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A Live Finding Aid of Archival Ethnographies / Janet Ceja Alcalá

Abstract: This literature review of archival ethnographies gives an overview of the methodology developments since the early 2000s. Its format renders homage to one of the most popular forms of archival representation: the finding aid. The template of a finding aid is used with a hyperlinked twist to render a live inventory of ethno-archival publications. Organized into "series levels," a collection of publications that use archival ethnography are identified based on four major themes: "Classical Archival Ethnography," "Informal Records," "Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain," and "Constructing Archives." The finding aid on archival ethnographies should be useful for researchers interested in the evolution of the methodology, as well as for those interested in conducting ethnographic research in and about archives.

<1> In this article, I review and examine some of the major scholarly themes discussed by authors using ethno-archival methodologies during 2001–2014. I do so by coding and classifying sixteen representative publications onto a template that mimics the structure of an archival finding aid. [1] I use hyperlinks to map this methodological interconnectedness, and on a more practical level, to easily teleport readers to the studies reviewed.

<2> My interest in archival ethnography began after reading two articles written in the early 2000s emphasizing the importance of archival research. In one of them, "Building an Infrastructure for Archival Research," Anne J. Gilliland and Sue McKemmish analyzed the state of the archival profession's research rigor and revealed that there were a number of exciting and emergent areas of study. The areas included the sociology and politics of the record and

recordkeeping, the psychology and ethnology of recordkeeping and use, ethnography of the archive, archival media, and archival systems. The authors also reported the use of new research methods that went beyond the usual case study, survey, and historical pieces that had dominated the professional literature.[2] The application of new research methods was a sign that the field had been growing and becoming more sophisticated in addressing new research concerns. This is also perhaps partly because of the archival turn in academia that problematized the notion of archives from a place that houses records to one that is embroiled in knowledge and power dynamics.

<3> In the second article, "'Communities of Memory': Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas," McKemmish, Gilliland, and Eric Ketelaar discussed the necessity and challenges of being culturally responsive in understanding the global communities that archivists inevitably end up documenting through their labor. The notion of *incommensurable ontologies* between indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge was an especially important point used to emphasize the complex entanglement of cultural identity with memory and evidence paradigms.[3] Their article was also another impassioned call to add new research methods to our toolkits to address such topics. One of those research tools was archival ethnography, given its concern with interpreting social and cultural phenomena, including some of the questions that incommensurable ontologies generate through archival knowledge systems and their translatability from one social context to another. Now, more than fifteen years after those articles were published, this investigation reviews the intervening literature on archival ethnographies.

What is Archival Ethnography?

<4> What distinguishes archival ethnography from other ethnographic styles is that the researcher is said to be positioned "within an archival environment to gain the cultural perspective of those responsible for the creation, collection, care, and use of records." It can also be practiced in "any social space where the creation, maintenance, or use of archival records forms a locus of interest and activity." [4] It is important to note that since the archival turn, archival definitions no longer simply encompass:

"1. Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or

private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records.

2. The division within an organization responsible for maintaining the organization's records of enduring value.

3. An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations; a collecting archives.

4. The professional discipline of administering such collections and organizations.

5. The building (or portion thereof) housing archival collections.

6. A published collection of scholarly papers, especially as a periodical." [5]

<5> Professional definitions have been destabilized by new meanings that hinge on the power of "the archive's" truth claims. This destabilization has added value not only to scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, but also to archival studies. Moreover, it has provided an opportunity for archivists to experiment methodologically. The use of archival ethnography is an example of this experimentation, and it serves a significant purpose in understanding the sociocultural functions of recordkeeping activities, and more generally to be able to conceptualize archives as a subject of study. Still, its description could very well be confused with another and quite similar methodology: ethno-history.

<6> Archival ethnography and ethno-history coincide in combining ethnography with the use of archival sources. The difference between the two methodologies is that ethno-history requires that a scholar take on an anthropological sensitivity and use historical materials, including but not restricted to archival records, to understand a particular culture's past. Archival ethnography takes into account the archival recordkeeping environment as primary in the ethnographic process. In other words, archival

ethnographies take the archival milieu, broadly envisioned, as the subject of study, rather than solely requiring that the materials gathered as data be studied as historical artifacts of a particular social group's past.[6] What helps distinguish an ethno-history from an archival ethnography are the author's philosophical and methodological commitments and how she frames the role of the records in the study.

