the Conservatori, the Roman civic officials, had a portrait head carved for him and joined with an ancient cuirassed statue, allegedly one that represented Julius Caesar—no coincidence when we consider that the Farnese claimed ancestry from the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Using an ancient representation of a general to represent a modern one merged the illustrious Roman of the day with his ancient predecessors, thus achieving, in a very literal sense, what Renaissance Romans aimed to achieve by decorating themselves with famous ancient ancestors.

Presenting the hero of the day in ancient stone further corroborated the collective fantasy of descent from and continuity with ancient Rome.

Two years later, a statue of Marcantonio Colonna, another illustrious general and a member of a rival Roman family, was placed facing that of Farnese (figure 3).

Entirely modern in makeup, Colonna's statue visually joined a modern portrait head and an ancient cuirassed body to produce a very similar hybrid. Some two years earlier, commemorative plates in honor of these generals were affixed on the Capitol in the same order: first one for Farnese, then one for Colonna. This repeated symmetry

served the delicate balance of power in late sixteenth-century Rome, a balance that had to be preserved and carefully renegotiated. Each of these events was accompanied by elaborate ceremonies and public feasts. These in turn reflect values, habits, and expectations characteristic of late sixteenth-century Roman society—a society regulated by ceremony and hence deeply concerned with hierarchy and propriety; a society in which theatricality and spectacle were part of everyday life; a society dominated by the power of the popes but carefully staging, and, to some extent, preserving, civic autonomy; and a society at once connected with distant parts of the world and fixated on its Romanness, deriving its identity from the strata below.

When I arrived in Rome in late summer 2013, I had little idea of all of this. I had been fascinated by that fine yet tangible thread that connected Renaissance practices of restoration all the way back to Roman sculptural practices. I assumed, however, that in this equation between modern and ancient Romanness, Antiquity held a position of authority similar to that suggested by the pedestals on which statues are placed in museums today. It was in the process of studying pertinent documents in the Roman archives, and in particular the Roman *avvisi* in the Vatican library, that these qualities of late sixteenth-century Rome came to life, allowing me to apprehend the agendas, motivations, and sometimes the urgency behind the day-to-day business with Antiquity in early modern Rome.

The *avvisi* were notes—literary announcements—written in Rome and other major cities and dispatched to courts across the peninsula and beyond to inform them of anything that was considered noteworthy: from ceremony and pomp, to the inauguration of artworks, to lists of goods from the “new Indies” brought by ship from Portugal. Since the *avvisi* were not yet digitized in 2013, I read every single note sent from Rome in the last three decades of the sixteenth century to find relevant information about the statues I studied. It was these seemingly unrelated glimpses that added up to a comprehensive, tangible view of the city. They helped me better situate the works I was studying then and have aided my understanding and teaching of Renaissance art ever since.

I hope to show this with the following example. In 1571, to celebrate the decisive victory against the Turks in the Battle at Lepanto, in which Marcantonio Colonna proved instrumental, the Roman city officials bestowed upon him a triumph similar to the triumphs that the Roman Senate bestowed on victorious generals in Antiquity. Colonna was the hero of the day. In 1584, he was no longer a star but still a celebrity worth being compared to. A three-line *avviso* from July 28th of that year reports, in its first line, how admiral Doria entered Naples that day greeted with fewer artillery salvos than had been fired on the occasion of Colonna’s entry into the city earlier that same year. The remaining two lines describe how Doria and the viceroy of Naples negotiated who should walk or sit to the right, the position of honor. This was not a verbal

negotiation but a brief performance of staged and expected conferring and refusal of said honor by way of the repositioning of their bodies. Social importance was audible, visible, and performed in ways that were codified and comprehensible, like spoken language. These performances were eagerly consumed.

When discussing Renaissance portraiture in my course on the arts of the Italian Renaissance, I often show this portrait of Pope Leo X in the company of two cardinals and ask my students to gauge, from the portrait



**Fig. 4.** Raphael, Pope Leo X with cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi. 1518–19. Oil on panel. 154 x 119 cm. Florence, Uffizi. Photograph: The Yorck Project (2002) by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH. GNU Free Documentation License.

alone, who of the two is likely to become the next pope (figure 4).

Students make great inferences based on careful observation of composition, distribution of light, and each cardinal's proximity to the pope or to objects of special significance. The vote is typically a tie until I point to the privilege associated with standing to someone's right side. Then, we have a clear winner.

The *avvisi* that I bring to the classroom afford students glimpses into the day-to-day business of a city that produced the art we look at today. Original sources, however fragmentary, translate into cultural knowledge that situates in context objects that have long been severed from their original

places and functions. It is the fragmentary character of archival evidence that allows students to avoid the pitfalls of deductive methods and to instead induce meaning from the evidence, scrutinizing the palpable and concrete to uncover underlying systemic patterns. This "archaeological" approach allows students to arrive at notions about societal norms, attitudes, and trends in the period they study, making those insights more meaningful and memorable to them. The process also teaches them to take charge of their own learning, to inquire, investigate, and evaluate.

Original sources that come to the classroom straight from the archive are not yet edited or framed. They present not as a narrative but as building blocks that students can use to create their own narratives. Exposure to original sources gives precedence to evidence over rhetoric. Students are not obliged to replicate narratives about Renaissance art that were coined in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth centuries. Moreover, students develop a sense of how such narratives emerge from the ambitions and preoccupations of their own times and often conflate



those with the period they try to rationalize. This educates students about the entanglement of art and art history and helps them discern how our perceptions of art are informed by handed-down narratives perpetuated by textbooks and curatorial practices, all to the ironic effect that notions very foreign to our time become the very lens through which we look at Renaissance art. Once this realization has taken hold, students are more likely to engage with Renaissance art in ways that are fresh and genuine. They are also likely to transfer this emancipated approach to other encounters with the past, as well as to any sphere of civil life where rhetoric clouds evidence.

Our students can benefit not just from the evidence that we witnessed in the archives and are eager to share with them. They can benefit from replicating those attitudes that best served us in our encounters with archival holdings. Common to any open-minded approach to archival materials, regardless of the context they come from, is a willingness to accept the answers suggested by the archive—by its holdings, its structure, its operations—whether our original research questions anticipated those answers or not. Moreover, an open-minded encounter with the archive requires the willingness to rethink, fine-tune, and rewrite those original questions. The archive obliges us to critically evaluate our inherited narratives as much as it obliges us to scrutinize our own narrative building. It is this commitment to critical inquiry that completes the process of teaching with archives—and that may be its highest benefit.

## Small Altars: Ethnic Studies in California and a Living Archive

*Jose Emmanuel Raymundo*

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**H**ow do we preserve the radical history and tradition of Ethnic Studies and approach it as a tool for freedom? This is a central question as Ethnic Studies becomes institutionalized.

There are accessible, rich, and expanding archives of Ethnic Studies scholarship to assist in growing the discipline as it becomes a formal part of the college curriculum. This is useful especially in California where the state legislature passed Assembly Bill Number 1040 (AB-1040) in July 2021. Ethnic Studies, defined in the legislation as a discipline about Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Latina/o Americans, is now a college graduation requirement for the 1.2 million students in the California Community College system, the world's largest system of public education. The inclusion of Ethnic Studies in the curriculum is especially striking given the fraught domains with which Ethnic Studies is intertwined. Its twin activist and academic orientations must continually wrestle with college administrations' tendency to use Ethnic Studies as proof of their commitment to "diversity." Meanwhile, right-wing political figures argue that academic approaches that deal with race and ethnicity are fomenting anti-American sentiment. Shortly after taking office as the Governor of Arkansas, Sarah Huckabee-Sanders outlawed the use of the term *Latinx* in state documents. Florida's Department of Education rejected an Advanced Placement African American Studies course curriculum because "it significantly lacks educational value."

### Founding an Ethnic Studies Department

Against this horizon, I examine Ethnic Studies—both the evolution of the discipline and the particularities of establishing an Ethnic Studies department at my institution, Santa Rosa Junior College, during the 2021–2022 academic year, when I served as the department's founding chair. My college's Ethnic Studies department emerged from intensified student activism after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Student groups,

such as the college's Black Student Union, demanded the creation of a Black Studies department as one way for the college to address curricular and institutional erasure. My reflection in this essay is animated by the knotted communal ties and ancestral bonds in Ethnic Studies.

The legislation requiring Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement, which was already in the legislative pipeline before America's latest round of national soul-searching over race, created a convenient opportunity for college administrators to respond to public outcry, fulfill forthcoming state requirements, and receive state funding for the legislation's implementation. However, while state legislation made Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement, the actual form it took depended on the priorities of individual community college school districts. Put in another way, while taking an Ethnic Studies course in order to graduate was a state requirement, creating an Ethnic Studies department, hiring tenure-track faculty to teach Ethnic Studies, or even creating new Ethnic Studies courses, was not. Rather, colleges could fulfill the requirement by cross-listing existing courses as fulfilling the state's Ethnic Studies criteria. Thus, the shape of Ethnic Studies at each college depends on the local culture of activism on the part of students, faculty, unions, and community members to resist cosmetic window dressing rather than structural investments in Ethnic Studies. The activism of students, faculty, and community members at my college was essential in pushing the administration to create an academic department.

It is here that different visions and functions of Ethnic Studies arise. In one version, Ethnic Studies is the synergy of multiracial activist intentions to dismantle White supremacy through education. It nurtures a student's ability to imagine past, present, future, and other worlds. It simultaneously articulates erased histories and claims the presence of marginalized communities. It enriches our understanding of race and nation by reframing it. This requires the hiring of Ethnic Studies scholars, many of whom come from historically underrepresented groups, into the ranks of permanent, tenured faculty. To talk about Ethnic Studies programs is to talk about the labor of people of color that make it work. Freed from the precarity of adjunct labor and given comparatively more resources and time, Ethnic Studies faculty can direct energy to develop curricula and implement long-range strategies for a department's sustained growth and to ensure its future existence. This is impossible without the presence of tenured faculty who can become fluent in the subtleties of the local institutional language in order to effectively fight for resources. The institutional fluency that comes from presence and permanence is even more essential in a community college where longevity can have contractual primacy over expertise. Ethnic Studies, in this vision, is pulsating with life—with students, scholars, and community members learning and working together and becoming a vital and undeniable part of the institutional body.

In the other vision, Ethnic Studies is public-relations window dressing permitted by college administrators in order to create an illusion of change without making substantial investments. In this vision, the transformational potential of Ethnic Studies is blunted and becomes decoration and proof of an institution's response to current fashion and sentiment. The translation of social justice into something legible and palatable for those uncomfortable or disinclined with it in the first place has resulted in the toothlessness of "DEI" speak. The radical power of difference is made over as "Diversity." Justice is defanged to become "Equity." "Inclusion," rather than structural transformation, becomes the goal.

So, what is the solution? How do we ensure that the radical, justice-seeking version of Ethnic Studies prevails? It is essential to locate Ethnic Studies within the communities it represents. Part of my duties as department chair was to meet with different groups, inside and outside the college, to both publicize the department and to solicit feedback. What did community members want to see in the new department? One group I met with was an association of Black residents of the North Bay, the area north of San Francisco including the affluent tourist "wine country" of Sonoma and Napa counties. About three dozen members Zoomed in from various locations; one student Zoomed during her dinner break at a wig salon. An elderly woman had relocated to San Diego but liked to attend the monthly meetings to maintain her ties with the local Black community. Most had no affiliation with the community college; they heard about the meeting through friends and attended specifically to hear about the new department. "It's here one minute and then it's gone," lamented one woman who recounted an Ethnic Studies department at the community college sometime in the 1970s and 1980s; she was unsure what happened to it. Another shared that in the 1980s when she was an undergraduate, she drove from Sonoma to Berkeley to take night classes in Ethnic Studies. She described how important it is that students have the option to take classes locally. She also made it a point to say that she took courses in African American Studies "but also Chicano Studies and Asian American Studies." Questions served as a gateway to recount protests and marches that community members had attended, notable academics from whom they had taken classes, and books that they still use decades after their last lecture. At the meeting's end, a woman emphasized the importance of African American Studies being taught by fully qualified scholars of African American Studies. She asked, "Who's gonna be teaching our kids? Who's gonna be talking to our kids?"

