Articles

Redefining Archives in South Africa: Public Archives and Society in Transition, 1990-1996

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Résumé

Pour les archivistes sud-africains, à la fois comme Sud-Africains et comme archivistes, la période 1990-1996 en fut une passionnante, menaçante, et enrichissante. La démocratie naissante, avec ses douleurs de croissance, évinçait le régime de l'apartheid. À la même époque, un discours archivistique stérile et périmé était vaincu par un successeur et assurément relié à la nouvelle dynamique sociétale. Le présent article décrit cette transition, en mettant l'accent sur le domaine des archives publiques. L'article débute avec une brève analyse des archives publiques sous l'apartheid; on y explore ensuite la transformation du discours—en suivant l'hypothèse que les archives nécessitent une redéfinition, plus précisément une réinvention pour une Afrique du Sud démocratique—d'abord dans la perspective d'un processus, ensuite en termes des questions principales. La dernière partie de l'article offre une évaluation de la situation actuelle et quelques réflexions pour l'avenir.

Abstract

For South African archivists, both as South Africans and as archivists, the period 1990-1996 was at once exciting, frightening, and enriching. A fledgling democracy, with all its growing pains, supplanted the apartheid regime. At the same time a sterile, outmoded archival discourse was vanquished by a successor born of and connecting assuredly with the new societal dynamics. This article provides an account of that transition, with a focus on the sphere of public archives. It begins with a brief analysis of public archives under apartheid. It then explores transformation discourse—one informed by the assumption that archives require redefinition, more precisely reinvention, for a democratic South Africa—firstly from the perspective of process, secondly in terms of the core issues which occupy it. The article's final section offers an assessment of the present position and some thoughts on the future.

Introduction

"Archives hold the memory of a nation" is an assertion archivists are fond of making.[1] A stirring slogan, it dismisses the role of libraries, museums, and other repositories of information, not least the memories of individuals. It also suggests a glibness about the complex processes through which archives feed into social memory, and it is closely allied to the concept of archivists as impartial custodians who somehow remain insulated from institutional and societal dynamics.[2] Of course, in everything they do—the records they choose to preserve, how they arrange them, describe them, and make them available—archivists are active shapers of social memory, and they in turn are positioned within, and are shaped by, the larger forces which contest the terrain of social memory.

Under apartheid this terrain, together with all social space, was a site of struggle, not only of narrative against narrative, but also, in the crudest sense, of remembering against forgetting.[3] In imposing apartheid ideology the state sought to destroy all oppositional memory through censorship, confiscation, banning, incarceration, assassination, and a range of other oppressive tools. This was the context within which public archivists practised under apartheid—struggle informed not only their institutional and social environments: it permeated the fabric of their daily professional work. Impartiality was patently a pipe-dream.[4]

South Africa's formal transition to democracy began in 1990 and culminated in 1994 with the adoption of a new Interim Constitution and the holding of the country's first democratic general election. Two years on, the Government of National Unity has successfully secured adoption of a final Constitution and managed elections at the local government level.[5] But the monumental task of transforming apartheid South Africa, of building democracy, has just begun. In the sphere of archives—particularly public archives, the focus of my paper—the process has not got beyond foundational spade-work. This work has been energized by and positioned within two overlapping arenas of transformation: the public service and social memory.

My account[6] of transition begins with a brief analysis of public archives under apartheid. I then explore transformation discourse in South African archives, firstly from the perspective of process, secondly in terms of the core issues which occupy it. In the final section I assess the present position and offer some thoughts on the future.

Public Archives and Apartheid

In addressing public archives under apartheid, it is not my intention to attempt a comprehensive historical analysis,[7] nor is it to engage debates around the professional quality of the work done by public archivists. My purpose is to locate public archives within the arenas of state bureaucracy and social memory in the period 1948-1990,[8] and to suggest in broad terms how public archives were shaped by the system of apartheid. In doing so I focus deliberately on the State Archives Service; excluded from analysis are the South African Defence Force (SADF) Archives and the various homeland (or bantustan) archives services.[9] It should be noted, however, that the SADF Archives and the homeland archives services in both conception and

administration faithfully reflected apartheid logic. Under a system according inordinate power and autonomy to the military, it is not surprising that the SADF Archives, although legally subject to the professional supervision of the State Archives Service, in practice sustained an independent operation.[10] Nor is it surprising, in the context of apartheid homeland policy, in particular the inadequate professional and administrative assistance made available by central government, that the homelands either neglected public archives entirely or maintained only rudimentary services.[11]

The State Archives Service has its origins in the fledgling public archives facilities maintained by the pre-Union Cape, Natal, Orange River, and Transvaal colonies.[12] In the decade after Union, these facilities were fashioned into a national archives service positioned in the Department of the Interior. Empowered legislatively for the first time in 1922, it subsequently underwent a number of name changes and moved from the Interior Department to Union Education, then to the Education, Arts, and Science Department and finally to the National Education Department. From the outset its custodial mandate embraced the archives of all central and provincial government offices; in 1962 this was extended to incorporate all local government offices.[13] Also from the outset, the Service enjoyed a mandate to supplement its official holdings by collecting private records.[14] Its functions vis-à-vis public records still in the custody of government offices—its records management functions—remained modest and purely advisory until 1953. Thereafter, especially after the passing of the 1962 *Archives Act*, the Service developed a significant records management capacity sustained by wide-ranging regulative powers.[15] By 1990 the Service had facilities in seven cities across the country,[16] including six archives repositories and five intermediate repositories (or record centres).

Throughout the apartheid era the State Archives Service, by virtue of its positioning within the state, was shackled by its identification with the apartheid system. Denied membership in the International Council on Archives (ICA) and shunned by most other countries, particularly during the cultural boycott of the 1980s, the Service was largely excluded from the international exchange of professional ideas and resources. Individuals attempted to keep abreast of developments through the literature, but this was no substitute for active participation. Within the country, mutual suspicion erected barriers between the Service and many institutions and individuals active in the arena of social memory. This impacted directly on the Service's functions—for instance, the Service found it difficult to secure donations of private records from other than establishment-aligned sources, and participation in the Service's computerized national registers of manuscripts, photographs, and audio-visual material was constrained.[17] At a more profound level, however, isolation fostered a larger mentality resistant to new ideas and enthralled by an outmoded professional discourse.[18]

Apartheid realities and the Service's status as an organ of the state combined to ensure that many of its services, whatever the intentions of the Service or of individual archivists might have been, were fashioned into tools of the apartheid system. Three examples illustrate this. Firstly, despite the fact that user services were open to all and offered free of charge,[19] black South Africans made up only a small proportion of the Service's users. Systemic barriers—low educational standards, high rates of illiteracy, physical isolation from city centres, competency in languages other than

the official Afrikaans and English, etc.—ensured that most South Africans enjoyed only nominal access to public archives. Secondly, the Service's records management functions—designed in the first instance to identify and safeguard public records with archival value, but also effective in promoting administrative efficiency—in effect oiled the wheels of apartheid bureaucracy.[20] Thirdly, in its relationship with homelands archives services, the Service was placed in a classic apartheid dilemma: cutting them loose professionally would have meant reinforcing homeland underdevelopment; providing comprehensive support would have meant buttressing grand apartheid policy. In practice, the Service's approach fell uncomfortably between the two schools.