Methods

<7> The literature gathered for this study was done via library research in an academic library at a university ranked as having high research activity. After conducting initial library searches, however, it became quite clear that the results I was getting had missed much of the professional archival literature. Instead, numerous works outside of this domain turned up and were actually more irrelevant than relevant. This is likely due to the reach of the abstracting and indexing mechanisms that support their discoverability in major database software. Although, some would argue that archivists have not readily participated in greater intellectual debates that would otherwise make their voices heard and their labor visible through serious publication efforts.[7] I am not as concerned about scholars in other fields theorizing "the archive" because they have truly enriched our work, I find myself more troubled by how, as "information experts," our knowledge is so easily excluded from databases and current trends in discovery indexing technology. The absence of our archival representation in academia is at least partly based on technical mediation that not only undermines it, but also makes interdisciplinary research a lot more difficult to conduct.

<8> For instance, Michael Khoo, Lily Rozaklis, and Catherine Hall, who recently conducted a survey of ethnographic methods in Library and Information Science (LIS), identified only one archival ethnography out of the eighty-one studies they located.[8] Even within LIS, there seem to exist deep divisions in understanding the field of archival studies. Khoo, Rozaklis, and Hall also noted that the studies they found had not been published in anthropology journals, meaning that the LIS literature had no disciplinary import or export for members of the anthropological discipline. This is quite different from what I discovered. While I did not find extensive evidence of cross-pollination between anthropology and archival studies, there was

one article published in an archival studies journal written by an anthropologist. In addition, two authors who published archival ethnographies in an ethno-history journal did cite the professional archival literature. More research is necessary to understand how trends in journal abstracting and indexing affect the exposure of the professional archival literature.

<9> As a member of the professional archival community, I am afforded a certain "know-how" that ultimately led me to compare the library search results I gathered from the library directly against highly ranked professional archival journals. Those journals included: *Archival Science*, *Archivaria*, *The American Archivist*, *Archives & Manuscripts*, the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, *Records Management Journal*, and *Information and Culture*. According to the Australian Research Council's evaluation criteria for archival scholarship, these journals are the foremost renowned around the world on archival issues.[9] They have thus been stamped as sites in which the archival elite set out to publish their ideas. Yet even as the journals boast an internationally friendly cadre of scholars and cover topics from all over the world, they remain primarily English language dominant and hail from the archival traditions of the UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and the United States. This leaves out major knowledge traditions representing over nine tenths of the world's population.[10] The question of incommensurable ontologies becomes especially pertinent here since that which gets published is inevitably judged along the lines of archival knowledge systems that cater to lineages that have long defined archival recordkeeping from a Western perspective. That is not to say that one cannot find radical interpretations or reconfigurations of archival work in the English language, just that there are not very many of them.

<10> After searching for published archival ethnographies in each of the aforementioned journals, I found that between the years 2000 and 2014, three of them had published a combined total of nine articles that applied variants of the methodology. Those journals were *Archival Science*, *Records Management Journal* and *Archives and Manuscripts*. Because ethnography can function epistemologically (as a theory of knowledge), methodologically (as an approach to conducting a type of ethnography), as a method (the process of gathering and analyzing data), and finally as a product (an ethnographic text or

artifact), all forms were considered in the selection of publications for this review. An additional seven articles were selected from three non-professional archival journals. One of those, *History and Anthropology*, published four articles that fit the archival ethnography typology. Additionally, *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, *Journal of Documentation*, and the organizational studies journal *Organization* all published one article. Thus, a sum of sixteen publications are included in this review.

<11> Publications were excluded if the authors failed to articulate that they were conducting ethnographic research within a recordkeeping environment, even if their data collection methods resembled those of ethnography. As a way to keep the project manageable I also omitted books, book chapters, and dissertations that used archival ethnography.

The Elements of the Tool

<12> The literature reviewed is organized using the structure of a descriptive inventory, oftentimes referred to by archivists and researchers alike as a *finding aid*. [11] Finding aids are used primarily to organize analog archival record collections, but for our purposes, the finding aid's structure is meant to act as a roadmap that renders a summary of the articles and a live inventory of the publications through hyperlinks. Somewhere between a descriptive inventory and a bibliography, this tool is meant to provide a subject/ive typology on archival ethnographies with a brief review of the research.

<13> The interactive part of the finding aid is the section titled "Hyperlinks List" that on a traditional finding aid would otherwise be called a "Container List". I have changed the title to represent hyperlinks because there are no actual contents within a container (normally a box) to list. Instead I provide internal links to quick reviews of the literature based on each theme identified and immediately after there are direct links to the 16 articles' journal providers. The references are organized by using what is called a *series level*. A series level refers to a set of grouped records arranged according to their similarity within a filing system, which is based on the assumption that they were created, received or used for the same or related function; thus, designating them into a unified grouping. [12]

<14> Archival record collections, however, can be

messy and some might argue that cohesive unified grouping are somewhat of an archival myth. For instance, what happens when a filing unit, or whole archival records collection for that matter, is fragmented into different orders before it is even acquired by an archive? Archivists must become investigators and research the arrangement of the records by finding inherent patterns within the mass of data. Therefore, archivists oftentimes take part in creating artificial orders as a way to maintain a sense of cohesion and to make them accessible to users.