Discussing collective experience and communal memory is a powerful tool for combatting the "disciplining" of Ethnic Studies as it becomes institutionalized. The tendency for a discipline's desiccation

as it undergoes institutional inclusion can be countered by replacing or relocating Ethnic Studies within a network among *all* its practitioners, not just those in a classroom or in a college. Through open channels of communication between community members, students, scholars, teachers, and policy makers, Ethnic Studies can be a living discipline that can resist the idea that its inclusion in the curriculum is the end point, rather than an important marker at a way station on the route to systemic transformation.

The North Bay conversation room held a varied collection of people connected by their institutional experiences and individual memories with the discipline. The courses they took, the learning communities they formed, and the lessons they still carry forged their present-day investment. In the same way, Ethnic Studies is anchored in a wider community of students, teachers, and elders that exist outside a classroom, a library, or syllabus. These disciplinary witnesses carry historically significant memories, including memories of previous institutional promises made and broken. Very few academic disciplines would evoke the same kinds of commitment and engagement and remembering. It is hard to imagine an equivalent meeting happening if the college was establishing a new Chemistry or English department.

When I think about Ethnic Studies, I think of that community meeting and the woman asking “Who’s gonna be talking to our kids?” Rather than an academic discipline divorced from its roots, ancestors, and provenance, Ethnic Studies in 2023 can still rely on a network of activist-scholar pioneers from the Third World Strikes at San Francisco State in 1968–1969 who established the discipline. As an academic undertaking rooted in community, Ethnic Studies, as it takes shape in the 117 colleges of the California Community College system, should make room for the experiences and memories of local and regional networks of students, scholars, witnesses, and elders to build departments shaped by local histories, priorities, and needs.

### **Offerings, Altars, Voices**

Ethnic Studies is a forum filled with many voices, literal and metaphoric. The environment within which Ethnic Studies operates has to function with “non-consensus realities.” I borrow this term from the psychiatric movement and the *Healing Voices Network*, which argue that “filling a room with talk of phantasms will not infuse them with more vivid life or grant them more unshakable power. Instead, partly by lifting the pressure of secrecy and diminishing the feeling of deviance, the talk will loosen the hold of hallucinations and, crucially, the grip of isolation” (Bergner 2022).

An example of such a non-consensus reality emerges in a firsthand account from 1572, offering a picture of explorer Miguel de Legazpi’s

capture of Manila. The unknown writer observed the following about the Tagalogs, the ethnic group in and around the city:

When any chief is ill, he invites his kindred and orders a great meal to be prepared, consisting of fish, meat, and wine. When the guests are all assembled and the feast set forth in a few plates on the ground inside the house, they seat themselves also on the ground to eat. In the midst of the feast (called manganito or baylán in their tongue), they put the idol called Batala and certain aged women who are considered as priestesses, and some aged Indians—neither more nor less. They offer the idol some of the food which they are eating, and call upon him in their tongue, praying to him for the health of the sick man for whom the feast is held. The natives of these islands have no altars nor temples whatever (sic). This manganito, or drunken revel, to give it a better name, usually lasts seven or eight days; and when it is finished they take the idols and put them in the corners of the house, *and keep them there without showing them any reverence.* (Blair 1903, 164–65; emphasis mine)

Such journeys into the spiritual realm are not confined to the past. In my own daily life, my grandfather is always talking to me. Though he passed away almost thirty years ago, I think of him daily. The altars I make are almost always for him. While sampaguita will not grow in northern California, two summers ago, I asked landscapers to plant jasmine all along the garden walls. Dried stalks of fern, yellowing ficus leaves, and fallen rose petals are diverted from the green waste collection on Fridays and arranged carefully and intentionally around the few photographs I have of him. On his birthday, I cook trays of pancit, fill my table with crates of mangoes, and pounds of cashews—all his favorite foods. (Pork was his absolute favorite, but I abstain.) For months, I surround myself with the tropical sparkle of 1970s and 1980s “Manila Sound” that echoes the ambience of life under the Marcos dictatorship. Unlike nostalgia, my reminiscing is not rooted in a desire to return but is an attempt to create an affirming environment that acknowledges personal history and identity unconstrained from time, space, and institutional parameters.

All these non-consensus realities should be brought to the surface through Ethnic Studies, with one not taking precedence over another but rather used when warranted or desired, and made commonplace or otherwise “held in no great reverence.” Ethnic Studies should be done in the spirit of caring for oneself, with the goal of cultivating the “art of life” and freedom. Improvisation, randomness, and feeling are key values. What is created through those nodes are altars, clumps of islands, knowledge, refuge, imagination, and creation, which is the only way to freedom.

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## Chapter Four: Current State of the Archives

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### Navigating Endangered Archives during a Time of Global Instability

*Ania Nikulina*

Archives are frequently theorized as static repositories of tangible texts and objects, and as storehouses of impartial and systematized knowledge. As global instability threatens academic ecosystems and the state of the archive itself, challenges associated with access and the ability to effectively recover archival data are all brought into focus through the experiences of the CLIR-Mellon fellows.

As with any other cultural institution, the archive can be and often is underfunded, understaffed, or threatened by natural or anthropogenic hazards. Similarly, archival access can be a difficult, non-linear process of negotiation and compromise. Political, social, and cultural factors play a role in determining accessibility; some archives may remain completely inaccessible to outsiders due to issues of ownership, cultural sensitivity, or preservation concerns. Finally, description and digitization of archives is a complex and costly process; making materials comprehensively available online would be an impossible dream even without legal, ethical, or technical constraints. In this collection of essays, researchers describe the challenges of both maintaining and preserving the archive, detail lessons learned along the paths to find the objects of their archival research and reflect on critical aspects of preserving the extracted knowledge.

If we are to attribute historical and cultural meaning to the documents contained within archives, it is critical to consider not only the information contained in the archived materials, but the history and state of the institutions themselves. In her essay, “Epistemological Limits of Government Archives,” **Sauda Nabukenya** discusses the state of the archive in Uganda and shows that archives should be viewed not merely as sources of historical information, but as key sites of knowledge production—or of destruction, in the case of records deemed “unworthy of preservation.” The essay demonstrates that the state of the archive may represent a deliberate process to either preserve or slowly decay knowledge seen as undesirable and points to the problematic notion of archives existing as pieces of evidence and, at the same time, as mediums of political control.

Echoing the broad concern about the state of the archives in the face of global change, **Nicole Ferraiolo** and **Lizzi Albert**’s essay, “Archives



and the Climate Crisis,” considers the threats climate change poses to endangered archives, collections, and cultural heritage sites and discusses possible responses. Importantly, the essay considers both immediate threats from increased-intensity weather events and long-term, “slow motion disasters” associated with global climate change, such as the threat of sea level rise to archives and collections located in endangered coastal areas. Ferraiolo and Albert pose and discuss difficult questions focused on the role of state and private actors in both recognizing the reality of the threat posed by climate change and addressing the unequal effects of the climate crisis on the historical records.

In “Serendipity in and beyond the Archive,” **Amy Dunagin** focuses on the potential for surprise encounters with archival materials in contemporary search methodologies, as the boundary between digital and in-person research is blurred. She identifies both obstacles and potential bridges to serendipitous discovery. The value of serendipity speaks to the undertheorized discrepancy between highly contextualized data and the more broad-ranging academic curiosity facilitated by primary source research and international travel.

Finally, two essays in this collection take up the question of the digitization of archives and the potential impacts of this process, on both research and researchers. In “Digitization and Archival Violence,” **Adrienn Kácsor** and **Megan McDonie** consider opportunities and potential harms associated with the digitization of archival records in terms of source selection, contextualization, and access to digital archives as researchers attempt to navigate the rapidly shifting pathways by which they can approach historical records and study past human experiences. In “Becoming a Professional Historian in ‘Interesting Times,’” **Pablo Palomino** reflects on some of the challenges of archival research at a time of global instability. He suggests that efforts to make archives more accessible should go beyond bulk digitization and increasingly focus on providing detailed descriptions of archival collections to empower researchers to take more strategic approaches as they plan new investigations.

Preserving, accessing, and theorizing archival knowledge in the face of variable regulations, policies related to COVID-19, limited resources, physical location, digitization, and destruction—all complicated by outside political, social, and cultural factors—presents complex challenges for both archivist and scholar alike. The experiences of the CLIR-Mellon fellows suggest that by seeking to better understand these challenges from different disciplinary and professional perspectives, scholars can become more creative and effective researchers, teachers, and advocates for the preservation of cultural heritage.

## Epistemological Limits of Government Archives: Recovering the Voices of Ordinary Litigants in Local Legal Archives and Writing a New Legal History

*Sauda Nabukenya*

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**A**rchives have traditionally been recognized as repositories of historical documents, but their significance extends beyond preservation. As entities of power, archives possess the ability to manipulate memory by selectively deciding what to preserve, exclude, or even destroy. Archives, as Achille Mbembe points out, are the product of a process that transforms documents into items deemed valuable for preservation and keeping in a public space (Mbembe 2002, 20). To accurately interpret and assign meaning to the content of these documents, it is necessary to comprehend the history of archives and their collections. However, historians and other scholars often use archives without critically examining the reasons for their creation, the circumstances surrounding their creation, the creators of the archives, and decisions regarding their retention, selection, and arrangement. Scrutinizing archives and their materiality is critical to revealing and analyzing misrepresentations, biases, misinformation, and silences. This brief paper argues that scholars must view archives not solely as historical sources but also as sites of knowledge production. Using my own archival research experience, I demonstrate how the content of archives and their preservation affect accessibility, research inquiries, and historical scholarship. Furthermore, I discuss how my discoveries and observations in various archives altered my research trajectory.

During the summer of 2016, I undertook a preliminary survey of archives in Uganda to inform my doctoral research proposal on the British legal system’s dominance in the country. My primary destination was the Uganda National Archives in Wandegaya, Kampala, where I examined a wide range of government documents, colonial legislation, reports, petitions, administrative records, and newspapers. Furthermore, I conducted a search for judicial archives accessible in

Uganda; my exploration led me to the High Court of Uganda archive.<sup>1</sup> Within this repository, there was a wide range of documents authored by British judges and colonial officials such as appellate judgments, revision and confirmation orders, legal publications, and law reports and correspondence pertaining to the organization and operation of the High Court. As I delved into this archive, I was particularly impressed by the archive's extensive national coverage, comprising case files originating from every part of Uganda. This collection provided valuable insights into significant issues that were debated and resolved at the highest judicial level.

Although this legal archive provides valuable insight into the history of Uganda's legal system and the individuals involved in legal proceedings, it was apparent that the government archives and the legal archives I examined had a historical bias towards the views and opinions of colonial officials, legal experts, political leaders, and elites. Based on what these archival collections offered, I decided to explore how colonial officials influenced the development of Uganda's legal culture and marginalized local traditions. Despite being widely used and viewed as authoritative sources for research, government and legal archives have gaps and omissions and have been employed to control and manipulate historical narratives. By examining the influence of particular individuals on the archival collections and resulting historical accounts, we can gain a more profound understanding of the inherent epistemological limits and biases of government and legal archives. This awareness will prompt us to seek out other sources that may provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of the past.