Another dilemma confronted the Service in the form of powerful state organs obstructing its legitimate activities and flagrantly ignoring or defying its legal instruments. Given the apartheid system's disregard for accountability and transparency, and the Service's junior status within government,[21] the Service was poorly positioned to resist. Again, three examples serve to illustrate this dimension. Firstly, a number of government offices persistently refused to subject their record systems to design analysis and archival appraisal or to cooperate in the transfer of records into the Service's custody.[22] Secondly, from the late 1980s numerous cases of unauthorized destruction of public records by government offices were documented and many more alleged.[23] They pointed to a systematic endeavour to secure a selective amnesia as the apartheid system crumbled. The Service was singularly unsuccessful in opposing this or exposing the culprits. Thirdly, in the 1980s the Service was forced by its political masters to withdraw open access to certain records in its custody— those less than fifty years old of six government offices, and all post-1910 records of a further four offices.[24] These restrictions were lifted in 1991, and in practice constituted only a minor infringement of public access to the records concerned.[25] Nevertheless, this incident contributed to a perception of the Service as a willing collaborator in state-imposed public amnesia.

Not that willing collaboration with the apartheid system was not a powerful dynamic in the Service. Indeed, I would argue, it was moulded as an institution by apartheid and absorbed apartheid bureaucratic culture. Until the mid-1980s public service legislation laid down that only whites could be appointed to professional and many administrative posts. By 1990 not a single professional post had been occupied by a black person.[26] As in the rest of the bureaucracy, senior positions were dominated by white, Afrikaans-speaking males.[27] The Service's structure was rigidly hierarchical and its management ethos authoritarian. Transparency and broad participation in decision-making were given short shrift. Official language policy was implemented, with Afrikaans dominant in the upper reaches of management. Much core policy documentation was produced only in Afrikaans. Language usage, needless to say, also impacted on the Service's interface with users and the public generally. As did the Service's provision of racially segregated reading room and toilet facilities until the 1970s.

The absorption of apartheid bureaucratic culture, and, at a deeper level, of apartheid ideology, shaped the Service's functions and left indelible marks on the Service's contribution to social memory. A close analysis of the Service's archival appraisal function is beyond the scope of this article.[28] However, it is clear that until the

blossoming of social history and revisionist historiography in the 1970s, the Service's
fashioning of appraisal into a tool for academic researchers, particularly historians,
resulted in the experience of the under classes being poorly reflected in the records
chosen for preservation. The fact that most of the Service's appraisers were taught as
undergraduates by establishment-aligned Afrikaner historians was an important
contributory factor. A more fundamental skewing of social memory is evident in the
Service's collections of private records. With the exception of the Boer resistance to
British imperialism, they document poorly the struggles against colonialism,
segregation, and apartheid. Black experience is also poorly documented, and in most
cases is seen through white eyes. Similarly, the voices of women, the disabled, and
other marginalized people are seldom heard. A number of practical difficulties, for
instance inadequate budgets and the rareness of skills required to give the voiceless
voice, must be considered in explaining this phenomenon. I have already mentioned
the problems posed by the Service being identified with the apartheid state. But the
heart of the issue was a collecting policy which quite deliberately directed archivists
away from grassroots experience towards society's pinnacles.[29] A more blatant
ideological intervention was demonstrated by the Service's official history project,
which involved the production of a multi-volumed official history of one of the central
events in Afrikaner history, the Anglo Boer War of 1899-1902.[30] "It was," according
to historian Albert Grundlingh, "the Afrikaner's answer to the *British Official History
of the War* and *The Times History of the War*."[31] Ideological considerations also
informed the selection of theses for publication in the Service's *Archives Year Book
for South African History*. Introduced in 1938, the series became an important vehicle
for Afrikaner nationalist historiography, with the legitimization of white rule and the
exclusion of oppositional voices being key objectives in selection policy.[32]

Debate around the shaping of the State Archives Service by the apartheid system
has produced two dominant (and conflicting) characterizations of the Service. One
portrays the Service simply as an instrument of the system—as Jill Geber asserted in
1987: "Primarily the Government Archives Service is an important auxilliary (sic)
administrative tool of the National Party used to further the efficient execution of
apartheid policy throughout the administrative structure."[33] The other characterization
posits an institution straight-jacketed by the system but resilient enough to emerge
largely unscathed. Neither is accurate. Both employ narratives without complexity
or texture. My analysis offers an interpretation somewhere between these two
extremes. Ultimately it delineates public archives in South Africa—whether positioned
in the public service terrain or that of social memory—as bearing profoundly the
imprint of apartheid and in urgent need of transformation.

Transformation Discourse: Processes

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and numerous other
organizations in February 1990, and the subsequent initiation of formal negotiations
on the dismantling of apartheid, marked the beginning of what many journalists and
other commentators termed South Africa's period of "Pretoriastroika."[34] Terms like
"transparency," "accountability," "stakeholders," "public participation,"
"restructuring," "reconstruction," and "transformation" exploded into public discourse.
The sphere of archives was no exception. A transformation discourse—one informed

by the assumption that archives require redefinition, more precisely reinvention, for a democratic South Africa—quickly emerged. This despite the fact that participants in this discourse, unlike in many other spheres, had very little to build on. They were confronted by a paucity of revisionist thinking and debate.[35] A survey of pre-1990 South African archival literature, for instance, reveals a predominance of work positioned comfortably within the status quo.[36] The only significant exception was Jill Geber's 1987 MA dissertation, "The South African Government Archives Service: Past, Present and Future," which attempted an historical analysis of the State Archives Service and offered a vision for public archives in a post-apartheid South Africa.[37] This seminal work marked the birth of transformation discourse, but its immediate impact was slight.[38] From 1990, South African archival literature underwent a sustained rejuvenation as it exploited a blossoming of professional exploration and debate.[39] But in the early stages of transition, participants in transformation discourse were forced to rely on ideas from international archival literature and from more broadly-based debates around social memory within the country.

Between 1990 and 1994, South Africa's formal transition period, three main tributaries fed into the river of transformation discourse: the State Archives Service, the ANC, and the South African Society of Archivists (SASA).[40] Within months of February 1990, and thereafter with increasing urgency, "Pretoriastroika" dynamics fashioned change within the State Archives Service. Two conflicting imperatives competed for supremacy in this process: a conservative, survival instinct located mainly at senior levels and focused on adapting to new realities; and, mainly at junior levels, a progressive determination to effect meaningful changes. The process was facilitated by a significant shift in the balance of power in the Service's senior management—the six most senior officials in 1990 had all retired by 1994, and whereas all twelve of the most senior positions had been occupied by Afrikaners (only one a woman) in 1990, by 1994 four women and three English-speakers were placed in the top eleven positions.[41] Racial exclusivity broke down more slowly, with just five professional positions occupied by blacks in 1994 and the first such appointment at senior management level taking place in 1995.[42] Another significant impetus to progressive elements was provided by the ending of international isolation. The Service was admitted to membership of the ICA in 1991 and quickly embraced participation in all its structures, notably the Eastern and Southern African Branch (ESARBICA).[43] The Service hosted numerous visits by foreign archivists and, in turn, responded to invitations from other countries.[44] In 1992 the Service's Director appointed a Committee to Investigate the Impact of Social and Political Changes on Archives Services in Other Countries and reinforced it with the appointment of several issue-based committees and task teams. For the first time, albeit cautiously, management was encouraging internal debate and seeking engagement with debates in the archival profession and beyond. Participation in professional and other gatherings became more common. Management style was also changing, with broader participation in decision-making and the faint glimmerings of transparency and accountability. All of this, needless to say, impacted on the Service's coal-face activities. A project to translate into English core policy documentation only available in Afrikaans was embarked on. The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the Service's archival appraisal programme were revisited in light of international developments, and an endeavour to document apartheid more fully through the

appraisal programme was initiated. Public programming was implemented systematically for the first time through, *inter alia*, open days, extended reading room hours, group visits, and formal consultation with users. An electronic records management programme, long over-due, was established. These are examples of a far broader phenomenon, one which demonstrated the Service's willingness and capacity to adapt to new realities. However, it would be misleading to suggest that this constituted a commitment to transformation. In 1994 the survival instinct, drawing on the inertia of the previous four decades, still held sway.