<15> The series levels created for this descriptive inventory have been organized according to four themes that were assigned by using qualitative coding. By qualitative coding I refer to the interpretive approach of extracting and describing concepts and ideas from the data examined. I used coding as a heuristic to identify patterns in the recordkeeping environments studied, and the activities that each author engaged in through the ethnographic process. In other words, each series is titled according to the major themes identified. Curiously, coding is actually quite analogous to creating an archival finding aid. For instance, one qualitative research expert's explanation of coding could very easily describe what archivists do: "...to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system of classification, to categorize." [13] Both coding and finding aids are similar in the skill they require for developing descriptive analytic arrangements. Yet whereas qualitative researchers are aware that coding is a process largely based on interpretation, the codified standards that guide archival work sometimes make it difficult to remember that finding aids, such as the one here, are also subjectively constructed.

<16> Perhaps the section of a descriptive inventory that exposes the most archival subjectivity is in the Scope and Content note. This section is meant to give users a general idea of the nature of the materials and activities reflected in the contents of the archival records collections. [14] Usually, these elements include the functions or transactional activities that led to the records' creation, the types of documentary forms incorporated, dates or time periods the records reflect, geographic areas representative of the records, subject matter, and any other relevant information. This section allows the most leeway in presenting information from the archivist's perspective regardless of our objective

intentions. For the Scope and Content section, I provide a brief description of the articles based on the major themes I identified: "Classic Archival Ethnography," "Informal Records," "Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain," and "Constructing Archives." These themes are supported further by a section titled Keywords, which was used to replace what is traditionally referred to as an access point. Access points act as index terms that can link up with other information systems to improve the searchability of archival records collections. I opted for using the keywords provided by the authors on the publications and organized them alphabetically.

<17> As a final word of caution, the descriptive inventory below has been modified according to the type of sources used: scholarly publications. I am describing scholarly publications that can be digitally duplicated depending on the type of access available to the user. As a result, I have modified the tool to reflect the form of the documents and their transactional nature online. Finally, due to the experimental nature of this approach, other elements of a descriptive inventory have been intentionally removed.

The Ethno-Archival Finding Aid

Title: A Collection of Archival Ethnographies

Dates: 2001-2014

Size: 16 Articles

Access Restrictions: With the exception of one article available only in print, the rest of the publications can be accessed online. One article can be openly accessed without a subscription or fee.

Language of Material: All of the articles are in English.

Scope and Content: This collection of articles has been divided into four series to reflect the major themes extracted from the sixteen articles reviewed: "Classic Archival Ethnography," "Informal Records," "Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain," and "Constructing Archives." The first series focuses on classic archival ethnography, which highlights the work of some of the earliest scholars who in the early 2000s used ethnography to theorize archival recordkeeping phenomena. These authors are also very self-reflective of how they practice ethnography. The

second series introduces publications in which authors work within and study cultural contexts that engender informal records.[15] The authors in this series bring up archival recordkeeping situations that problematize the conceptual nature, classification, and formats of archival records. The third series reflects the works of authors using a specific ethnographic research strategy to study archival records. The strategy, reading archives "along the archival grain," was developed by a historian. The fourth series encompasses articles that demonstrate an emerging trend of scholars who are theoretically and literally constructing archives that take into account the changing nature of both the conceptual and practical meanings of archives.

Keywords: Affect, Afro-Mexican, Archive, Archives, Archival education, Archival ethnography, Archival metatext, Archival paradigm, Australia, Black history, Bosnia, Botánicas, Community archives, Construction Industry, Croatia, Custody, Cyber villages, Data management, Diaspora, Digitization, Diversity, DNA, Documents, Endangered languages, Ethnography, Ethnographic fieldwork, Focus group interviewing, Genocide, Healing, Heritage, Himalayas, History, In-depth interviewing, Independent Community Archives, Knowledge creation, Memory, Mexico, Military, Modernist Architecture, Mongolia, Nuclear tests, Organizational remembering, Organizational space, Participant observation, Political repression, Post-conflict recovery, Professional education, Professional practice, Records continuum, Records management, Recordkeeping, Recordkeeping and human rights, Rehabilitation, Remembering, Research applications, Social Construction of Meaning, Stolen Generations, The State, Traditional medicine, Trauma, Yugoslav Wars

Hyperlinked List:

[Series I: Classic Archival Ethnography, 2001-2009](#)

This series is arranged chronologically and includes some of the earliest publications that use archival ethnography to study recordkeeping phenomena.