Colonial government archives were created and maintained by colonial officials who actively used archives to promote the systematization and centralization of law at the national level. Using the rhetoric of objectivity and civilization, they constructed narratives that elevated British legal principles and procedures of justice, while denigrating indigenous legal practices as outdated and backward. It is important to recognize that the rhetoric preserved in these archival documents, as well as what was omitted or destroyed,<sup>2</sup> cannot be separated from the intentions of those who created them, namely colonial administrators, judges, court clerks, and colonial administrators.

These individuals had a keen sense of their roles in history and left behind extensive records such appellate court decisions,

<sup>1</sup>The High Court of Uganda was established in 1902 as the final court of appeal for cases tried in both customary and civil courts. Its judges were members of the colonial legal service, most of them trained in England or in India. It continued to function as the decisive voice in matters of law until the 1990s, when the Constitutional Court was instituted.

<sup>2</sup>For example, at the end of the British empire, a sizable number of records were destroyed, and others were sent back to Britain to be kept as secret under the program code-named "operation legacy" (Sato 2017).

colonial legislation, annual reports, legal publications, articles, and correspondence. For instance, as early as 1904, colonial legal authorities began the practice of record-keeping and publishing colonial laws and appellate court decisions in government gazettes and law reports. Their goal was to establish a comprehensive collection of national laws, identify authoritative court decisions, and create a system that would operate based on precedents (Odoki 1975, 5). The creation of archives was a critical component of the wider colonial project of state building and legal modernization. Legal archives played a significant role in shaping future possibilities, serving as repositories for precedents employed to support subsequent cases and actions. Paul Halliday contends that legal archives have a history that can be traced back to their physical and material forms. He argues that the materiality of law encompasses not only the words used, but also the physical objects and procedures for storing, using, and finding precedents to generate legal authority (Halliday 2014, 110). This helps explain why colonial archives are well organized and maintained, with documents written on expensive paper and preserved on metallic shelves and in acid-free folders and boxes (figures 1-2). Their durability over time can be attributed to the quality of the paper and the buildings in which they were housed. These colonial archival practices and politics of knowledge are primary reasons for the absence of ordinary people's voices in these archives.

To overcome the epistemological limitations of government archival collections and state legal sources, I searched for local records that could fill the knowledge gaps. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, accessing the thoughts and actions of marginalized individuals is a challenging task unless historians decenter government archives as the central focus of political thought (Trouillot and Carby 2015). In 2018, I made



**Fig. 1.** A shelf holding government publications. Uganda National Archives, Entebbe. Still from "Archives, Access, and the Politics of Information in Africa," a recorded talk given by Derek R. Peterson at the Center for Research Libraries Collections Forum 2018 (Peterson 2018).



**Fig. 2.** Colonial government archives in Uganda are typically housed in acid-free folders and boxes and so are more accessible to researchers. Photograph from the author's personal collection.

a discovery at the Mengo archive, where I uncovered previously unseen local records for Buganda courts. These courts' records contained a wide range of lawsuits that had been deemed unimportant and unworthy of preservation in comparison to the precedent-setting appellate decisions from British courts that were published in the law reports. Despite being written in vernacular and the court proceedings giving the impression of a "backward" society, these local court records are unique and detailed. The case files contain first-person testimonies of litigants, testimonies from witnesses, proceedings from lower courts, and statements from the police. These records offer valuable insights into the

diverse ways that ordinary Ugandans debated and imagined law, offering alternative perspectives to the narrow categorizations envisioned by the colonial state. Unlike appellate court decisions that often obscure the voices of ordinary people through formulaic and condensed narratives, these records provide detailed accounts and access to a much broader range of legal cultures and ideas.

When I discovered these records, they were inaccessible, uncatalogued, and impossible for anyone to use for research (figures 3–4). They were stored in the basement repository of the court buildings, with files haphazardly piled on wooden shelves and some even scattered on the floors, covered in dust.



**Figs. 3–4.** Pictures of the Mengo archive taken before the materials were organized and cataloged in 2018. Photographs from the author's personal collection.



**Figs. 5-6.** The documents are fragile, very old, and some are damaged. Photographs from the author's personal collection.

These historical records are very delicate and old, and some are damaged from pests, water, and rodents (figures 5-6). Additionally, due to poor storage conditions, the cheap paper on which they were written is deteriorating and slowly dissolving. Even opening the file gently or flattening the creased pages causes particles to fall off, leading to their destruction.

These images not only highlight how these local archives are endangered, but also shed light on the selectivity of preservation, prompting questions about how the physical state of these records shapes access to knowledge. As Steedman has argued, the “dust” of archives profoundly impacts when, how, and to whom they become sites of knowledge (Steedman 2001). The way these records were neglected and the manner in which they were kept indicates that they were not considered to possess legal authority. After cases were resolved in the native courts, the documents were folded, tied, filed away, and forgotten, along with the people and legal practices that generated them. Despite the importance of these courts in colonial Uganda, their records have also been neglected by legal historians due to a combination of factors, such as the perception that they lack legal authority and the fact that they were often written in local languages. Furthermore, a significant number of these native courts' records have been lost or destroyed. Nonetheless, these local records are incredibly valuable as they contain voices of ordinary people and offer insights into their lives and experiences. Specifically, they shed light on how individuals participated in the administration of justice and governance within their communities.

Given that native courts did most of the judicial work and governance during the colonial era, their records are the best sources from which to study the development of law and legal institutions in Uganda. By recovering the histories of local courts, the significance of ordinary people in law and governance is brought to the forefront since in native courts everyone participated in policing their communities, identifying offenders, and resolving conflicts. Through these local court documents, we can see how those involved in the cases played active roles in collecting

evidence, observing proceedings, and providing information that was used to decide cases. Furthermore, ordinary litigants played significant roles in producing that archive as they were the textual protagonists of lawsuits.

The archive of Mengo, which holds the records of Buganda courts, includes documents authored by individuals who were both literate and illiterate. Even those who were unable to read or write contributed to the archive through their testimonies, the documentary evidence they presented, their petitions, and the complaint letters they wrote. Although native courts have been associated with orality and custom, and British courts with textuality and law, a thorough examination of lawsuits demonstrates a more complex history of legal writing and practices. In this localized legal system, a wide range of practices and materials (oral and written) informed law and justice, including cultural and religious traditions as well as the local knowledge of ordinary people. These dynamics allowed ordinary people to bring their ideas, attitudes, everyday life experiences, and local evidentiary practices into legal practice, thereby shaping the application and content of law. Historians have missed this reality because they have too long relied on incomplete or inaccurate sources preserved in government archives.

When I began to read sources in reverse, from local to official records and reading against the grain of official archives, I realized that I needed to change my research questions and the subjects of my study. By centering local records, I was able to uncover the voices and experiences of ordinary litigants such as women, landless men, servants, slaves, immigrants, and children who were overlooked in official archives. As I delved deeper into these sources, I discovered the significant roles these groups played in shaping law and its application in colonial and post-colonial Uganda. By recuperating these otherwise unheard voices of litigants whose pursuit of justice and liberties made it to the courts in no spectacular fashion, whose cases were not considered precedents or jurisprudentially worthy of preservation in law reports, my research recasts our understanding of the evolution of law and legal institutions in Africa. It does so by broadening the sources of jurisprudential concepts of justice, rights, and peace in colonial and post-independence Uganda. By highlighting the epistemic value of unheard voices of marginalized groups, my research challenges traditional narratives that have focused on dominant groups by providing more nuance and an inclusive perspective. It also prompts us to consider the goals of the colonial project, its emphasis on reforms, cultural distinctions, categories, the politics of knowledge, the selection of histories and historical actors, and how archives were curated for future use.

Although local court records were bureaucratically neglected and poorly preserved, they are the most valuable discovery during my research expedition. They not only changed the nature of my research

questions but will also contribute to the writing of new legal history, one that incorporates the perspectives of ordinary people. The Mengo archive of the Buganda courts that contains voices of ordinary litigants is the most significant legal archive of its kind: the paper record of an African court, operating according to the legal and jurisprudential traditions of what was often referred to as “customary law.” While there are other archives for customary courts in Africa, none had the same level of autonomy, prestige, or power as the Mengo court. As such, the archive will be of interest not only to scholars and students of Uganda, but to political philosophers, intellectual historians, and scholars of legal practice more generally. We organized and cataloged the archive and transferred it to the Uganda National Archive in Wandegeya for safekeeping and accessibility (figures 7-9). Due to the age and fragility of the records, most of the very old records remain inaccessible today. We are seeking funds to digitize the collection for future accessibility.



**Fig. 7.** Mengo archival records after they were processed in preparation for a move to the Uganda National Records Centre and Archives (UNRCA). Photograph from the author’s personal collection.



**Figs. 8-9.** Transferring and organizing the records at UNRCA. Photographs from the author’s personal collection.



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## Archives and the Climate Crisis

*Nicole Kang Ferraiolo and Lizzi Albert*

**Nicole Kang Ferraiolo** served as CLIR’s Director of Global Strategic Initiatives from February 2019–January 2023, and as Program Officer from 2014–2019. In 2020 and 2021, she hosted the second season of CLIR’s podcast *Material Memory*, which focused on climate change and cultural memory. In 2023, Nicole became the Head of Digital Strategies for the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum. She holds an MA in International and World History from Columbia University and an MSc in International and World History from the London School of Economics.

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**T**his paper is a summary of the open roundtable discussion, “Archives and the Climate Crisis,” held at the CLIR-Mellon Fellows Reunion Symposium in May 2022 (St. Louis, Missouri). The discussion focused on exploring how the climate crisis impacts the way researchers work with records of the past. In this session, participants considered the roles and responsibilities of researchers, and what can be done to help safeguard collections and avert the worst climate outcomes.

The session opened with an overview by moderators Lizzi Albert and Nicole Kang Ferraiolo, who produced and hosted season two of CLIR’s *Material Memory* podcast, focused on cultural memory and the climate crisis. They opened the session with a reminder of the scale and stakes of the crisis and shared examples of specific impacts of the climate crisis on archives and cultural heritage. One study found that over 95 percent of Mediterranean UNESCO World Heritage sites were at risk from coastal flooding and erosion. Archaeological sites in particular are among the most at-risk (Reimann et al. 2018). Another study found that in the Southeastern United States, a one-meter rise in sea level (which is predicted to occur by the end of the century), will result in the loss of nearly 20,000 archeological sites (Anderson et al. 2017). Even underwater archaeology isn’t immune. Ocean acidification, more powerful hurricanes, changes in ocean depth, changes to marine biology, and other ecological changes will impact ancient shipwrecks and other artifacts. One study found that 98.8 percent of archives in America’s Lower 48

states will face a climate change risk factor by the year 2100 (Tansey 2017). This study *only* looks at temperature and water risks, not wildfires and other climate hazards. And if 98.8 percent of archives in the US are at risk, what does this mean for archives elsewhere in the world?

Ferraiolo and Albert also discussed some of the direct and indirect ways the climate crisis affects cultural heritage. In addition to disasters and natural hazards, slow motion disasters such as increases in temperature and humidity are expected to lead to more bugs and mold in archives. Meanwhile, the insurance industry is reevaluating how it models risk (Ritchie 2013). This will have a significant impact on museums, which may no longer be able to afford to insure their collections. Budgetary deprioritization will be another issue. Governments and institutions will be spending huge portions of their budgets on adapting to climate change over the coming decades. Cultural institutions have always been early targets for budget cuts, and expensive climate adaptation measures in prioritized sectors may lead to insufficient funding in cultural sectors. Finally, threats to communities themselves will affect heritage. Culture, heritage, and historical memory often live outside formal cultural institutions. When communities are displaced or forced to adapt, their cultural and social cohesion risks being permanently lost.