The ANC, on the other hand, occupied a position squarely within a transformation paradigm. Long traditions of oppositional discourse, policy formulation around the reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa, and the development of concepts like people's education, people's history, and cultural liberation energized the ANC's voice on archives. In 1992 the organization's Department of Arts and Culture established a Commission on Museums, Monuments, and Heraldry which convened an Archives Sub-committee with the following short-term mandate:

> To examine the state of management of archives in the country;
>
> To formulate a draft policy document regarding archives in a democratic South Africa;
>
> To formulate guidelines regarding interim measures;
>
> To make recommendations regarding transformation, popularization and democratization of current archives structures.[45]

The Sub-committee produced its Preliminary Report in June 1992. Although it provided a comprehensive and wide-ranging analysis—one of the objectives being to perform an educative function within the ANC—its policy formulations and specific recommendations focused on the State Archives Service. The thrust of its thinking is captured in the assertion that "the guiding principle must be the repositioning of the Archives Service within the structures necessary to liberate the minds and memories of the people, so that they can empower themselves as citizens of a democracy."[46] Its proposals were organized around several core ideas: institutional transformation; accountability and transparency; freedom of information; outreach; public participation; oral history as a mechanism for giving the voiceless voice; and the promotion of people's history. The only proposal which addressed directly the position of private archival institutions posited a "national, co-operative collections policy" managed by a "democratised State Archives Service."[47] The Report made a considerable impact on archival discourse. Popularized by Graham Dominy in a 1993 *South African Archives Journal* article,[48] it injected fresh ideas and gave momentum to transformation discourse. Its influence within the ANC, however, was marginal. Absorbed into broader positions adopted by the Commission on Museums, Monuments, and Heraldry, it emerged from the ANC's 1993 Culture and Development Conference as an arid collection of slogans which were neither acted on by leadership structures nor publicized.[49] The Sub-committee continued promoting archives as an issue within the organization, but by the end of 1993 it had effectively ceased to exist.

SASA, South Africa's oldest and largest professional association of archivists,[50] was the other major contributor to transformation discourse. Until the 1980s it was dominated by State Archives Service archivists and did little beyond producing the annual *South African Archives Journal*. During the 1980s it established branches in all four provinces which began to attract new members and create space for the exchange of ideas. However, given the State Archives Service's hegemony, in particular the National Committee's faithful reflection of the Service's management hierarchy, it is not surprising that an outmoded professional discourse prevailed, dissident voices were muted, and SASA never adopted a critical stance vis-à-vis the state. From 1990 a sea change became evident.[51] "Pretoriastroika" in the State Archives Service reverberated through the Society as well. Changes to SASA's constitution made it easier for non-State Archives Service members to secure election to the National Committee.[52] A new leadership infused energy, broader awareness and experience, and a determination to invigorate the association professionally at the same time as positioning it on the public stage. Internal procedures and processes were upgraded and made more transparent. A professional code was adopted.[53] Almost overnight the *South African Archives Journal* was transformed from a space for nuts and bolts musings into a forum for meaningful exploration and debate. Many of the key texts in transformation discourse appeared in its pages. New voices, including those of major players on the international archival stage, used it as a medium.[54] SASA-convened gatherings became more frequent and more relevant. In 1992 the National Committee, together with the Association of Archivists and Manuscript Librarians (AMLIB), convened South Africa's first international archival gathering, with the theme "Archives and Users in Changing Societies."[55] Another international gathering, entitled "Archives for the People: Securing an Archival Heritage," was convened in 1994.[56] For the first time SASA made formal interventions in public debates. Its 1993 "Position Paper on Information and Archives" was distributed to all organizations participating in South Africa's transitional negotiation process.[57] Subsequently it petitioned government structures concerning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Arts and Culture Task Group, the National Archives of South Africa Bill, and South Africa's final Constitution.[58] These interventions were not expressions of a coherent vision or paradigm. SASA's heterogeneous membership, internal tensions, and the baggage of its past militated against this. The focus was on specific issues; the imperative to articulate positions representative enough of members' views. But SASA's leadership was geared to the dynamics of change; it was comfortable with transformation discourse, and it was well positioned to participate fully in structures created by the new government after 1994.

The State Archives Service, the ANC, and SASA were not the only tributaries into transformation discourse during its formative 1990-94 period. A host of smaller ones swelled and enriched it. Numerous individuals used conference platforms, journal pages, even the press, to contribute their ideas.[59] Broader debates, for instance around issues like freedom of information, both absorbed and fed into archival debates. I have already noted the international dimension. Worth specific mention is the impact made during their visits to South Africa by Eric Ketelaar, Terry Cook, and Andor Skotnes. All three made forceful interventions, travelling widely in the country and bringing to bear their experience of archives in established democracies and participation in cutting edge debates on the international stage.[60] Other significant

local contributors included AMLIB, the South African Historical Society, the South African History Archive, and the William Cullen Library (University of the Witwatersrand).

The general election of 27 April 1994 ushered in the new Interim Constitution and the formal transfer of power from the National Party to the ANC-led Government of National Unity. In terms of transformation processes in archives, it also marked a shifting of the initiative to government and various structures appointed by it. The Interim Constitution provided for the devolution of the state's responsibility for culture, and with it archives, from the central government to the country's nine new provinces. This implied the conversion of the State Archives Service into a national public archives service at the central level and the creation of nine more or less autonomous provincial public archives services.[61] During 1994, the State Archives Service was moved from the defunct Department of National Education to the central Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology, and the various homeland archives services were allocated to the provinces in which they were situated. It was also accepted in principle that State Archives Service facilities located in the provinces would be allocated to them in due course. In November 1994, the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology appointed the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) to advise him on a new arts and culture policy for South Africa. The Group's Heritage Sub-committee was mandated to address the question of archives. Although it did not possess a representative from the archival profession, this Sub-committee consulted widely, travelling the length and breadth of the country to ensure a process that was as inclusive as possible. ACTAG's final report, submitted to the Minister in June 1995, positioned archives firmly in the heritage terrain and emphasized its importance as an agent of reconciliation and nation building. The records management functions of public archives services were totally ignored, as were widely expressed misgivings about the unqualified placement of public archives within structures of government for "culture." A complex network of heritage structures, embracing all three tiers of government, was proposed, and, in line with the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme, the Report advised a shifting of public archives resources to programmes designed to empower people and redress the imbalances of the past.[62] The Report provided the conceptual framework intended to inform the drafting of new archival legislation.[63] In April 1995 the State Archives Service, acting on a mandate from the Minister, convened a Consultative Forum for Archival Management and Legislation.[64] With representatives from a wide range of interest groups and consisting of over sixty delegates,[65] the Forum brought together the diverse streams in South Africa's archival discourse. Over seven months the Forum hammered out a synthesis position and gave it expression in a unanimously-adopted draft National Archives of South Africa Bill.[66] This was submitted to the Minister in December 1995 and reached Parliament in February 1996.[67]