Bibliography 1

[Link 1](#) McKemish, Sue. "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice." *Archival Science* 1, no. 4 (2001): 333-59.

[Link 2](#) Gracy, Karen F. "Documenting Communities of

Practice: Making the Case for Archival Ethnography." *Archival Science* 3-4 (2004): 335-65. No Link[16]
 Trace, Ciaran B. "For Love of the Game: An Ethnographic Analysis of Archival Reference Work." *Archives and Manuscripts* 34, no. 1 (2006): 124-43.

Link 3 Nycyk, Michael. "Records Management Practices in Construction Industries: Australian Perspectives." *Records Management Journal* 18, no. 2 (2008): 140-49.

Link 4 Shankar, Kalpana. "Recordkeeping in the Production of Scientific Knowledge: An Ethnographic Study." *Archival Science* 4, no. 3-4 (2004): 367-82.

Link 5 Shankar, Kalpana. "Ambiguity and Legitimate Peripheral Participation in the Creation of Scientific Documents." *Journal of Documentation* 65, no. 1 (2009): 151.

Series II: Informal Records, 2009-2014

This series is arranged chronologically and includes articles that question the conceptual nature, classification, and types of records found in formal archives.

Bibliography 2

Link 1 White, Kelvin L. "Mestizaje and Remembering in Afro-Mexican Communities of the Costa Chica: Implications for Archival Education in Mexico." *Archival Science* 9, no. 1-2 (2009): 43-55.

Link 2 Flinn, Andrew, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd. "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream." *Archival Science* 9, no. 1-2 (2009): 71-86.

Link 3 Jones, Michael Owen, and Claudia J. Hernández. "Latina/O Traditional Medicine in Los Angeles: Asking About, Archiving, and Advocating Cultural Resources." *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 5, no. 1 (2009).

Link 4 Halilovich, Hariz. "Reclaiming Erased Lives: Archives, Records and Memories in Post-War Bosnia and the Bosnian Diaspora." *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 231-47.

Series III: Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain, 2011-2014

This series is arranged chronologically and includes

articles that use the research strategy of reading "along the archival grain".

Bibliography 3

Link 1 Kaplonski, Chris. "Archived Relations: Repression, Rehabilitation and the Secret Life of Documents in Mongolia." *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 431-44.

Link 2 Turin, Mark. "Born Archival: The Ebb and Flow of Digital Documents from the Field." *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 445-60.

Link 3 Murphy, Fiona. "Archives of Sorrow: An Exploration of Australia's Stolen Generations and Their Journey into the Past." *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 481-95.

Link 4 Trundle, Catherine. "Searching for Culpability in the Archives: Commonwealth Nuclear Test Veterans' Claims for Compensation." *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 497-512.

Link 5 Decker, Stephanie. "Solid Intentions: An Archival Ethnography of Corporate Architecture and Organizational Remembering." *Organization* 21, no. 4 (2014): 514-42.

Series IV: Constructing Archives, 2009-2014

This series is arranged chronologically and includes articles by scholars who are theoretically and literally constructing archives as a part of their archival ethnographic approach.

Bibliography 2

Link 1 Jones, Michael Owen, and Claudia J. Hernández. "Latina/O Traditional Medicine in Los Angeles: Asking About, Archiving, and Advocating Cultural Resources." *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 5, no. 1 (2009).

Link 2 Turin, Mark. "Born Archival: The Ebb and Flow of Digital Documents from the Field." *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 445-60.

Link 3 Gilliland, Anne J. "Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-Conflict Croatia." *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 249-74.

Classic Archival Ethnography

<18> The work of Sue McKemmish, Karen F. Gracy, and Cirian Trace, demonstrate a strong commitment to practical archival recordkeeping environments. Writing in the early 2000s, they were among the first archival scholars to experiment with ethnography as a method to study very specific archival phenomena. Each of their pieces is positioned for developing empirical theories in archival recordkeeping, and in some cases as a "how-to" introduction for professionals. Their approach in using ethnography was employed in the "classic sense" or rather, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes, one in which ethnographic writing is reduced to method in an attempt to be overly transparent about a research process that prompts a kind of methodological authority.[17] For instance, Cirian Trace, based in the United States, studied the archival reference process to "ascertain what contribution naturalism (a research paradigm given life through the methods and assumptions of qualitative or naturalistic research) could play in giving archivists a deeper nuanced understanding of archival reference." [18] She admits, however, that her work is only the beginning of what could lead to the development of a rigorous theory.