Attendees came to this session with different levels of familiarity with these issues. Some of the participants attended because they hadn't thought about these issues and wanted to know more, while others had engaged with climate change actively in their work. Several participants commented on the way climate change affects the archives with which they work. Ryan Kashanipour talked about how many of the collections he works with in Latin America are exposed to open air and how the increasing humidity will have a disproportionate impact on the archives with the fewest resources, exacerbating existing structural dynamics. Another participant, Naomi Pitamber, shared her experience working on Crete. Pitamber worked with a team that surveyed deprioritized historic sites in small villages to document neglect and mold with the eventual goal of better preservation of buildings and frescoes. They found that certain kinds of horticulture could help wick moisture away, and they plan to return with additional funds to assist with landscape architecture.

Several participants observed that their fields are not thinking enough about the relation of racial inequity to climate change and the archives. Sharon Burney pointed out that several of the institutions most at risk for climate impacts, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), are facing multiple risk factors, and in many cases, their institutions and collections are being subsumed by larger institutions.

A number of actions were proposed. Pitamber suggested a sampling project across multiple archival-based fields to see how disciplines are changing as a result of climate change, in the hopes of developing an

anticipatory model to help researchers and cultural organizations respond together. Sharon Burney suggested a mapping and inventory project to identify where we are losing culture, inspired by some of the mapping work that has been done around the slave trade that helps descendants learn where they are from.

A core theme throughout the discussion was the importance of community. Jang Wook Huh made the point that scholars cannot take action alone; raising awareness is a collective act. Participants talked about strategies for building this sense of community and common purpose. Karl Kubler pointed out that in some ways, this process is easier in an academic setting than it has been in the past because scholars are increasingly expected to combine activism with scholarship, even if the incentives in the academy have not caught up with this reality. When looking to build community outside the academy, Huh spoke about the importance of giving communities opportunities to take ownership of these issues. Burney mentioned that tending to community was like tending to a garden in that it requires ongoing investments of time and resources. Pitamber suggested finding common ground that everyone can agree on; sometimes, this common ground can be simple, like everyone agreeing that they do not want the local church to fall down: “We can’t force everyone to be a part of a common purpose, but we can still find something in common.”

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## Serendipity in and beyond the Archive

*Amy Dunagin*

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**M**ost researchers can point to a paper or article they never intended to write—one that resulted from a serendipitous “find” in an archive during research for something else entirely. This archival serendipity is one of the most fruitful, not to mention fun, aspects of research: the unexpected avenues pursued only because we stumbled upon interesting material on an adjacent shelf, or because a skilled archivist pointed us toward a dusty box we would never have found on our own. Much of this serendipity seems to be lost as we conduct more and more of our research online using digitized source databases. However, there are strategies for achieving serendipity both in the archive and in digital primary source research, especially when in-person research is impossible, whether due to funding constraints, responsibilities that preclude research trips, or other limiting factors.

One of the highest-yield ways to facilitate serendipitous discoveries beyond the archive is by identifying surprising hits from keyword searches in digital primary source databases. Creativity with keyword selection improves the chances of finding something exciting. With the advent of fully searchable databases, we can afford to be profligate with our lists of keywords. Although keyword searches are more likely to turn up large quantities of truly irrelevant items, they also increase the chances of finding obscure sources of great relevance to our interests—items missing from the footnotes of the secondary literature that nevertheless illustrate a point perfectly or enrich our understanding of a topic.

A second avenue for pursuing serendipitous finds—whether in the archive or behind our computer screens—is to allow ourselves to be captivated by intriguing historical actors and to follow their archival trails wherever they might lead. An individual we encounter only because of her limited connection with, say, an institution we are researching, but whose letters or recorded actions cause us to feel surprised, disgusted, or amused—such an individual is likely to be as interesting in other contexts as in the one we were intending to study. Occasionally, following the

trail of an individual through the written record of her life can lead to rewarding side projects or shape the original project in surprising ways.

In any form of research, the key to serendipitous finds is allowing ourselves to cave in to our curiosity. Even when we are conducting digital research, unhindered by an archive's hours of operation or the excruciating brevity of even the longest research trips, our time is our most precious resource, and we all feel the urge not to waste it. It often seems sensible, or even imperative, that we put on our blinders and look only at items that fall within the specific research parameters we have set for a project—whether chronological, geographical, or thematic. But in denying ourselves the chance to “waste time” by resisting opportunities to follow our noses down unlikely paths, we also deny ourselves one of the great joys of research, and perhaps even an unexpected publication or two along the way.

On my last research trip before the COVID-19 pandemic, I called up a box of randomly organized eighteenth-century sheet music, looking for anything from the earliest years of the century that might be relevant for my book project. As I skimmed, I noticed a British theatrical song from the 1770s that had the refrain, “give me death or liberty.” I was intrigued by the idea that Patrick Henry's line had made it into a theatrical prelude on the other side of the Atlantic so quickly. Had I been in the archive with only pencil and paper, I am certain my musing would have ended there. But with my laptop and Wi-Fi, I was able to give in to my curiosity on the spot. It took only moments to discover that the chronology was in fact the other way around: the song text I had before me predated the Henry speech by several months. Even more enticingly, it had been printed in a magazine that circulated widely in the colonies and that Henry would have been reasonably likely to encounter within a few weeks of his speech. Although it had nothing to do with my book research, my fortuitous but entirely accidental discovery of this now-obscure song text resulted in a couple of conference papers and a forthcoming publication in *Early American Studies*.

As my experience illustrates, new possibilities for achieving serendipity are arising as archival research continues to evolve, especially in response to rapid technological change. Already, the line between digital and in-person research has blurred, as technology is integrated into the reading room experience in new ways. Our fingers jump between manuscript and keyboard or touchscreen as we consult finding aids, biographical databases, digitized collections, and countless other sources in real time. What we find shapes how we encounter the archival documents before us. Our generation of scholars is the first to integrate these two seemingly disparate research experiences so thoroughly. This juxtaposition of old and new information technologies is a defining feature of contemporary research, and it promises rich opportunities for serendipitous discoveries that it will be our privilege to explore.

## Digitization and Archival Violence

*Adrienn Kácsor and Megan McDonie*

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**Megan McDonie** is an assistant professor in the Department of History at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2017 and conducted research in Guatemala and Spain for her dissertation, “In the Shadow of the Volcano: Volcanic Landscapes, Indigenous Knowledge, and Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Mesoamerica.” She holds a PhD in history from Penn State University.

**T**his paper is a summary of an open roundtable discussion that occurred at the CLIR-Mellon Fellows Reunion Symposium “Looking Forward to the Past,” in St. Louis, Missouri, May 2022.

This roundtable, “Digitization and Archival Violence,” emerged from discussions among CLIR-Mellon fellows about how increased archival digitization has impacted structural imbalances related to archival stewardship and scholarship. As junior scholars who had the privilege to conduct on-site archival research prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, our experiences pushed us to consider how access to physical archives shaped the research and writing process. We had to conceive



**Fig. 1.** This photograph is from the Fortepan Collection, an open-access digital repository that allows users to submit their photographs to the online collection. All users can then add new tags to the sources. “Hungary, Nádasladány,” around 1895–1899. (Photo credit: Klósz György). <https://fortepan.hu/en/photos/?id=83549>.

our research through—or against—the archive catalog systems and the accessible collections. We faced, for instance, the challenges of accessing Indigenous experiences in colonial Spanish records or twentieth-century migrant artistic production in collections of national museums. During our pre-COVID-19 research, national and larger state archives already had digitization projects, which enabled researchers to work both in physical archives and remotely with online records. As COVID-19 gripped the globe in spring 2020 and prevented countless researchers from accessing physical archives, researchers shifted to dealing primarily with digital collections. Since the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact physical archives, scholars have been confronted with both the benefits and challenges of archival digitization.

Without attempting a comprehensive analysis, this short roundtable summary highlights three larger themes regarding how digitization has impacted access to archives: accessing digital repositories; the ordering of the digital archive (digital catalogs, labels, tags, metadata); and locating and reading digital archives (digital literacy). Ultimately, the goal of the roundtable was not to find “solutions,” as most of these questions have been—and will continue to be—discussed in dialogue with unfolding societal changes. Archives are never innocent, as they are institutions that keep alive some voices at the expense of others. They are often created and cataloged by historical figures of power, where inequalities are produced and reproduced.<sup>1</sup> The evolving nature of digitization, however, raises possibilities regarding how this could alter or reshape these existing systems. Digitization provides important ways to emphasize the dynamism of the archive and to facilitate connections between past, present, and future. While archives are slowly returning to physical access in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of digital records for research will continue to increase in the future.

### Access and Digital Repositories

During the roundtable, an important conversation emerged around the possibility of digital archives providing expanded access to wider audiences beyond professional researchers and students, including individuals and communities. These collections could not only reduce users’ often time-consuming, expensive, and environmentally unfriendly travels, but also accommodate everyone—regardless of race, sex, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, or disability—by facilitating access to data. However, digital repositories remain tied to institutions and their

<sup>1</sup>For example, works such as: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972); Charles Merewether, *The Archive* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).



structures. Access to digital content might require registration and even institutional affiliation.

Questions arose such as, how could the process of archival access be changed to welcome all users? Who would then be the stakeholders for archives? These questions compel archivists and researchers to consider the significance of funding community-based digitization projects. Additionally, digitization can empower diverse communities to participate in the production of their own histories and to access their own records. This also raises important ethical questions regarding which documents should be included or excluded from the digitization process. The right not to be digitally accessible is as crucial as all questions about digital access. The process of digitizing archival materials must take into account the people, the lives, and the experiences contained in the records, and whether these records should be widely accessible. Researchers face ethical dilemmas when studying human experiences of the past and must carefully respect their humanity. Similarly, digitization pushes archivists to make ethical decisions about which materials to include for digital access.

### **The Order of the Digital Archive**

Catalogs, archival labels, descriptions, and metadata are products and producers of history. They both shape and mirror the societal values and structures present at the time of their creation. So, what can we do with classification systems that are themselves laden with discrimination? Changing these existing systems is a long and likely never-ending process, as it relates to structural questions beyond individual documents, collections, and institutions. As archivist Dorothy Berry suggests, “Problems that took years to build are not often dismantled in an hour” (Berry 2021). Berry argues that reparative descriptions of archival materials can backfire if exercised merely as institutionalized, “fast-track” solutions to centuries of structural racism. The roundtable discussed how archives should keep old catalogs and metadata as historical records, while also redesigning them to make them more inclusive and to help researchers to think about the collections from new perspectives.

Digitization can also be a tool for facilitating collaborative productions of archival labels and tags involving people who bring different perspectives to materials. The Fortepan Collection is an example of an online repository that gives users a chance to create and add new tags or labels to digital documents (figure 1). That opportunity, however, also poses questions about the responsibility of digital archives to filter harmful content. As one participant emphasized, the primary challenge is to start asking new questions to stop re-inscribing ineffective and harmful archival systems. Digitization of archival materials could thus facilitate cross-cataloging of sources under a variety of topics or characteristics. It

could, for instance, include tags linking a source to its physical place in a repository as well as tags that connect it to new issues or ways to approach the source.

### Digital Literacy

One of the most poignant conversations emerged around the question of digital literacy. Access to digital documents requires the ability to both locate the documents one needs and to read them critically. In the case of digitized materials, additional effort might be required to read documents in context, since they are separated from their physical archival folder or collection. Physical archival research does have the advantage of allowing the researcher to see other records from similar years or authors because materials are often filed together with other related items. Digital records could include information about other sources stored in the same box or collection, similar to how online library catalogs sometimes provide a list of other books on the same shelf as a selected book. Additionally, librarians have been developing valuable instructional programs for teaching critical reading skills, including working with decontextualized digital archives. As digital repositories expand in an era of misinformation, these digital literacy initiatives are increasingly important.