Progress at the provincial level has been slower. Provincial governments face a mammoth and complex restructuring process. There is keen awareness of the need for clarity to emerge at the national level before provinces formulate archival policy, and most provinces have little to work with in the way of archival infrastructure, expertise, and experience. A number have sustained debate through provincial task groups on arts and culture. Only KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape have task groups specifically for archives. The former, appointed in 1994 to advise the province's

Minister of Education and Culture on all matters related to archives and to draft archival legislation for the province, produced a *Position Paper on Archives and Public Records in KwaZulu-Natal* in 1995 and a draft Provincial Archives of KwaZulu-Natal Bill in 1996. The Eastern Cape task group was appointed in 1996 specifically to draft archival legislation for the province.[68] The indications are that the launching of provincial public archives services, and the establishment of a new archival "system" for South Africa, still has a long road to travel.

Transformation Discourse: Core Issues

What I have called transformation discourse focuses heavily on public archives, the main target for transformation. Nevertheless, it addresses a myriad issues spanning archival theory and practice, archival functions and structures, and the broader terrains of social memory and public service. Clearly any attempt at identifying the *core* issues is a highly subjective business. In this account I restrict myself to areas of debate specific to archives, thus excluding, for instance, more general debates around public service transformation and government restructuring. Within these parameters I explore the issues which in my view give the discourse its fundamental shape. In each instance, I would suggest, the ground being contested is the very identity of archives.

Considerable earlier post-1990 debate revolved around the nature of a public archives as an institution. There are proponents of the view that it is essentially a cultural, or more specifically, a heritage institution.[69] Others, and they have gained the ascendancy, argue that while its heritage function is indisputable, it cannot be understood properly without taking into account its roles in information management and public administration.[70] This position is predicated on the assumption that records management functions[71]—which draw public archives into advising, monitoring, controlling, and auditing government offices—are *archival* functions.[72] Public archives, both as an institution and as an idea, the argument is elaborated, straddles various disciplines and social arenas. Some go further and maintain that public archives must be conceptualized around processes rather than records in physical custody.[73]

Adherents of the heritage model have advocated the positioning of public archives within government structures for culture. The thrust of their challenge to the apartheid status quo has consisted of the critique of the tight control exercized over the State Archives Service by the apartheid bureaucracy,[74] and in the promotion of greater bureaucratic status or professional autonomy for public archives.[75] In contrast, those who posit a broader conceptualization of public archives have argued that positioning within structures for culture undermines the efficacy of public archives' records management functions and contributes to misconceptions about the nature of archives. While they have achieved no consensus on an ideal positioning—ideas range from a more central position within government to independent agency status[76]—they agree, for different reasons, that tight bureaucratic control is undesirable.[77] This debate was effectively pre-empted by central government's decision in 1994 to place the State Archives Service as a directorate within the Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology, and the subsequent assumption of responsibility for archives by provincial departments of education and culture. Prospects for a re-positioning or a significant change in status appear slim.[78]

Underpinning debate around control over and the relative independence of public archives has been a more fundamental one in which the notion of public archivists as impartial custodians has been swept off the stage by the view of archivists as active shapers of social memory and documenters of society.[79] This idea is arguably the defining characteristic, the leitmotif, of transformation discourse. Exploration of its implications has occupied centre stage, developing several strands and generating fierce debate. Perhaps the least contested argument is that public archives, because of their role as active shapers and documenters, must be subject to high levels of transparency and accountability. The apartheid model for public archives—answerable only to the state and their operations largely opaque—has been firmly rejected. This, of course, fuses with the broader imperative to democratize South Africa's public service. Debate in archives has revolved around mechanisms for achieving transparency and accountability,[80] and the question of how an appropriate balance of accountability to the users of archives, to society, and to the state is to be achieved.[81] The achievement of a substantial consensus on the desirability of such a balance[82] has been accompanied by a decline in the view that the shaping power of archives should be harnessed by the state to promote particular narratives, for instance that of reconciliation and nation building.[83] The importance of this development for the future of public archives in South Africa can scarcely be over-emphasized. History is littered with examples of states controlling their public archives to manipulate social memory.[84] In 1993 Albert Grundlingh warned against it in the context of a transitional South Africa by raising the spectre of the State Archives Service being "...called upon to provide a legitimizing historical project for the new state. Will that," he went on to speculate, "involve the appointment of an official state historian ... to narrate the anti-apartheid struggle in the same way that Breytenbach started some thirty years ago to chronicle the Afrikaner struggle against the British Empire?"[85]

Similar questions have permeated discussion of those two core "shaping" functions of public archives, appraisal, and collection.[86] With the former the focus has been on appraisal as an institutional process: Who should be responsible for appraisal? To whom should appraisers be accountable? How transparent should the process be? How reliable are the appraisals done during the apartheid era? These questions are rooted in an intense distrust of State Archives Service appraisal practice, which is characterized by an unrelenting opacity.[87] Some have gone so far as to recommend that the appraisal function be taken from public archives and given to independent boards comprising academics and other "stakeholders." The intensity of this distrust was illustrated in November 1995, when South Africa's National Cabinet imposed a moratorium on the destruction of all public records—irrespective of whether or not they had been appraised by the State Archives Service—until the passing of new national archival legislation.[88] By 1995, however, debate had yielded substantial agreement on a number of issues—appraisal is an archival function and archivists should be responsible for it. Nevertheless, democratic imperatives demand that levels of transparency be high, that public account of appraisal decisions be given, and that there should be some measure of public participation in the decision-making. These positions were reflected in the draft National Archives of South Africa Bill prepared by the Consultative Forum for Archival Management and Legislation—the draft proposes that the National Archives be charged with the appraisal of public records, subject to the approval of its overarching appraisal policy and monitoring of the

policy's implementation by a National Archives Commission appointed by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology.[89] The Commission, in other words, would be the Minister's and society's watchdog.[90]

Debate around the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of appraisal practice has been less widespread but equally vigorous. Located mainly within State Archives Service structures, the debate has pitted defenders of the Service's established practice against advocates of macro-appraisal.[91] The Service's appraisal policy has its roots in the 1950s and demonstrates the powerful influence of T.R. Schellenberg. The policy is built on the assumption that archival value is a composite of Schellenberg's informational and evidential values. However, in practice the distinctions between these values have become blurred, and at the appraisal coal-face one dominant question tends to subsume all others: Does this record possess actual or anticipated usefulness to researchers? The Service's methodology is incoherent, with elements of both Schellenbergian methodologies[92] as well as elements of macro-appraisal.[93] Not surprisingly, the Service's policy has proved an easy target for advocates of macro-appraisal, who question the validity of its intellectual foundation and its appropriateness to the realities of the 1990s. Macro-appraisal, they argue, provides an explanation of archival value which is rooted in the archival bedrock of provenance, which, unlike the idea of usefulness, secures a workable yardstick and meshes with a methodology appropriate to modern records environments. In 1996 the State Archives Service formally discarded its Schellenbergian appraisal underpinnings and embarked on a macro-appraisal inspired overhaul of its appraisal programme.[94]