<19> Where Trace found limitations, Gracy succeeded by using ethnography in combination with grounded theory to develop a theory on the culture of film preservation in archives in the United States.[19] She details the ethnographic research process as a primer for archivists who are new to using the method and illustrates the process through her experience. Moreover, it is through this work that she develops and coins the concept of *archival ethnography*.

<20> Sue McKemmish also used a mixed methods approach, claiming participant observation and reflection as her entry into ethnography based on her years of experience in developing the Australian records continuum theory. Her article is a reflective piece that discusses the development of this ambitious theory encompassing "the development of the unifying concept of records as evidence of social and organizational activity, ideas about the fixed and mutable nature of records and the role of recordkeeping in society, the development of the records continuum model, the redefinition of archival description, and the building of conceptual models for describing records in their societal, business, and documentary contexts." [20] In all of these cases ethnography was used to address questions concerning archival recordkeeping activities that spoke primarily to an audience of archival professionals

and, in the Australian context, also records managers.

<21> Similar to McKemish, Gracy, and Trace, Kaplana Shankar and Michael Nycyck also hail from the archival and records management community, and they too engage with archivists and records managers alike about the value they find in using ethnography in their respective fields of inquiry. Yet because the settings that they study are not in a traditional archives, their work also has a broader reach within other communities of practice. Nycyck used ethnography to study an Australian construction company's records management practices and to identify and reflect on some of the problems this community faces with recordkeeping as an industry.

[21] One of the issues he identified was how project staff and project managers conflicted in the value they placed on recordkeeping. While the project managers sought to implement record policies to increase efficiency and performance, the project staff resisted and oftentimes failed to follow through because, to them, the organizational method they used still worked. His conclusions focus on the insight he provides to the company concerning buy-in and cultural differences that would need to be addressed for the launching of a more productive records management program.

<22> In Shankar's "Recordkeeping in the Production of Scientific Knowledge: An Ethnographic Study," she tailors her work to the archival community by discussing how she studied the creation, use, and management of scientific records, and the consequence of such recordkeeping practices on the production of scientific knowledge specifically. In "Ambiguity and Legitimate Peripheral Participation in the Creation of Scientific Documents," she goes on to discuss her findings in detail rather than provide a reflective piece on how she conducted the ethnography. Her work centers on a neurobiology teaching laboratory at a university and more broadly on how science is socially constructed. By exploring the ritual of writing up field notes, she learned that that creating scientific records is a very personal act that scientists do not always want to talk about, even as it marks their entrance into the profession. To Shankar, this undertaking revealed more generally how "the way individuals and institutions of science conceptualize recordkeeping practices" is emotion-laden, but also secret.[22]

Informal Records

<23> Besides the "how-to" ethno-archival confessionals and practice-based theory building pieces of the early 2000s, a new wave of archival ethnographers emerged in 2009 to study community archiving efforts and to problematize the nature and holdings of traditional archival environments. The ontological question of what an archival record constitutes is a theme captured by the term "informal records" and it describes the articles in this series.

<24> Kelvin L. White and Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepard used archival ethnography to study community archiving endeavors with a focus on the ramification of culture on recordkeeping. For instance, Flinn, Stevens, and Shepard worked on an ethnographic project in the United Kingdom with four community archives to examine identity formation issues surrounding race, color, gender, sexuality, and class, as well as how on a broader scale these archival efforts could affect social policy.[23] In their article they stress how the impetus of community archiving is based on the desire of populations who have been oppressed, and who come from very diverse backgrounds, to be able to voice their histories *on their own terms*. [24] They are histories, moreover, that are recounted through informal records such as museum artifacts, books ephemera, clothes, and audiovisual materials. White takes a slightly different route in studying community archiving efforts. He uses ethnography within an Afro-Mexican community in the southern Pacific coast of Mexico to examine the community's knowledge structures and memory keeping as a way to develop archival education recommendations that incorporate other ways of knowing as well as alternative conceptions of how a record may be defined. As he states, "indigenous and former slave communities often rely on non-textual ways of remembering, including oral, aural, and kinetic forms." [25] These forms, have great significance to the profession if it is to make archives and archival education more inclusive to such communities. This ontological dilemma is also present in the work of folklorists Michael Owen Jones and Claudia J. Hernández who document their development of an archival repository of cultural resources from *botánicas* in service of the Latina/o community in Southern California. [26] Yet in creating the repository they ran into not-so-uncommon classification issues in which traditional terms used by the community studied were actually not compatible with standards used by Western medicine. This creates