The digitization of archival records presents an array of opportunities and challenges for researchers in the twenty-first century. It facilitates easier access to historical events and knowledge and provides opportunities for new ways to describe and think about archival sources and collections. At the same time, it creates ethical challenges about selecting sources for digitization and raises important questions regarding ways to address digital literacy. Furthermore, while a physical archive potentially reflects an isolating or stationary space, digital archives provide a platform for these repositories to interact with a larger audience and to reflect on current social issues. Ultimately, digital archives push us to think critically and creatively about sources, the access of archival institutions, and the changing ways that individuals can approach historical records and study human experiences of the past.

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## Becoming a Professional Historian in “Interesting Times”

*Pablo Palomino*

**Pablo Palomino** is an associate professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Emory University. He received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2010–2011 and conducted research in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Germany, and the United States for his dissertation, “Transnational Musical Networks in Latin America, 1910–1950.” He is Licenciado from the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina) and holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Berkeley.

**C**LIR has shaped my professional career in multiple ways. First of all, it supported a dissertation research project that allowed me not only to visit the archives I needed to visit, but to spend enough time in several cities to establish academic contacts, improve my linguistic and cultural skills, peruse bookstores, visit historic sites, and learn about political realities and public debates. All these things became essential to my formation as a Latin Americanist, and also as a scholar inclined to reflect on the links between my specific research and the larger cultural issues that I want my work to illuminate. The academic year 2010–2011 was thus not just when I found and began to organize tons of notes, photos, and texts for my dissertation, but the year I became acquainted with institutions, histories, and intellectual traditions in Brazil, Mexico, Germany, the United States, and even my native Argentina. This experience infused my thinking about my dissertation topic—the transnational networks that created what we call “Latin American music”—with questions about how actors and institutions, historically and currently, invested resources in curating and transmitting specific parts of the region’s musical and social past. This formative experience continues to feed my thinking, the courses I teach, and my research more than a decade later.

Second, through conversations with amazing fellows, serving on the CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellowship Selection Committee, and working with the superb CLIR team, I learned the highest standards of research design, proposal writing, and evaluation. When evaluating undergraduate, graduate, or faculty research proposals, I strive to replicate the CLIR model: multiple evaluators per application, attention to originality and clarity, identification and explicit discussion of the traits that make some proposals look particularly strong or weak, and devoting plenty of time to discuss those either “in the middle” or with disparate scores. Conversations with other CLIR reviewers taught me

how much professional *respect* is required in a rigorous evaluation system, and how productive it is to turn conflicting views into an opportunity to become aware of our own intellectual habits and epistemic criteria. Our experiences working together were animated by new perspectives, questions, and discoveries—exactly what I love about being a historian.

It is not easy to replicate this level of professionalism in other places where there is not enough time to read, interrogate our own biases, and create an atmosphere of respect and collegiality in which productive debate can emerge. But bringing these standards to my practice has been worth trying, and I do it with a sense of confidence for which I will always be grateful to CLIR.

The third lesson I have taken from my experience with the CLIR-Mellon program is its encouragement of dialogue across disciplines and across national bibliographies, something fundamental in shaping my professionalization as a historian. Particularly important to me, as a foreigner, was the confidence this gave me that my formation in other languages, perspectives, and bibliographies was something valuable. This experience happily coincided with a growing interest, within Latin Americanist historiography and beyond, in transnational and global history and interdisciplinarity.

Now, the “interesting times.” The ecology of archival research in the foreseeable future under pandemics, war, and other uncertainty-generating factors poses tough challenges. How might we keep alive the social and cultural immersion surrounding archival research in the future, should circumstances such as the isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic recur? How can we replicate CLIR’s professionalism and support for intellectual exchange (meetings, discussions, workshops), which are essential to any intellectual project, when the overall conditions for research have worsened? Uncertainty regarding travel planning and archival accessibility forces us to have a “Plan B” *and* a “Plan C” and the flexibility to shift between them depending on changing circumstances. Of course, for many colleagues working in “sensitive” countries or on “sensitive” topics, or with materials that are difficult to access due to geographic or financial limitations, this was already the norm. Grappling with these obstacles has always added a specific value to the challenging archival research supported by the CLIR-Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources. Now, virtually *all* of us must adapt our writing goals and timelines to a research experience less predictable than in the past. Global inflation has made budgeting more difficult, and a growing awareness of our carbon footprint as academic travelers in a world of climate disasters weighs more and more heavily in our research decisions.

Considering this context, I suggest the need to support archives (big and small, in the US and abroad) to produce *detailed descriptions of their*

*archival collections*. I think this is more necessary than digitizing those collections. The archival experience—and all the discoveries associated with it outside the archive—will always be essential to capturing a research subject and to becoming a professional researcher. Funding agencies should support local communities of archivists and researchers so they can provide strategic information about their collections to sustain and improve research plans. Funding should not feed the fantasy of an individualized digital experience detached from the situated social interactions that shape our understanding of research objects. Funding should allow those interactions at archives and cities to flourish in a way that allows researchers to bridge their institutional homes and those distant worlds, intellectually and interpersonally.

Hence, rather than envisioning an online future in which we work from home with remotely digitized sources—missing out on the intellectual excitement of discovering an entire world of people, texts, and histories around the archives—my idea is simpler: to have more information available about those faraway materials, so researchers can plan their travels strategically. This would help both archives and researchers decide how to prioritize limited financial resources. It would also enable cooperation across cities when travel becomes impossible, by working in teams; exchanging archival labor; or even paying each other to identify, copy, or annotate specific materials locally. In other words, since these “interesting times” do not seem to be leading back to “normal” and boring ones when researchers were able to plan ahead and execute long-term archival travel, these and other new and creative strategies for supporting archival-based research will become increasingly necessary.

## Chapter Five: The Future Of Archival Scholarship

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### Uncertainty and Endurance

*Diane Oliva*

As past CLIR-Mellon fellowship recipients, we are already living a future. Contributors throughout this entire publication reflect on how archival work has changed since their fellowship periods. In particular, the unexpected disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread global shutdown of 2020 forced an immediate shift in the ways that scholars conduct archival work. The long-term impacts of this are yet to be fully realized; however, our current unstable geopolitical environment has already created new barriers for scholars working in places such as China and Russia. For new scholars embarking on research, the unstable present has been exacerbated by the recent discontinuation of several critical dissertation-research fellowship programs. There is now an alarming crisis for archival-based disciplines. In what seems like a critical moment for the future of archival work, the authors in the following section offer their visions of the decades to come.

As the world continues to move in the direction of increasingly connected global economic systems, we can expect that scholarly concerns will help define what constitutes equitable exchanges of information. **Maria I. Rose's** work with Repertoire Internationale de Littérature Musicale (RILM), an international organization that has promoted academic exchange across borders since the 1960s, explores ways of resisting the dominance of English-language scholarship and of promoting instead “multilateral collaborations.” Her essay encourages questions about power and control in knowledge production at a moment when many scholars are concerned about the ability to physically access archives in the future. For some of our fellowship recipients, political safety is and has always been a prominent concern. As scholars who work in increasingly unstable political environments adapt their methods and research questions, we can only speculate on the ways that archivists and researchers may need to reimagine access and scholarship in the face of global instability.

Perhaps this is the moment to drag out the adage “only time will tell.” What we can certainly expect of the future is that a multiplicity of temporalities will continue to shape the scope and scale of archival work and its scholarly byproducts. **Amanda Scott's** essay relishes in the generative potential of “slow research” with all the “failures,” “dead ends,” and “boredom” it brings. Through an affective recollection of her years in the archives, which now may seem like a rare luxury, Scott

reflects on the methodological shifts that may come from a lack of funding opportunities for yearlong, multisite graduate student research. While such loss is concerning, she nevertheless suggests that “speeding up” archival work may encourage future generations to ask different and “equally valuable” questions. **Michelle King** considers how the lifespan of an article—from conception to publication—has changed following the twentieth-century digital revolution. But she also reflects on how the speed and scale of archival work must inevitably conform to the particular challenges and opportunities that arise from different stages of a scholar’s life. King reminds us that the future of archival work is always profoundly intertwined with the trajectories of our own personal timelines. Time does tell.

But where will we be in the future—that is our bodies and the tools that have become an extension of us? Facing a future where we may not have enough time in the archive, **Meaghan J. Brown** shares tips and tricks for making the most of our research trips collected from the roundtable “Technology in the Archive,” which explored an expansive definition that included pillows, space heaters, and footrests. As such, Brown reminds us that accessibility goes beyond access to documents and that the work of the archive requires a specific kind of physicality from our bodies. The range of technologies covered in her piece may bring some comfort to us; perhaps we can expect that, despite future uncertainties, we will never tire of discussing how we sift, sort, and catalog the physical materials that generate the excitement that turns us time and time again into human fixtures of the archive, if only for a brief while.

## RILM: A Case Study in the Field of Music

*Maria I. Rose*

**Maria I. van Epenhuysen Rose** is a pianist and musicologist, who specializes in performance practice of the Classical and Romantic periods. She has performed extensively throughout the world and made many CD recordings. In 2002–2003 she received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship for her research on the history of the early French piano in preparation of her PhD dissertation at New York University (2006), “L’Art de Bien Chanter: French pianos and their Music before 1820. Since 2008, she has been a senior editor at the International Office of Répertoire Internationale de Littérature Musicale (RILM) in New York City, and in 2017, she founded the Academy of Fortepiano Performance in the Catskills (NY).

**A** few years after completing my PhD, I was hired as a full-time editor at the International Office of Répertoire Internationale de Littérature Musicale (RILM), one of the main resources used all over the world for research in the field of music. When I wrote my report at the end of my CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2003, little did I know that my thinking and writing about the past and future of library research would be excellent preparation for the job that I hold today. This brief essay provides an opportunity to revisit, twenty years later, the observations I made nearly two decades ago. I will confine myself to just a few points to illustrate the monumental changes in the world of library resources and to show how RILM, which has a front seat in this process in the field of musicology, has adapted during recent years.

RILM was founded in 1966 as a nonprofit research tool for musicologists, producing annual printed volumes of bibliographies of music literature with abstracts and indexing. It was designed following the UNESCO model, whereby each country organizes its own national committee to contribute bibliographic records that are sent to the central database. Editors in the central office in New York then check, translate, research, abstract, and index them. In all participating countries, the information is selected by native scholars, preserved in the language and spelling of the country of origin, and supplemented with English translations. RILM includes historical musicology, ethnomusicology, popular music studies, organology, iconography, and music theory in more than 200 languages. In its time it was amazingly forward-looking in its global scope and vision. Unlike other research tools, it did not privilege



English-language scholarship, and, at the height of the Cold War, it contributed to academic exchanges in which cultural borders were more easily crossed. As the executive director, Zdravko Blažeković recently wrote:

When [the founder] Barry S. Brook (1918–1997) conceived the Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM) in the mid-1960s, his starting point for the scope of RILM’s bibliography was to provide a solution for better communication among music scholars. [...] His global thinking was in many ways atypical at the time, as it was more in line with the mission of the United Nations than with the advancement of the global Pax Americana. At a time when Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain between the political East and West, and non-European political players were aligning themselves with one or the other ideological side, Brook observed the world as an opportunity for multilateral collaborations across all political systems and ideologies. He may not have entered through the gate of “global musicology,” but he had certainly arrived on its doorstep. (Blažeković 2022)

In 2001, with a grant from the Mellon Foundation, RILM started to digitize its printed volumes; now the complete database is available in academic libraries and through personal subscriptions anywhere in the world. Coincidentally, it was in the following year that the Mellon Foundation supported my research through CLIR. This was a time when the monumental shift toward digitization took place. Evidently, the nature of RILM’s challenges has changed: In the 1960s and 1970s crossing the divide between Eastern and Western Europe may have been a central purpose; in recent years RILM has become far more international and inclusive by increasing its coverage of music scholarship in countries like China, India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Indonesia.