The State Archives Service's collecting function—outlined in the second section of this article—has also proved to be an easy target. Apologists for it are nowhere to be found. Its critics have developed broad consensus on the defining characteristics of an alternative vision for collecting by public archives, one deeply influenced by the concept of "total archives."[95] Policy, it is asserted, should direct archivists not only to society's pinnacles, but also, firmly, to grassroots experience and the full gamut of experience in between. Policy should accommodate the complementing of official holdings but be directed primarily at the filling of its gaps. Collecting should be driven by the post-apartheid imperative to give the voiceless voice. Public archives should not compete with the country's numerous private collecting institutions for material which would be more appropriately preserved by the latter. This vision is already reshaping public archives collecting policy, but two key questions remain unresolved. Firstly, to what extent, if at all, should the collecting function be subordinated to the management of official holdings?[96] Secondly, what should public archives' involvement be in the collection of oral tradition and history?[97] In South Africa, with its strong oral traditions and high rates of illiteracy, it is clear that giving voice to the voiceless will require a strong commitment to the collection of oral sources. As the ANC's Archives Sub-committee articulated it:

"People's History" programmes, including oral documentation programmes, should be fostered as part of a programme of democratisation and empowerment of the voiceless by the Archives Service in collaboration with other cultural and heritage organisations...[98]

Still being debated is whether public archives should collect oral tradition and history themselves, acquire oral sources collected by experts in the field, facilitate access to oral sources by means of the national registers,[99] coordinate and promote the collecting of oral testimony, or be invested with a combination of these functions.[100]

Debate around the use and availability of public records has followed numerous streams. Much attention, for instance, has been paid to the question of public rights of access, with substantial cross-fertilization taking place between the archival debate and the wider public debate on freedom of information.[101] However, the defining issues in transformation discourse, in my view, have hinged on the assertion that it is not enough for public archives to ensure equal access to their holdings, even if they do so in terms of constitutionally-entrenched rights of public access. They must go beyond being merely servers of records users. They must become *creators* of users; or, in the words of the popular slogan, they must "take archives to the people."[102] From the outset this position formed one of the dominant streams in transformation discourse, and quickly secured hegemony, even within the State Archives Service.[103] Its proponents pointed to the array of systemic barriers to access raised by the apartheid system, the alienation from public archives of most South Africans, and the urgent need to utilize public resources in addressing the huge inequalities and imbalances inherited from apartheid. Public archives, in short, should be transformed from a domain of the elite into a community resource.[104] They also pointed to the State Archives Service's inertia, even indifference, in the face of systemic barriers under apartheid and to the dominance within the Service during the apartheid era of the view that outreach is, at best, a luxury and, at worst, simply not a function of public archives. While there is broad agreement that outreach and other public programming activities *are* functions of public archives—crucial functions in the post-apartheid era—cautionary voices have pointed out that they constitute a severe drain on limited resources and that care should be taken to ensure that they do not undermine other archival functions.[105]

There are numerous manuscript-collecting institutions outside the ambit of public archives in South Africa,[106] some of which have done innovative and extremely valuable work in filling the gaps in the official record.[107] But their role in a democratic South Africa and their relationship to public archives have received relatively little attention. Nevertheless, critique of the status quo has seen the emergence of the key elements to a new approach. The lack of inter-institutional cooperation, sharing of resources, and coordination have been identified as major problems.[108] The prevalence of overlapping collecting fields and consequent inter-institutional rivalry has been singled out in particular;[109] past attempts at collaboration in identifying and demarcating collecting fields did not have encouraging results.[110] The overly restrictive access policies of some institutions and cases of collections being sold to foreign purchasers have also drawn criticism, as has the State Archives Service's pre-1990 lack of engagement with other collecting institutions—with the obvious exception of its national automated registers of manuscripts, photographs, and audio-visual material. The new approach is built on two foundations: the transformation of public archives from ghetto-dwellers into effective members of a broader archival community and the promotion of voluntary cooperative endeavour. Mechanisms for the exercise of state control over private institutions, with two exceptions, have attracted little support. The role of the state is seen as one of coordination, support, and advice

rather than of control. The draft National Archives of South Africa Bill envisages just such a role for a new National Archives.[111] Other suggestions include the management of the national registers through a forum of participants, the promotion of coordinated archival policy formulation and planning at national and provincial levels by a National Archives Commission, and the provision of state grants to heritage—including archival—institutions by a National Heritage Council. The two exceptions to this voluntary model relate to access provisions and the disposal of records. Some voices have called for state regulation of access to records in private custody;[112] this has been rejected within archival debate, but is still on the table in the broader debate around freedom of information. In contrast, there is consensus on the need for state control over the disposal of records in private archival custody: the draft National Archives of South Africa Bill makes it an offence to destroy, export from South Africa, or otherwise dispose of records recorded on a National List by the National Archives Commission without the Commission's approval.

Now and the Future

For South African archivists, both as South Africans and as archivists, the last six years have been at once exciting, frightening, and enriching. A fledgling democracy, with all its growing pains, has supplanted the apartheid regime. At the same time a sterile, outmoded archival discourse has been vanquished by a tougher successor— sometimes cruder, sometimes more sophisticated—born of and connecting assuredly with the new societal dynamics. If nothing else, this experience demonstrates again that archivists are not, and can never be, insulated from larger forces.

   What I have called transformation discourse in archives is open-ended. Its ideas are not accepted by all South African archivists. It accommodates sometimes intense debate. And yet it possesses a remarkable coherence and offers a fundamental redefinition of archives, particularly public archives, for a democratic South Africa. At the same time it is characterized by many consensus positions arrived at by compromise, reflecting, I would argue, the contours of South Africa's political terrain. The discourse, then, is distinctively South African. Nevertheless, as I have suggested at various points in this article, it has been influenced by and meshes with recent developments in international archival discourse,[113] which in turn reflects the post-1990 ending of South Africa's international isolation.

   As public archives in South Africa take on the future, one big question will be asked of them: Can transformation discourse deliver at the archival coal-face? Strong signs of renewal within the State Archives Service are encouraging. But systematic transformation of existing programmes and the launching of new ones will be expensive, as will the establishment of nine provincial archives services, nine provincial archives councils and heritage councils, a National Archives Commission, and a National Heritage Council, and the successful tackling of problems posed by electronic record-keeping, all in the context of ever-diminishing resources and an acute shortage of qualified and appropriately skilled archivists. The position of the provinces in this regard is of particular concern. Add to this the vulnerability of public archives to uncooperative professional staff—re-education programmes are essential—and to political and bureaucratic manipulation, and the magnitude of the challenge is apparent.