problems of legibility with the retrieval of folk knowledge within information systems. Concerns over legibility, however, are not limited to information systems, as anthropologist Hariz Halilovich reminds us in his piece on studying what he calls "mundane records" in the recovery of memory and identity for post-conflict survivors of the Bosnia-Herzegovina war. A war that brought genocide and ethnic cleansing, also destroyed the material culture of Bosnian Muslim and Croatian populations, including archives, libraries, and museums. This destruction left little cultural heritage artifacts and documentary evidence of the crimes committed against these populations. Given the obliteration of these "official" memory texts, what then counts as an archival record? Drawing from his fieldwork, Halilovich discusses the role personal records and online communities have for displaced Bosnians who are now reconstructing their identities in light of the atrocities they underwent.[27]

Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain

<25> In 2011, the journal *History and Anthropology* published a special issue on "The Political Lives of Archival Documents" in which the contributors engage with the documentary and material turn in anthropology. They describe this trend as one motivated by "how the aesthetics, form and materiality of documentary work shape the means by which archives exert power." [28] The authors in this series have in common that they share the ethnographic strategy of reading archives "along the archival grain." A phrase coined by historian Ann Laura Stoler, who suggests that "we need to read [the archive] for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake - along the archival grain." [29] While this scholarly trend stems from anthropology and history, it is also one that indirectly speaks to archivists. As the editors of the special issue admit, the discourse surrounding archives and power usually position it as hegemonic product of the state, however, it also "downplays the diversity of archival practices that exist, especially engendered by those groups who are the subject of the archival gaze and record, and who often appropriate the archive's logic, its forms of memory and its documents for new uses. That such documents' future effects and interpretations are never fully known by their creators make them unstable actors in struggles for power and key sites of concern for those seeking

influence of social change." [30] Moreover, it is those interpretations that can help make the familiarity of archives to archivists seem "strange," and conversely provide perspective on the social impact of archival work.

<26> Historian Fiona Murphy and anthropologists Catherine Trundle, and Chris Kaplonski offer ethnographic accounts of tracing archival records within State apparatuses, and explore how these records are used as tools for contestation, healing, and redress. Murphy presents an ethnographic reflection of how trauma and suffering are materialized in the lives of members of Australia's Stolen Generations. [31] The Stolen Generations refers to a time period between the 1890s-1970s in which Aboriginal children were stolen from their families based on State policy in order to be assimilated into mainstream society. Murphy focuses on the story of Patrick and his journey into the archives to confront and reconnect with this traumatic past. Yet while the archives are at once a place of grief for Patrick, they are also a major part of his healing process. This is in part motivated by testifying his suffering to the Australian National Library's "Bringing Them Home Oral History Project," an effort by the library to have the testimonies of the Stolen Generations archived and remembered as a public record of the country's oppressive past against Aboriginal populations.

<27> Testifying is also evident in Trundle's ethnographic account. She reads both "along" and "against" the archival grain to understand how archival records are used for contestation and redress by "test veterans" involved in nuclear bomb testing detonations for the New Zealand and British governments in the 1950s. The veterans believe to have been a part of a covert government experiment meant to test the human health consequences of the nuclear weapon, which resulted in the deterioration of their health. [32] The irony of this case is that while the veterans are quick to contest the contents of the records during legal proceedings through their oral testimony, they are just as quick to use records that have traveled outside of the archive as evidence and truth that can counter the State's narrative of non-culpability. Trundle explores the contradictions and relational networks that the archival documents traverse through the lives of the veterans.

<28> Kaplonski explores the internal logic of the Mongolian State in reinterpreting the past as

ideologically truthful via two archival records documenting a Buddhist lama, Samdan, who was arrested for being a counter-revolutionary in socialist Mongolia in the 1930s. Kaplonski traces the relationship between these records; one found at the Central Historical Archives of Mongolia from 1931 that had initially incriminated Samdan, and the other, a Supreme Court resolution produced in 1997 that led to his posthumous rehabilitation.[33] On this journey Kaplonski ends up encountering conflicting versions of the truth behind Samdan's arrest, many of which are generated through records that officially legitimize the unlawful actions of the past. By unraveling the meanings and multiple truths produced by the documents, Kaplonski offers us his own "ethnographic truth"-yet another account that is inherently partial and incomplete.[34]

<29> Finally, historian Stephanie Decker uses archival ethnography in a slightly different manner than the previous scholars. She emphasizes a postcolonial perspective in using the corporate archives of three multinational banks in Nigeria and Ghana in the 1950s and 1960s—a period of decolonization and early independence in these countries. Using postcolonial theory, she examined the architectural records of Barclays Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, and Unilever and found that the modernist architecture used to build their branches during the decolonization period helped to "engender a form of organizational forgetting of their involvement in the colonial past of these countries." [35] Through architecture, these multinational banks were able to build a visual narrative that prompted people to "forget the past" and look to the future.