At the end of my CLIR-Mellon fellowship report, I addressed three topics: accessibility of materials and copying procedures, digitization, and specialization. The first, accessibility of materials and copying procedures, is now an antiquated topic; in most cases, microfilm (a big topic of concern in my report) is a thing of the past. Accessibility is now mostly understood not as reliant on libraries’ on-demand copying facilities and procedures, but as dependent on the ease and availability of digital resources. RILM was originally designed as a tool that would point its users to the journals, books, and collections that contained the relevant articles so that the user would then head over to a physical library to find it on a shelf. Now RILM increasingly is the music library with a growing number of e-books, e-journals, and full-text licensing for print journals, in order to compete in the marketplace where the contents of many books and articles can be found on the internet.

The second topic, digitization, is still a central topic today: What is digitized, what is publicly available on the internet, and who decides? Most recently, this has become a huge problem in news reporting and social media. The creator of an information source—academic or not—always makes choices and although it is easy to say (as we do at RILM) that we do not *make* the news but are just *reporting* it, there are always topics and perspectives that are prioritized, however subtle this imbalance may be. RILM tries to strike a balance between representing current “hot” topics and preserving older traditions of music scholarship—something that often leads to heated discussions between staff members. Furthermore, how does one conduct academic research with digital resources when there is so much readily available, while yet maintaining a healthy perspective on the relevance of these materials? In my fellowship report, I hoped that a forgotten little piece of paper in a box at the National Archives in Paris would still generate the same excitement for future generations as it did for me. This concern is still with me when I see very empty academic libraries. I also worried at the time about the difficulties many librarians encountered in the transition to online catalogs: I still remember the painful moment at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris when an older and clearly knowledgeable librarian was unable to find the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* in the digital catalog on his computer. Today, the fluency with digital systems is built into all professional training and therefore not as much a concern.

The final topic, specialization, is, as I addressed it in the report, closely related to digitization. I proposed a division between general libraries and specialized ones; the latter would be more selective and traditional, while general libraries would cover all levels and aspects of scholarship but at a more basic level of understanding. Looking back, I recognize that this idea came out of the perception that too many libraries try to be all-inclusive and that it would be better for some to cover limited topics more completely and more in-depth. Such libraries exist, of course, and play an important role. But for a more systematic realization of this idea, the time has passed: we have to navigate online searches as best we can with a critical eye. Besides, the current trend of crossovers between different disciplines has made such divisions highly impractical.

The expanded availability of information on the internet is wonderful, assuming that researchers are trained to be critical and careful—this is not always the case. As I said in the fellowship report: “Compared to the world of eighteenth-century scholars, it is obvious that it is today very easy to obtain information. The question is whether we have the tools to select, assess, and process it.” Educators recognize this problem and, in many cases, teach their students from an early age to be critical and protective of their own values, while being sensitive to unfamiliar traditions.

The world of information has certainly expanded and exploded in the last twenty years, opening up exciting new avenues, especially regarding non-Western cultures around the globe. Academic resources like RILM are in a position to provide an equitable exchange of information while aiming to uphold scholarly standards. This is good news, as long as academic researchers know that, in the end, it takes the same long hard work as it did in earlier times to understand exactly what they are finding.

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## Reflections on Slow Research, Dead Ends, and Boredom in the Aftertimes

Amanda L. Scott

**Amanda L. Scott** is assistant professor of History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State University. She held a CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellowship in Original Sources in 2014–2015, during which time she conducted research in over twenty libraries and archives in Spain, France, and the United States. This research eventually led to the publication of her first book, *The Basque Seroras: Local Religion, Gender, and Power in Northern Iberia, 1550–1800* as well as several articles. She is currently working on a second book that stems from some documents collected during the fellowship year and which explores the overlap between vagrants, pilgrims, and bandits in early modern Spain.

**H**ow does it feel to have twelve months of archival research reaching out before you, with no obligations other than to sink every day into the minutiae of early modern court records? As I embarked on a project on Basque religious women in 2014, I remember feeling excitement, but also an overwhelming sense of relief that I would have the time to complete necessary research for my dissertation. More than anything, though, I felt a sense of inviting creativity: I would be able to trace individuals through the archival labyrinth, meet others in the documents that had slipped through the superficial detail of the catalog, and, most importantly, get lost in the sometimes-dead-ends of archival research, following leads where they would take me, and not where a tight schedule constrained me to think they should go.

This slow year of possibilities was funded by a CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellowship in Original Sources. I held this fellowship in 2014–2015, making me one of the later cohorts, but not so near the end that any of us had a sense that the program would be ending in 2022. I took it for granted that this was how dissertation research was supposed to go. Yet in the subsequent years, such long-term grants have ended or been curtailed significantly, transforming me and my cohort into something like geriatric dinosaurs on the edge of extinction. The difficulties and expense of traveling in the COVID-19 pandemic world, coupled with the shuttering of dissertation fellowship programs across the humanities and social sciences, means that archival research—and indeed, the very nature of how we ask questions of the archive—has changed dramatically and possibly permanently. Now that I am training graduate students of my own, I am struggling with what I think is a shift in the discipline. Perhaps this means a return to textual analysis and

research with printed sources, which would not necessarily be bad, and indeed would reflect a normal pendulum effect in our field. More likely, however, I think this means a shrinking in the scope of what we can do in our discipline. Comparative and transnational histories—the kinds of histories that take the longest to do well—will become increasingly impossible.<sup>1</sup> Histories nudged into shape by the luxury of expansive inductive reasoning will be eclipsed by shorter and no-nonsense hypothesis-based methods. Our field is changing, right at the time when our unique ways of asking questions are all the more critical.

In other words, I want to suggest that long-term, on-site research in archives and libraries lets us imagine our topics in ways that we cannot do remotely. The slowness of archival research, the dead ends, and the failures are a critical part of producing a piece of work that looks beyond the individual and the moment in history, and which can speak across time and space and answer big questions. As David Armitage and Jo Guldi argue in *The History Manifesto*, one of the greatest challenges for historians in the modern era is confronting and breaking away from the “spectre of the short term” (Armitage and Guldi 2014, 1). In an age dominated by quarterly returns and pressure to reap immediate profits instead of investing in the long term, Armitage and Guldi argue that short-term history creates a sort of feedback loop, making it even harder for us to communicate our relevance to the public. Even more importantly, it makes it harder to see long-term patterns, further disabling us from using historical insights to help solve modern existential crises (Armitage and Guldi 2014, 61–72).

I am under no illusion that my own work on the social and religious history of the early modern Basque country can do much to help us confront things like racial inequality and climate change. However, I do think that as a social historian, I am uniquely positioned to help teach students historical empathy, thus practice learning to value and care about people (of the past) whose minds you have no ability to change and who you cannot ask why their beliefs contradict your own. I have long struggled with landing on the right balance between microhistory and *long-durée* history, eventually producing a dissertation that studied the role of religious women in mediating religious reforms over 250 years.

Using a variety of dwindling dissertation fellowships that were available in the mid-2010s meant that I was able to spend over 100 weeks in the archives. This seems unheard of today. I made use of this time, reading and transcribing virtually every diocesan, notarial, inquisitorial,

<sup>1</sup>As I have tried to incorporate a discussion of the disciplinary change into my graduate courses, I have found that Sarah Mazza’s historiographical introduction is one of the best places to begin this conversation (Mazza 2017). On the challenges that face historians in terms of methodology and speaking to audience, see pages 1–6; and for a brief discussion of the rise of comparative history, see pages 164–166.

civil, and criminal record pertaining to the Basque *seroras* (the women I was studying). As scholars who work in archives well know, this length of archival research becomes painfully lonely, arguably damaging for many of your personal relationships, easily bad for your health (my mother commented how strangely pale I looked, even after coming home from months in Spain), and realistically, utterly boring and mind-numbing much of the time. Many days produced nothing: documents shorter than they promised, key entries consumed by mold, entire volumes missing, or descriptions that turned out to be the delusional musings (or mistranslations) of some long-lost volunteer archivist. On shorter trips, such lost days would be catastrophic, yet as part of slow research, these days ironically turned out to be some of my most important and useful. When I could not look at notarial protocols a moment longer, I amused myself by doing quantitative analysis, counting people and animals, tracking women's use of notarial resources, and following up on strange episodes well outside my research focus such as towns that hired wolf-hunters, joint leases on individual cows, child support payments, or peace accords involving sharing beloved spotted dogs. I took advantage of the relative freedom of the CLIR-Mellon fellowship to travel around to additional archives and sites, some of which, to be honest, I chose simply because I was curious about what the original Durango, Basque Country might hold. At other times, I used/abused the power of the catalog by searching for shared Basque eponyms like Iñigo Montoya, and things like whales, spies, blind musicians, bullfighting, ferret-hunting, arquebuses, love letters, and pet cats (this turned up the notorious bandit "El Gato," who preyed upon pilgrims in the sixteenth century). All of this may sound a bit frivolous, but none were dead ends: I carefully transcribed and filed away each of these archival divergences. Some turned up secondary paths, which I then followed, eventually leading me to non-cataloged sources, which I would have never found under normal searches in the catalogs. Others were too weird and rich to be tucked away in footnotes and have since spawned new articles and significant portions of my second book (Scott 2020).

All of this is to say that yes, I love archives, and I am deeply nostalgic for the past and saddened by what cuts to dissertation fellowships will mean for the next generations of students. I think if there is anything we can take away from these musings and which needs to be a part of any discussion of how to go forward in the "aftertimes," it would be how we can prepare students for a very different world of archival research, and importantly, archival thinking. As a Spanish historian, I am deeply indebted to—and also cursed by—the Spanish government's digitized joint archival catalog Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES, <https://pares.culturaydeporte.gob.es>), which can be accessed internationally. However, PARES provides only a strange snapshot and eclectic categorization

of documentation, listed at the whim of past archivists, deceptively incomplete, and hampered by a need to be viciously precise with the application of randomly placed commas and punctuation, to the point that it is often impossible to find a given document a second time. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, PARES has been my go-to for student research, allowing my students to at least read a handful of trial records in order to practice their paleography. Yet the facility of accessing these documents means that students do not suffer from the energizing fits of boredom that provoked me to search for cats, dogs, spies, and Íñigo Montoya, and they consequently do not wander the labyrinth of archival research, embracing dead ends and mistaken searches. Research becomes hyper-focused on a handful of documents, on a few years of history, or on the people whose records the holding institutions chose to digitize. The secrets of the archives stay lost; the silences mean something else.

Addressing this change likely involves a shift in how we prepare students for archival research and in how we discuss the importance of using primary source materials. Students of the aftertimes may be reading their documents more carefully than I ever did, and they may dwell upon, consider, and wonder about the people connected to their documents in ways I was privileged to not need to do. For me, archival research was a matter of plenty, and perhaps I became numb to the quantity and rarity of what I had around me. Students today may recover some of the excitement of heading to the archives for the first time and needing to make the most of research in a short time. This renewed sense of urgency may in turn help them ask different (though equally valuable) questions than the ones I was able to ask. On the other hand, these questions are going to be, as I suspect, much more complicated by questions of nationality and transnationalism. Global history—what it is and how it is done—is currently also in flux, with many of the biggest history PhD programs shifting their degree offerings to fields like Global Early Modern or Europe in the World. Yet with Fulbright, one of the few long-term research fellowships remaining, students are being pushed in the opposite direction, their research collections circumscribed by Cold War national ideologies. Comparative and transnational histories become even harder to execute under these circumstances. Instead, students pursuing transnational research will be piecing together research projects through small short-term grants, missing out on the freedom to follow leads and learn from dead ends.