To this big question I would add two subsidiary ones. Firstly, as public archives "take archives to the people," will they be able to resist what Jean-Francois Lyotard has called the mercantilization, or commodification, of knowledge?[144] We would do well to remember Terry Cook's eloquent reminder:

> the quest for knowledge rather than mere information is the crux of the study of archives and of the daily work of archivists... Quite simply, archivists must transcend mere information ... if they wish to search for, and lead others to seek, "knowledge" and meaning among the records in their care.[115]

In nurturing new branches it is imperative that we provide sustenance to our roots. And secondly, in finding ourselves as active shapers of social memory, will we provide space—will we be *allowed* to provide space—for competing narratives? The extent to which we do so will be the primary measure of our contribution to the enrichment and democratization of the nation's memory.

Notes

*   This article is based on a paper of the same title which I presented at the University of the Western Cape Conference entitled "The Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa," Cape Town, July 1996. I must record my indebtedness to Clive Kirkwood, Kerry Harris, Albert Grundlingh, Christopher Merrett, Michele Pickover, and Marie Olivier for commenting on an early draft of the paper. Nevertheless, the views expressed in the article are my own—they do not necessarily reflect the standpoints of these individuals nor of the State Archives Service.

1   See, for example, the publicity brochure *National Archives of Canada Act* (Ottawa, 1992), p. 1. One of the mission objectives of the Canadian National Archives is "to preserve the collective memory of the nation and the government of Canada." Another example is to be found in the State Archives Service's *Annual Reports* for 1995: "...the State Archives Service is responsible for preserving a national archival heritage...In a sense this heritage is the collective memory of the government and the people," (Pretoria, 1996), p. 1.

2   The concept, derived primarily from the writings of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, had a strong presence in pre-1990 South African archivy, despite the pervasive influence of T.R. Schellenberg.

3   Novelist Milan Kundera explored the relations between power, memory, and forgetting in his *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (London, 1983).

4   Readers of the article in draft form have understood me to imply here that public archivists collaborated in the destruction of oppositional memory; other readers have discerned an implication that public archivists engaged in struggle against such destruction. At this point in the article I imply neither. My point is that struggle informed the work of public archivists and that an impartial stance was impossible. For an account of censorship under apartheid, see Christopher Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa* (Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg, 1994).

5   The paper on which this article is based was written in May and June of 1996. I prepared this article from it during July 1996.

6   While I have striven for scholarly distance, this remains an insider's account. I have been in the State Archives Service since 1985, as part of senior management since 1993; on the National Committee of the South African Society of Archivists since 1988; editor of the *South African Archives Journal* since 1988; a member of the KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services since 1994; and I served on the African National Congress's Archives Sub-committee in 1992-93. By virtue of these positions I have been a direct participant in most of the processes described in the paper.

7   Such analysis cries out for attention. The only general texts which enter the terrain are: State Archives Service, *Handbook* (Pretoria, 1991), chapter 3; Jill Geber, "The South African Government Archives Service: Past, Present and Future," (unpublished MA dissertation, University College of London, 1987, chapters 1-4; and Razia Saleh, "A National Archival Policy for a Democratic South Africa," (unpublished MA dissertation, University College of London, 1993, chapter 4.

8 Strictly speaking the apartheid era began in 1948, when the National Party assumed power, and ended in 1994 with the country's first democratic general election and the establishment of a Government of National Unity. My analysis excludes the formal transition period of 1990-94, as the State Archives Service underwent significant changes during it. These changes are addressed in the next section of the article. For useful introductory general histories of the apartheid era, see William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford and New York, 1994) and Nigel Warden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid* (Oxford, 1994).

9 The apartheid government allocated a homeland to each of South Africa's major black ethnic "groups." In terms of separate development policy, black South Africans were to exercise full political rights only in these homelands. The ultimate goal was to establish each homeland as an independent country—by 1994 four of them had taken "independence."

10 See Verne Harris, "Public Access to Official Records and the Record Management Function of the South African State Archives Service," *Innovation* 4 (1992), p. 15.

11 By 1995, eight of the ten homelands had archives services. KwaZulu boasted thirty-four staff members (all appointed after 1990), while the rest combined possessed twenty-nine. Unpublished report by the Arts and Culture Task Group's Archives Sub-committee, "Archives in South Africa," 1995, pp. 6-7.

12 In 1910 the four British colonies joined to form the Union of South Africa.

13 Excluded from this mandate were the South African Defence Force, the homelands, and so-called "offices of record;" the latter were defined as offices "responsible for documents which require special treatment in order to ensure that the authenticity and legality of the contents cannot be questioned." State Archives Service, *Handbook,* p. 15-35.

14 In 1995 the State Archives Service had in its custody 7,292 linear metres of private records, 54% of its total holdings. Verne Harris and Clive Kirkwood, "The State Archives Service and Manuscript Collections: Some Thoughts on Policy and Practice," *Archives News* 37, no. 12 (1995), pp. 16-17.

15 The 1962 *Act* (as amended) charges the Director of Archives with general responsibility for records management in government offices. It also gives him/her the power to approve filing systems, microfilm projects, and the destruction of records.

16 Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town.

17 Verne Harris and Clive Kirkwood, "The State Archives Service and Manuscript Collections," p. 12.

18 Almost every area of thinking and practice was dominated by a discourse cemented in the 1950s and 1960s. Primary influences were Muller, Feith, and Fruin (as late as the 1980s, new archivists were given a copy of the *Manual* as their fundamental training text), later Dutch literature (Afrikaans-speakers are usually comfortable readers of Dutch), Jenkinson, and Schellenberg.

19 A nominal fee was charged for copies of documents.

20 This point has been made by Jill Geber, "The South African Government Archives Service," p. 56. However, she over-estimated the capacity of the Service's records management components, which were severely under-resourced. Verne Harris, "Public Access to Official Records," p. 15.

21 In the 1980s, the senior public servant in a government department held the rank of a director-general. As a director, the head of the State Archives Service was three levels lower.

22 Notable examples were the Department of Foreign Affairs and the National Intelligence Service.

23 Verne Harris and Christopher Merrett, "Toward a Culture of Transparency: Public Rights of Access to Official Records in South Africa," *The American Archivist* 57, no. 4 (Fall 1994), p. 684.

24 In terms of the *Archives Act* of 1962 (as amended), open access applies to records more than thirty years old, unless the Minister (at the time, of National Education) withdraws it on the grounds of "public policy."

25 State Archives Service records indicate that between 1980 and 1990 requests for permission to consult 2,381 items in the archives of these offices was received, and access was denied to only nine items.

26 In 1990 the Service's professional staff comprised seventy people. All of them were white, with thirty-nine women and thirty-one men.

27 In 1990 only one of the twelve most senior officials was not an Afrikaans-speaking male—she was an Afrikaans-speaking woman.

28 The most thorough analysis is in State Archives Service, "Report on Current State Archives Service Appraisal Policy and the Theory and Practice of Macro-appraisal," internal document (approved by the Director of Archives on 23 April 1996).

29 See Verne Harris and Clive Kirkwood, "The State Archives Service and Manuscript Collections," pp. 5-8.

30 The project was initiated in 1959 and continued into the 1990s.

31 Albert Grundlingh, "Historical Writing and the State Archives in a Changing South Africa," *South African Archives Journal* 35 (1993), p. 81.

32 Albert Grundlingh, "Politics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their Discipline, c.1920-c.1965," *Perspectives in Education* 12, no. 1 (1990), pp. 11-13. Theses were selected by the Archives Commission, on which the State Archives Service was represented by the Director. See also note eighty-seven below.