Constructing Archives

<30> Mark Turin, Anne J. Gilliland, and Michael Owens Jones and Claudia J. Hernández demonstrate how archival ethnographers are constructing new types of archives in both conceptual and practical terms. A route that may very well lead archival ethnography into the future. For instance, Jones and Hernández's documentation work rendered an archive of cultural resources on botánicas in Southern California. As mentioned earlier, their piece brought forth ontological considerations, but also the fact that researchers who use the ethnographic method do not always know how to "archive" their data. Their piece, then, is also a type of "how to" primer on how to archive ethnographic data, as well as a guide on what to keep in mind throughout the data collection

process. Turin's piece is also reminiscent of this style but with a hint more of enthusiasm about archiving. He states: "Archives have been successfully rebranded: they are no longer musty places where documents go to die, but sites of interaction and energy, connection and outreach." [36] At least this was the case for him, who, while working on his dissertation in Nepal produced a grammar of two dialects on the Thangmi language, and then ended up co-establishing the Digital Himalaya Project, a language preservation archive. His piece is an ethnographic reflection on the process of setting up this digital archive, which at first was to preserve documentation not from the region, but that of ethnographic collections in other parts of the world that had documented it. It later grew into a more robust effort by incorporating documentation from the local region, which included having to deal with major ethical considerations in order to make the records available online.

<31> On the other end of the spectrum is Anne J. Gilliland's work. She uses autoethnography and literary analysis to study the human dimensions of records and recordkeeping from an archival perspective. After spending time in Croatia after the Croatian war in the 1990s, she, along with colleagues began to ask "What could or should the archival community be doing to support post-conflict recovery and reconstruction? Is it possible to identify record or documentation problems and then implement solutions sufficiently quickly?" [37] As a result, her piece is a part of an on-going research project that seeks to identify "how bureaucratic requirements, the associated records and recordkeeping processes, and archives in regions dominated by or recovering from ethnically and religiously oriented conflict might aid or impede individual and community as well as national recovery and equitable coexistence if not reconciliation." [38] Gilliland's work is an example of what Turin means when he refers to archives having undergone a "rebranding." In other words, archival scholars are no longer simply using archival ethnography in the classic sense, they are also engaging in efforts that are political and conceptually challenging old archival traditions.

Conclusion

<32> This article provides a literature review of sixteen articles that employed archival ethnography in the last fifteen years. Four major themes were identified in the literature: "Classic Archival

Ethnography," "Informal Records," "Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain," and "Constructing Archives." These themes demonstrate the differences in techniques and strategies scholars use to conduct archival ethnographies, their disciplinary traditions, and the audiences that they address. Two of the themes that contrasted the most in terms of style and authorship were "Classic Archival Ethnography," and "Archival Ethnography Along the Archival Grain." Authors listed under the "classic" category hailed primarily from professional archival studies, whereas authors who worked "along the archival grain" consisted of historians and anthropologists. Authors that formed a part of "Informal Records" and "Constructing Archives" represented a slightly more mixed group of scholars, which show some methodological convergence. This may be partly because of the growing number of archival educators in academia with an interest in understanding how archives and records have a consequence on the lives of marginalized groups specifically. At this point it is worth quoting Roland Barthes: "To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one." [39] And here, as we can observe, archival ethnographies indeed belong to no one community of practice.

<33> As a final note, this literature review by no means presents a complete collection of publications that use archival ethnography, but it is the first to document some of the most recent works. Future research should include a systematic review of other extant and new literature in the field.

Notes

[1] Finding aids are tools created by archivists to provide access to archival record collections with the most common format resembling an inventory list.

[2] Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "Building an Infrastructure for Archival Research," *Archival Science* 4 (2004): 174.

[3] Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland and Eric Ketelaar, "'Communities of Memory' : Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005): 5.

[4] Karen F. Gracy, "Documenting Communities of Practice : Making the Case for Archival Ethnography,"

Archival Science 3-4 (2004): 337.

[5] Richard Moses-Pearce, "Archives," *The Society of American Archivists Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www2.archivists.org>.