There are also significant repercussions within this shift for how research and researchers in the next generation will be shaped by privilege, based upon who can or cannot access archives, and whose projects get funded. As historians of post-colonialism like Tony Ballantyne, Antoinette Burton, and Jeff Sahadeo have observed (and this is not just in the United States), the makeup of archival researchers

changes dramatically and tracks closely to the political climate of archival funding (Burton 2005). In many cases, domestic researchers in foreign countries cannot themselves afford to conduct research in their own countries. And as Emily Callaci argued in her sharp reflection in *American Historical Review*, the entire premise of flying off to international archives, leaving behind families and obligations, and even *walking around* foreign cities, is deeply privileged (2020, 126–131). Only certain kinds of people are implicitly allowed to ask questions of the archives, and by extension, studies of the past are shaped by specific mindsets and laden with cultural and economic baggage.

Nonetheless, this is the new reality. As a historian, I find the idea of trying to cling to the past and past ways of doing things particularly nonsensical. Although I think that we will lose something important with fewer opportunities to explore dead ends and spend slow months in the archives, I also do not want to suggest that we should be pushing our students to continue to approach historical and archival research the way we did, even a few years ago (we all know how frustrating it is to receive, for example, job advice from professors hired decades before us). Instead, I want to try to open up a conversation about how to adapt our training of our students to reflect the changes shaping the new aftertimes. We need to impress upon them the need to write big, long-term histories the best they can, while also savoring the short time they may have in the archive. Slow research may return (in ways we cannot yet imagine, nor necessarily want), but until then, we need to find other ways to ask big questions of the archives.

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## The Impact of the Internet on My Historical Research (or How to Publish an Academic Article in Fifteen Years)

*Michelle T. King*

**Michelle T. King** is an associate professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She received a CLIR-Mellon fellowship in 2004–2005 to conduct research on female infanticide in China, locating ephemeral nineteenth-century Chinese tracts at libraries in four countries, including the British Library in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the archives of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood in Rome, the Shanghai Library, the Xujiahui Library (formerly the Bibliotheca Zikawei) in Shanghai, and the National Library of China in Beijing. The article mentioned in the essay below, which took more than fifteen years to appear in print, is titled, “Margaret Sanger in Translation: Gender, Class and Birth Control in 1920s China,” *Journal of Women’s History* (2017).

**T**he trajectory of my intellectual career as a historian has spanned two distinct eras, analog and digital. In the early 1990s, I spent my junior year of college abroad in Germany. I recall noticing that a few fellow American exchange students always seemed to be holed up in the computer lab, instead of out exploring the city, but I had no idea what they were doing. Only later did I realize they were sending messages to friends back home through a computer. I could not see the point of this activity and never tried it. After I returned to the United States, I tried chatting online with a friend in Europe, but the whole process seemed far too cumbersome to become a habit: you still had to go to a networked computer at a prearranged time to chat. After graduating from college, I spent several years living and working in China, and continued to communicate with people back home through phone calls and snail mail. I also worked in a law firm in Hong Kong in the late 1990s, where there was a single, networked computer for research on our floor, strategically placed in a central, public location, so that any partner walking by could see what you were up to. But by the time I came back for my graduate studies at Berkeley in 2000, using a home computer for email suddenly seemed ubiquitous. Everyone thought that the one professor who refused to get an email address and could only be reached by phone was a bit of a crank. I still remember waiting impatiently for the connection sound of beeps and static on the dial-up modem. All of this online activity, if I remember rightly, was still only

for email; I do not recollect using the computer even to look up the weather, though it must have happened at some point.

In my first graduate research seminar in History, I did most of my research in analog, by sleuthing in books, microfilm, published bibliographies, and indices. The topic of my paper was American birth control activist Margaret Sanger's first and only lecture trip to China in 1922, particularly the Chinese newspaper coverage of her trip. Sanger's papers had all been microfilmed, and I still remember my excitement when I found a notice in one issue of *The Birth Control Review* from 1922, which listed dozens of Chinese newspaper articles that had covered Sanger's trip. Without that list as a guide, finding any Chinese newspaper article about her trip would have been an excruciating and fruitless needle-in-the-haystack exercise. But with those references in hand, I was able to gather enough material for my paper. Beyond a few famous names, however, I was not able to identify many of the Chinese authors of my newspaper sources, since most wrote with pseudonyms. Eventually I put the paper aside to focus on what would become the topic of my dissertation, female infanticide in China in the nineteenth century.

After my book on female infanticide was published in 2014, I returned to working on the Margaret Sanger paper, determined to publish it and let it see the light of day. What a difference fifteen years makes! Though my original research had been done in analog, I could now conduct word searches in Chinese both on the internet and in specific databases, answering questions I could not even pose, let alone answer, in the early 2000s. Typing some of the Chinese pseudonyms I had found into Google, I discovered the true identities of many authors I had no way of identifying years earlier, which dramatically shifted the shape of my paper. Other word searches in English helped me find little-known published material written by Sanger's less famous foreign contemporaries. The revised article finally appeared in 2017, more than fifteen years after I had started it. Though I cannot recommend such a glacial publication timeline to any academic, clearly the intervening years and advances in search engine technologies allowed me to write something of far greater complexity than I had originally envisioned.

Although the historical questions we ask have expanded infinitely with this digital revolution, I mourn the lost *frisson* of analog searches, even as entire libraries and archival collections are now at our fingertips with a few taps of the keyboard. It is the human interactions of the archive that seem to be disappearing, even as these same encounters could sometimes be exercises in futility and frustration. I am not sure if I will ever again experience the thrill of convincing a sympathetic librarian to allow me into the storage facilities where the uncatalogued Chinese materials of the former Jesuit Zikawei Library in Shanghai were kept, an episode that still stands as the most memorable highlight

of my research experience as a CLIR-Mellon fellow. The librarian gave me exactly one hour to conduct my search. Inside the dusty storage room, I quickly realized that none of the shelves were labeled and started to panic. How would I ever find anything, armed only with an outdated, photocopied catalog of the library's contents from 1957? By some miracle, I recalled the traditional Chinese fourfold method of categorizing books, and indeed, the works on the shelves were still arranged in that fashion. Once I knew the trick, I managed to locate the titles I needed. The library gods were smiling down on me that day.

Nowadays, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, I have undertaken much of my historical research for my current book project online, accessing all manner of primary and secondary sources and conducting interviews without ever leaving the comfort of my armchair. Yet a "hit" or "find" on my screen does not yield the same thrill as it did amongst dusty shelves. Today, our university has access to more than 20,000 digitized Chinese periodicals from the early twentieth century via the Shanghai Library's full-text searchable database. That means that the issue now is not a paucity of primary sources, but rather the opposite problem of having to wade through an endless river of them. The historical questions we can ask have exploded, with text-mining, visual and aural identification tools, and an ever-expanding range of searchable, digitized sources. But we may have lost something important along the way. My undergraduate students expect to be able to access everything they need for research instantaneously on their computers, and only grudgingly step foot in the library stacks when required to do so for an assignment. Trying to share with them the thrill of rooting around in original archival sources and making an unexpected discovery often seems like an uphill battle.

Twenty years ago, conducting historical research in Chinese libraries and archives was not only possible but essential for building research credentials. The recent tightening of China's current political climate has meant the narrowing of archival access even for native-born researchers. Digitized sources and library and archival collections outside the PRC have thus been a crucial boon for budding doctoral researchers, who may find themselves thwarted in their research plans by ever-changing COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns. Shifting political climates and global pandemics aside, digital access can also be essential to any researcher attempting to manage the tenuous work-life balance: for myself, with a husband and two elementary-school-aged children, mounting a lengthy overseas research trip is not as easy as when I was unencumbered and single in graduate school. At this stage in my life, any work I can do with a laptop from home means one less logistical nightmare of overseas research to overcome. I wonder, though, if I will ever again experience the serendipity and human connections

of analog research, which could be confounding and frustrating, but also exhilarating. The library gods remain silent now, as I tap away in the glow of my screen.

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## Technology in the Archive

*Meaghan J. Brown*

**Meaghan J. Brown** was a CLIR-Mellon dissertation fellow in 2011–2012. Her research on early modern English printers' use of nationhood in marketing printed books took her to London and Oxford, where she researched at the British Library, Lambeth Palace Library, the National Maritime Museum, the National Art Library, and the Bodleian Library. She is currently a program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*Note: The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the United States Government.*

**T**his essay is a summary of an open roundtable discussion that occurred at the Mellon Dissertation Fellows Capstone Conference “Looking Forward to the Past,” in St. Louis, Missouri, May 2022.

The CLIR-Mellon fellowship program emphasized mastering the intricacies of extended archival work. While the COVID-19 pandemic has rightly focused attention on the role of digitization and remote archival services in providing access to scholarly materials during the disruptions necessitated by public health and safety, this open roundtable asked participants to consider innovations and challenges encountered by scholars using technology *in situ* in the archives. What has changed in the past decade? How have changing policies and practices surrounding technology affected research? What technical challenges have they encountered in their current research? What social challenges serve as barriers to using specific technology in the archives? In many places, policy changes have loosened restrictions on what types of technology can be used. Many institutions now permit amateur photography of much of their collections, allowing researchers with simple cameras or smartphones to amass large collections of document images. Changes to policies that facilitate greater data gathering or different types of data acquisition often require modifications to research practices. Participants were asked about the hardware and software that shaped the path of their research, and how they had adjusted to new technical opportunities. They were also asked to consider what soft skills new researchers (or researchers new to a specific archive) needed to develop to take advantage of their time in the archive. Along the way, panelists discussed points of friction in their research practices and advised each other by sharing tips on tech that might work in different archival situations.

Participants brought a broad idea of what “technology” could mean, considering tools for research that ranged from the importance of comfortable and ergonomic furniture to sophisticated digitization and data organization software. One mentioned the challenge of researching after a surgery and the need to approach library staff early when accommodations were necessary to create a physically accessible research environment. While many institutions are open to providing accommodating furniture, such as footrests or adjustable chairs, some see adaptive devices—particularly researcher-provided ones such as pillows and cushions—as possible security risks. The arctic chill that many research institutions maintain for the benefit of their collections brought up a reference to the crowd-sourced planning tool, “How Cold is that Library?”<sup>1</sup> Compiled by both researchers and staff, the list includes tips about policies and notes about some important “lending” tech: shawls, fans, and even space heaters available to researchers in specific repositories.

Most of the technology discussed, however, focused on digitization, the organization of digital images (figure 1), or the organization of archival data. Some recommendations for better digital photography were remarkably analog: one participant noted that he used the cardboard place-marker the library provided to block glare from poor lighting. Because many researchers use increasingly sophisticated phone cameras as their main imaging devices, participants discussed the wide range of apps available for



**Fig. 1.** Author’s archival photo of the title page of Folger Shakespeare Library STC 15412 copy 2, taken with a Canon PowerShot S90 in January 2011. Image shows an early modern italic inscription reading, “Six tracts all relating to the Spanish Invasion in 1588.” Digital research photography has come a long way.

annotating, tagging, and organizing the resulting files for later retrieval and analysis. One participant, for example, said that she used CamScanner (<https://www.camscanner.com/>), a mobile phone app that scans documents and generates PDFs, along with the Atlas (<https://www.atlassoftware.com/>) keyword tagging app to organize the files once generated. Some archival projects involve close analysis or transcription of archival images, and participants discussed exploring the increasingly diverse capabilities of International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) tools such as DigitalMappa (<https://www.digitalmappa.org/>), which facilitates highlighting, annotating, and linking images and texts.