33 Jill Geber, "The South African Government Archives Service," p. 56.

34 Useful accounts of the "Pretoriastroika" period are given by William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* and Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution* (Sandton, 1995).

35 The reasons for revisionist thinking not being forthcoming from the State Archives Service are obvious. The inertia of the broader archival profession is addressed later in this article. Criticism from historians, genealogists, and other users tended to focus on specific problems—the denial of access to records, the destruction of specific categories of record, poor reading room service, etc. I am aware that this assessment might be seen as an endorsement of the powerful myth that before 1990 South African information and heritage practitioners were either passive fellow-travellers or active supporters of the apartheid system. In most disciplines, 1990 was not a watershed, with numerous individuals and organizations having fought courageously against the system for many years. But in archives, oppositional voices were rare before 1990, and in most cases they were severely hamstrung by their positioning within the State Archives Service.

36 There were a few notable exceptions, but in every case except the one addressed in note 37 below, the challenge was muted and narrowly focused.

37 Geber's historical analysis tends to be superficial. It offers no sense of the Service's internal dynamics or coal-face activity. The only Service records consulted by her were annual reports—a notoriously unreliable source of information.

38 It did find a resonance in post-1990 debates, having a considerable influence on the African National Congress' Archives Sub-committee. See, for example, African National Congress, "Preliminary Report of the Archives Sub-committee," (internal document, 1992), pp. 11 and 14.

39 The most important broadly-focused revisionist pieces include the following: African National Congress, "Preliminary Report"; Eric Ketelaar, "Archives of the People, by the People, for the People," *South African Archives Journal* 34 (1992); Eric Ketelaar, "Unfolding South African Archives: A Candid Report on a Working Visit," *South African Archives Journal* 35 (1993); Verne Harris, "Report of the Committee to Investigate the Impact of Social and Political Changes on Archives Services in Other Countries," *Archives News* 35, no. 10 (1993); Razia Saleh, "A National Archival Policy"; Albert Grundlingh, "Historical Writing and the State Archives"; Graham Dominy, "Archives in a Democratic South Africa: The Proposals of the ANC: An Evaluation," *South African Archives Journal* 35 (1993); South African Society of Archivists, "Position Paper on Information and Archives," *South African Archives Journal* 36 (1994); Arts and Culture Task Group's Archives Sub-committee, "Archives in South Africa"; Arts and Culture Task Group, *Final Report* (Pretoria, 1995), pp. 50-114; KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services, *Position Paper on Archives and Public Records in KwaZulu-Natal* (Ulundi, 1995); and Marie Olivier, "Continuity Amid Change: The Process of Establishing a New Archival Dispensation for South Africa," *South African Archives Journal* 37 (1995). Numerous more narrowly-focused, issue-based articles and conference papers have also appeared.

40 My order of treatment should not be seen as indicative of my assessment of their relative importance. The order is arbitrary.

41 By 1996 another four Afrikaner males had retired from the top eleven positions. The Service's old guard leadership had departed.

42 In 1996 the professional staff component consisted of fifty-six people; eleven per cent are black and sixty-six per cent are women.

43 It is significant that Marie Olivier, Director of the State Archives Service, was elected ESARBICA Vice-chair in 1995.

44 The influence of Eric Ketelaar, Terry Cook, and Andor Skotnes was especially significant. See note sixty below.

45 African National Congress, "Preliminary Report," p. 2.

46 Ibid., p. 14.

47 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

48 Graham Dominy, "Archives in a Democratic South Africa." This article was awarded the South African Society of Archivists' SASA Prize for 1993.

49 The Culture and Development Conference took place in April/May 1993. No formal document of Conference positions and recommendations emerged. One of the recommendations—that there should be a moratorium on the destruction of all public records—was implemented by the Government of

National Unity two years later. This is dealt with elsewhere in the article. (See especially note eighty-eight below.) In 1995, the ANC produced a collection of some of the documents presented at the Conference as well as summaries of some of the Conference recommendations. ANC Department of Arts and Culture, *Looking Forward, Looking Backwards: Culture and Development Conference, April-May 1993, Johannesburg* (Bellville, 1995).

50 SASA was established in 1960. Largely in reaction to its inactivity, the smaller, less State Archives Service-influenced Association of Archivists and Manuscript Librarians (AMLIB) was established in 1978. Most of its members remained members of SASA.

51 For accounts of SASA in transition, see Clive Kirkwood, "The South African Society of Archivists and the Cultural Historian," *Archives News* 38, no. 3 (1996) and Verne Harris, "Archivists, Archives and Professionalism" *South African Historical Journal* 32 (1995).

52 By 1994 the eight-member National Committee included five members from outside the State Archives Service, four non-Afrikaans-speakers, three women, two ANC members, and one black person.

53 South African Society of Archivists, *Professional Code for South African Archivists* (Pretoria, 1993). The *Code* was also published in *South African Archives Journal* 35 (1993), pp. 106-109.

54 The four issues between 1992 and 1995 contained contributions by the following writers from outside the country: Eric Ketelaar (Holland), two articles; Masisi Lekaukau (Botswana); Samuel Njovana (Zimbabwe); Mark Mbewe (Zambia); Brigitte Lau (Namibia); Jacob Kufa (Botswana); Robert Egeter-van Kuyk (Holland); Terry Cook (Canada), two articles; Alan Bain (USA); Andor Skotnes (USA); Helen Harrison (UK), two articles; and Joseph Phiri (Zambia).

55 The Symposium had five international and two South African speakers, and brought together seven heads of national archives. The heads of most homeland archives services also attended. The keynote address was delivered by Eric Ketelaar, General State Archivist of the Netherlands.

56 The Symposium had six international and eleven South African speakers, with the keynote address delivered by Terry Cook of the National Archives of Canada.

57 South African Society of Archivists, "Position Paper."

58 The submission on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was published in the *South African Archives Journal* 37 (1995). The others were planned for publication in the 1996 issue.

59 The State Archives Service seldom appeared in newspaper pages before 1990. After 1990 it was frequently in the news, often in the context of controversy.

60 Ketelaar, General State Archivist of the Netherlands, visited in 1992. He subsequently published "Archives of the People" and "Unfolding South African Archives" in the *South African Archives Journal* and "Keuren en Kiezen," *Archives News* 35, no. 2 (1992). He received the 1992 SASA Prize for the former. Cook, Director of the National Archives of Canada's Records Disposition Division, visited in 1994. He was awarded the 1994 SASA Prize for the two papers he presented at the "Archives for the People" Symposium. They were adapted for publication as articles in volume 37 (1995) of the *South African Archives Journal:* "From the Record to its Context: The Theory and Practice of Archival Appraisal since Jenkinson" and "Keeping Our Electronic Memory: Approaches for Securing Computer-generated Records." He also published "The Canadian Archival Scene," *Archives News* 37, no. 11 (1995) and "Living with Your Conscience at the End of the Day: Ethical Issues and the Archivist," *Archives News* 37, no. 10 (1995). For a sense of the impact he made in South Africa, see Verne Harris, "One Hell of a Pair: Personal Reflections on the Visit to South Africa by Terry and Sharon Cook, November 1994," *Archives News* 37, no. 7 (1995). Skotnes, Assistant Professor of History at the Russell Sage College in New York, also visited in 1994. He subsequently published "People's Archives and Oral History in South Africa: A Traveller's Account," *South African Archives Journal* 37 (1995).