[6] Michael W. Hesson, "Ethnohistory," in *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. James H. Birx (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), 2.

[7] Elisabeth Kaplan, "'Many Paths to Partial Truths': Archives, Anthropology, and the Power of Representation," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3-4 (2002).

[8] That article was Karen F. Gracy's: "Documenting Communities of Practice: Making the Case for Archival Ethnography." Michael Khoo, Lily Rozaklis, and Catherine Hall, "A Survey of the Use of Ethnographic Methods in the Study of Libraries and Library Users," *Library & Information Science Research* 34, no. 2 (2012): 84.

[9] These journals were ranked in 2010 with an A+ or A based on the Australian Research Council Research Excellence evaluation process. There were four other journals that were ranked as a part of the process; they are not included here, though it is safe to say that preliminary research for this study revealed that none of them had published archival ethnographies. AERI, "Discussion: Archival Journal Ranking," AERI 2010 Discussion Forum, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://aeri2010.wikifoundry.com>.

[10] The English-speaking countries have a combined population of just under 500 million people, compared to the world population of 7 billion.

[11] For the purposes of this article I will refer to descriptive inventories as finding aids.

[12] Richard Moses-Pearce, "Series," *The Society of American Archivists Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www2.archivists.org>.

[13] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2009), 8.

[14] Society of American Archivists, "Describing Archives: A Content Standard," (2013), <http://files.archivists.org>.

[15] Elsewhere I have noted that informal records are predicated on three interrelated dimensions surrounding the identity of a person or population; they include the memory infrastructures associated with identity, the devotion with which one works to enact that collective memory, and the production of materiality, such as records resulting from that labor. Janet Ceja, "Informal Records and the Autochthonous Preservation of the Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Rural Mexico" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2013).

[16] *Archives and Manuscripts* does not have digitized publications available online for the years 1977-2011.

[17] James Clifford, "Chapter 1: Introduction: Partial Truths," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford, George E. Marcus, and School of American Research. (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1986), 2.

[18] Ciaran B. Trace, "For Love of the Game: An Ethnographic Analysis of Archival Reference Work," *Archives and Manuscripts* 34, no. 1 (2006): 125.

[19] Gracy, "Documenting Communities of Practice : Making the Case for Archival Ethnography," 353.

[20] Sue McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 335.

[21] Michael Nycyk, "Records Management Practices in Construction Industries: Australian Perspectives," *Records Management Journal* 18, no. 2 (2008): 140.

[22] Kalpana Shankar, "Recordkeeping in the Production of Scientific Knowledge : An Ethnographic Study," *Archival Science* 4, no. 3-4 (2004): 379.

[23] Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *ibid.* 9, no. 1-2 (2009): 75.

[24] *Ibid.*, 73.

[25] Kelvin L. White, "Meztizaje and Remembering in Afro-Mexican Communities of the Costa Chica: Implications for Archival Education in Mexico," *ibid.*: 45.

[26] Botánicas are stores guided by a spiritual

healing ethos and that sell herbal remedies, religious items, and other health treatments supporting the syncretic belief systems of Latin American communities.

[27] Hariz Halilovich, "Reclaiming Erased Lives: Archives, Records and Memories in Post-War Bosnia and the Bosnian Diaspora," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 235-36.

[28] Catherine Trundle and Chris Kaplonski, "Tracing the Political Lives of Archival Documents," *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 407.

[29] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 100.

[30] Trundle and Kaplonski, "Tracing the Political Lives of Archival Documents," 411.

[31] Fiona Murphy, "Archives of Sorrow: An Exploration of Australia's Stolen Generations and Their Journey into the Past," *ibid.*: 482.

[32] Catherine Trundle, "Searching for Culpability in the Archives: Commonwealth Nuclear Test Veterans' Claims for Compensation," *ibid.*: 499.

[33] Chris Kaplonski, "Archived Relations: Repression, Rehabilitation and the Secret Life of Documents in Mongolia," *ibid.*: 433.

[34] Clifford, "Chapter 1: Introduction: Partial Truths," 7.

[35] Stephanie Decker, "Solid Intentions: An Archival Ethnography of Corporate Architecture and Organizational Remembering," *Organization* 21, no. 4 (2014): 515.

[36] Mark Turin, "Born Archival: The Ebb and Flow of Digital Documents from the Field," *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2011): 451.

[37] Anne J. Gilliland, "Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-Conflict Croatia," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 261.

[38] *Ibid.*, 257.

[39] Roland Barthes, "Jeunes Chercheurs," *Communications* 19, no. 1 (1972): 3.

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