<sup>1</sup>To browse temperature verdicts and warm layer recommendations, simply type “How Cold Is That Library” into a search engine.

Many of these processes are research-topic dependent, with scanning apps working more efficiently on modern materials in regular typescript than earlier, idiosyncratic or manuscript materials. When it came to digital tools, new and complex were rarely selling points. One speaker voiced anxiety that a chosen system might become obsolete before her project could be finished. There was a distinct preference for systems that have simple input mechanisms: some participants described attempting to use multifaceted systems of tagging or classification that were abandoned in favor of more minimally (and quickly) processing images during precious time in the archive. Participants seemed to have a higher tolerance for complexity when the focus of research was close analysis of a small number of documents. In contrast, the roundtable discussed the challenges of human input errors when dealing with large amounts of metadata. Open-source data manipulation tools, such as OpenRefine (<https://openrefine.org/>), were discussed as tools for cleaning and analyzing such data.

Output formats also matter. Many CLIR-Mellon fellows arranged to share digitized files and research documents with the archive, and so must limit themselves to outputs that their institutional partners could access. Often, this means common formats such as PDFs, CSVs, and word processing documents. Tagging and organizing images in an app can be convenient, but if the data cannot be easily exported, it is difficult to share and preserve. The size of high-resolution files can also create problems, and participants shared methods for backing up and storing large images.

Pro-digitization policies do not always help researchers. An institution may deny researchers access to original materials once they are digitized, even if the scholar is seeking to examine a part of the object, such as a book's binding or watermarks, which was not captured by the digitization process. Digitization projects can take materials out of circulation for months or even years, and participants discussed materials getting lost or damaged during digitization. And digital photography is not always the best method for capturing data. Panelists described a range of scenarios when transcription or other forms of data capture allowed them to work with their materials more efficiently.

As one participant observed, time pressure is a significant factor in selecting which technology to use or not use. While the CLIR-Mellon fellowship provided for extended time in the archives, many researchers still felt the pressing need to record as much material as possible for later consultation. Although some researchers used tech to provide alternative ways of seeing the archival materials—black light, transmitted light provided by light sheets, raking light, and others—most were concerned with simply having the time to *see* and to record what they saw.

As long-term research fellowships become rarer and rarer, researchers will rely more on technology in the archives to make the most of increasingly precious and brief archival time. In many cases, researchers

adapt tools, such as document scanning apps and word processing systems, that are not necessarily designed for the archival setting. While scholars are adept at creating ad hoc workflows to meet their research needs, these are not always sufficient. Different fields have diverse archival challenges. The use of specific tech in an archive is dependent not only on research topics and the particular challenges of an academic's research goals, but also on the policies and institutional conditions of the archive where the research takes place. Some academics are developing their own tools to tackle specific research problems in their field, from visualizing manuscript collations to pairing transcriptions with annotated archival images. For a tool to be widely adopted by scholars, this discussion showed that it needs to be both easy to use and efficient. It should be flexible enough to work in a variety of disciplinary modes. Its products must be easily shared and preserved. While no universal archival toolset exists—the humanities are just too diverse for that—this roundtable showed that many scholars discover tools by word of mouth and personal experimentation. As these tools and research workflows develop, academics in the humanities would benefit from further conversations about usability in the archive and more systematic exposure to the types of tools used in archival research during their PhD coursework.





## Afterword

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### Archival Futures: Optimism During Times of Crisis

*R. A. Kashanipour, Seth Stein LeJacq, Ania Nikulina, and Diane Oliva*

“The space shared by archives and history,” Francis X. Blouin, Jr. wrote, “was once defined collectively as a window to the past” (Blouin 2004, 296). Archives, in this context, were once thought to be unified spaces where scholars and archivists, communities and institutions shared interests in building pathways to explore the past. This idealized vision of harmonized historical archival research, however, belies the realities of scholarship in the twenty-first century. The archive, as a site and space of inquiry, is transforming under disciplinary, institutional, and geopolitical pressures. In the two decades of the CLIR-Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Resources, nearly 250 scholars have taken to the field to explore innovative archival studies. Many of their works have come under the most challenging of conditions, from wars to global epidemics. They are, in this sense, snapshots of the space of archives and history in transformation. The future of the archive comes as the mission and impulse to preserve and remember the past grows in importance.

In the face of wars, nuclear threats, and environmental crises, the kinds of things in danger of being lost extend far beyond physical paper, objects, or even digital files. The fear of a disappearing present expresses itself through the emergence of several new forms of archives. Recently, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a so-called “backup facility” in Norway for the world’s food supply, celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Buried beneath permafrost in -18C temperature are over a million seed samples collected from genebanks around the world. We imagine such repositories exist

to be accessed in the case of a future disaster; however, a “request” took place as recently as 2017, when the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) withdrew seeds to restart a seed bank they lost to the Syrian civil war. Located on the same isolated Norwegian archipelago is the for-profit Arctic World Archive, which advertises its eternal safeguarding of “digital memory and treasures” in a secure vault deep within an arctic mountain—“the safest natural location on earth,” so stated on their promotional material. A number of archives and corporations—including Yale, UNICEF, GitHub, the National Archive of Mexico, the Vatican Library, and many others—have deposited digital replicas of their holdings into the literal promise of cold storage. Such projects gesture toward the large-scale commercialization of cultural memory as well as the preservation of data in places as far from human hands as possible. And what could be farther than outer space? The Arch Mission Foundation in 2018 launched a digital copy of the English-language Wikipedia database into space, joining a host of archival records (most notably the 1977 Golden Record) that will presumably outlive human life on Earth. In a digital era in which our fears of losing data are manifested through the purchasing of programs that back up our personal files, such doomsday archives seem to collect information in ways that allow us to imagine a “reboot” of life after loss.

Yet, even with these new archival enterprises, the questions that frame our interactions with more traditional institutions and collection materials prevail. What is the archive now that it can be buried in arctic mountains and jettisoned into space? Who will own or fund the archives of the future? Whose memories can we *afford* to save? Who will be allowed to access materials in the distant future? And how might a future user—human or not—make sense of the past as mediated through the walls (digital or physical) of the archive? Of course, such questions assume that there will always be a future of readers, listeners, viewers, and touchers of such materials or that archives—paper or digital, lukewarm or frozen, earthly or celestial—are not themselves always at risk of being lost. We live in a moment when we have severe doubts that there will always be a future for humanity. But archives are as much an expression of their creators as they are repositories for another time. What then can current collecting practices tell us about ourselves and our present?

As global political and economic instability distresses societies and communities, much has been said about the notion that history repeats itself. Learning from history is an omnipresent issue, and the ability to archive and access the past is essential to social stability. Considering the archive from this perspective raises more questions than it answers, however. For instance, what materials should enter into the archive? How is information organized? How are documents accessed? And, most relevant in our time of instability, how is the archive safeguarded and protected? These questions shaped the central themes of this anthology.

Across these essays, repositioning and reconsidering the archive as a critical and dynamic institution has been a unifying thread. Managing vast ranges and quantities of materials across varying formats and technologies presents fundamental challenges for all researchers. Both archivists and researchers play vital roles in ensuring that access to certain materials is limited, while also safeguarding against the theft, damage, or loss of archival materials. Moreover, for research into sensitive subjects or in unstable settings, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of sensitive information stands out as critically important. This volume shows the diverse ways that CLIR-Mellon fellows have worked across a wide variety of challenging conditions and deployed innovative methods and technologies to navigate those conditions.

The other core theme of this essay collection is the impact of archival research on the researchers themselves. Archival research is a crucial element of many fields in the humanities and social sciences, including history, political science, and anthropology. However, this type of research often comes at great personal and professional costs. Archival scholars navigate a complex landscape of disciplinary, institutional, and often political boundaries. This program has, over nearly two decades, prioritized innovative archival projects that allowed scholars to work in multiple sites and collections, frequently in multiple countries.

As this volume reveals, one of the greatest challenges has been access. Many archives have strict rules about who can access their materials, which can be especially difficult for researchers who need to travel to different countries or regions to access specific archives. Further, limited availability of resources, such as funding and time, has been a consistent and significant obstacle for researchers. Records, like people, have been displaced, lost, and migrated over time. For researchers following their movements, the need to visit multiple archives has always been challenging. Finally, increasing political, social, and epidemiological instability has made archival research challenging all over the world. Political unrest, wars, or other conflicts have locked scholars out of regions and entire countries. Such instability has situated archival research as a cost of growing global disorder and upheaval.

While there is certainly great cause for alarm over the present and future of archives, the CLIR-Mellon fellows in this volume have told stories filled with optimism for projects of collecting, remembering, and preserving. These works have shown that the traditional archive—the stereotypical big government institution, wealthy private library, or research university special collections—has become rarer and less accessible. Austerity has harmed or closed many collections. Corporate universities often see little need for traditional physical libraries of any sort, much less rare materials collections and the workers needed to do the arduous labor of building and maintaining them. The retraction of research funding opportunities means that there is less support available

to allow people to visit those collections that are open. And political and ideological hostility to certain areas of historical inquiry have made scholarship more difficult and dangerous. Tragic as these developments are, however, they in no way spell the end of the drive to gather, save, and study historical materials. In other words, archival desire remains strong.

Efforts such as community archives show the ways in which scholars can continue to work outside the traditional channels. Generations of activists had developed the tools and knowledge to collect and preserve records and to teach with them when barred from traditional big archives and centers of academic power. CLIR-Mellon fellows have looked to the examples of Civil Rights and Feminist activists, to those in the Gay Liberation movement, and the queer rights activists who fought to build archives so that their—our—history could not be ignored and silenced any longer. A huge variety of archivists and scholars are already doing such work; indeed, they have never stopped. One need only consider the work of institutions and projects such as the Interference Archive, the Archivo de Respuestas Emergencias de Puerto Rico, and CIRN: Gay Freedom Movement Archives. Explore the work of The Caribbean Diaspora Project, Maroon Country, Climates of Inequality, or TonyOldies to see the legacies of the kinds of innovative work carried out by scholars.

These projects employ a variety of models to do the work of archiving and making materials available to their communities and the wider public. They often need to scramble for funding, labor, expertise, and space—both physical and virtual. Many such projects have relied on the resources of the corporate university, neoliberal state, and legacy funding institution, but in different ways and to different ends from those of the traditional big archive. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, theorist Jack Halberstam calls on readers to become “fugitive knowers,” to “steal from the university” and similar institutions in order to support the essential work that they will not (Halberstam 2011, 8). As several CLIR-Mellon fellows in this volume illustrate, communities of scholars and the public are invested in transforming the future of archival knowledge and research. Communities, as one fellow has noted, are themselves living archives. With methods and approaches like these, we can ensure that the crisis of the traditional archives does not mean the end of the larger project of saving and studying our histories. The future of the archives and the shared spaces they represent will require creativity, flexibility, and the innovative approaches modeled by the CLIR-Mellon Dissertation Fellows from 2002–2021.

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## About the Editors

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**Joana Konova** teaches art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago and specializes in Italian Renaissance and Ancient Roman art. She has a long-standing interest in ekphrasis and the reception of Antiquity. More recently, she's been interested in what she calls "performative objects"—that is, works that show, rather than tell, the stories they are tasked to visualize. A native of Bulgaria, Konova holds advanced degrees in German and Dutch Philology and Media Studies (University of Cologne) and Art History (University of Chicago).

**Seth Stein LeJacq** is a historian specializing in the history of medicine and queer history. His current research focuses on gender and sexuality in the age of sail and on the history of early modern fo-rensics. He teaches courses in history, the medical humanities, and academic writing at Duke University.

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