61 Under the Interim Constitution public archives was a "concurrent power" of central and provincial governments. This implied some form of central supervision over provincial archives services. The final Constitution establishes public archives as an "exclusive power," which implies that provincial services will not be accountable in any way to a National Archives.

62 For a critique of the ACTAG Report, see Verne Harris, "Getting our ACTAG Together: Musings on the Challenges Facing South African Archivists, with special reference to the Arts and Culture Task Group's (ACTAG) Report on Heritage," *South African Archives Journal* 37 (1995).

63 Strictly speaking, the Report should have formed the basis for a Government White Paper on Arts and Culture, which in turn should have informed the drafting of legislation. The Draft White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage was released on 4 June 1996—it simply does not address the question of archives.

64 It had a broader consultative mandate, but focused almost exclusively on the drafting of new archival legislation. For fuller accounts of the Consultative Forum's establishment and work, see Marie Olivier, "Continuity Amid Change," pp. 8-14; Clive Kirkwood, "Drafting New Archival Legislation for South

Africa: A Consultative Process Paves the Way," *Archives* News 38, no. 1 (1995); and Clive Kirkwood, "Consultative Forum Gives Assent to South Africa's Draft National Archival Legislation," *Archives News* 38, no. 2 (1995).

65 The following bodies were represented on the Forum: the Bureau of Heraldry; the State Archives Service; the Public Service Commission; the Arts and Culture Task Group; the Association of Archivists and Manuscript Librarians; the South African Society of Archivists; the Genealogical Society of South Africa; the South African Institute for Library and Information Science; the South African Historical Society; the South African Museum Association; the KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services; the South African National Defence Force Archives; Department of Justice; the South African Police Services; the Historical Association of South Africa; Department of Education and Culture (Northern Cape Province); the National Monuments Council; KwaZulu Archives Service; Lebowa Archives Service; South African Data Archive; Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology; Transkei Archives Service; Department of Arts and Culture (Mpumulanga Province); Department of Education and Culture (North West Province); QwaQwa Archives Service; Department of Education and Culture (Gauteng Province); Department of Education and Culture (Northern Province); Venda Archives Service; Bophutatswana Archives Service; Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Arts, Culture, and Languages; Science and Technology; the Southern African Institute of Information Management; the Committee of University Principals; the Institute of Town Clerks; the Library and Information Workers' Organization; the South African Library; and the Gazankulu Archives Service. The Union of Democratic University Staff Associations was invited but did not send a delegate.

66 The drafting was done by a Working Committee for the Drafting of Archival Legislation elected by the Forum. In studying international archival legislation, the Committee focused on the legislation of Australia, Canada, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

67 At the time of writing (May-July 1996) the Bill was being debated by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Arts, Culture and Language, Science, and Technology.

68 The Free State component of the State Archives Service has produced, with the concurrence of the Free State Branch of the South African Society of Archivists, a position paper for the Free State Province modelled closely on the KwaZulu-Natal document. Public archivists in both the Free State and Northern provinces are currently drafting provincial archival legislation.

69 Perhaps the clearest articulation of this view is to be found in Arts and Culture Task Group, *Final Report.*

70 This view has been most strongly advocated by the State Archives Service, but see also South African Society of Archivists, "Position Paper," p. 97 and KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services, *Position Paper,* p. 6.

71 These are functions related to records still in the custody of government offices and to records systems in use by government offices.

72 Both the draft National Archives of South Africa Bill and the draft Provincial Archives of KwaZulu-Natal Bill give expression to this view. It has also been adopted by the drafters of archival legislation in the Free State and Northern provinces.

73 See, for example, State Archives Service, "Report on Current State Archives Service Appraisal Policy." These voices have been strongly influenced by Terry Cook and other international heralds of a post-custodial era for archives.

74 The apartheid Department of National Education was responsible for formal state involvement in "culture." The Director of Archives reported to the Department's Chief Director for Culture.

75 The ANC's Archives Sub-committee elaborated on the difficulties created by the State Archives Service's "low bureaucratic status." "Preliminary Report," p. 7. The Arts and Culture Task Group proposed "framework autonomy" (without defining the term closely) for public archives in its *Final Report,* p. 65.

76 SASA has recommended that "South Africa's national archives service should be an independent agency directly answerable to the national legislature and advised by a board or commission representative of all archives users." SASA, "Position Paper," p. 97. The KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services (PTG: AS) recommended that "... the provincial archives service ... should be positioned as centrally as possible and with the status required to audit public records management. Independent agency status similar to that of the province's Public Service Commission, is the ideal." PTG: AS, *Position Paper,* p. 20.

77 They argue that effective monitoring, controlling, and auditing of government offices requires both relative autonomy within the bureaucracy and significant bureaucratic status.

78 Indeed, there is a danger of what autonomy the State Archives Service currently enjoys being further eroded. The delay in the passage of the National Archives of South Africa Bill through Parliament has been caused primarily by disagreement about the measure of control the Minister is to exercise over the National Archives. There are those who wish to increase significantly the powers afforded the Minister in the Consultative Forum's draft Bill. See also notes eighty-one and ninety below.

79 I do not imply that all Jenkinsonians have been converted; merely that their views have no currency in transformation discourse.

80 One of these mechanisms, arguably the most important, is a statutory body with certain controlling powers over public archives. In transformation discourse there has been unanimous rejection of the present *Archives Act*'s provision for an Archives Commission with an almost purely advisory function and appointed without public participation.

81 Disagreement on this question, specifically on the respective powers and duties of the National Archivist, the Minister, and the National Archives Commission, is the cause of the troubled passage through Parliament of the National Archives of South Africa Bill. See also note seventy-eight above and note ninety below.

82 Such a balance has been advocated by *inter alia* the Arts and Culture Task Group, the Consultative Forum on Archival Management and Legislation, and the KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services.

83 Nevertheless, this view still has powerful advocates. Elsewhere in this paper I have indicated its qualified expression in the Arts and Culture Task Group's *Final Report* and the ANC's Archives Sub-committee's "Preliminary Report." Powerful voices in the broader terrains of culture and heritage give it unqualified support.

84 I have already elaborated on apartheid South Africa's record, but there are numerous other international examples. See Terry Cook, "From the Record to its Context," pp. 37, 38, and 44.

85 Albert Grundlingh, "Historical Writing and the State Archives," p. 83.

86 There is no clear conceptual distinction, of course, between appraisal and collection. Active documenting is an integral part of appraisal, and collection presupposes appraisal decisions. But in South African archival discourse and practice the distinction has been made firmly, with appraisal a function related to public records and collection to private records.

87 Between 1926 and 1953 the Archives Commission was responsible for the appraisal of official records. Thereafter the function was assumed by the State Archives Service, although the Commission retained the power to authorize destruction until 1979. The Commission had little credibility—it was not appointed by a democratic government, the appointment process was not democratic, and it was not broadly representative (it was dominated by white, Afrikaans-speaking male academics in the apartheid period). Both before and after 1979 there has been no attempt to make appraisal a more transparent process, for instance by publishing policy documents or individual disposal authorities.

88 The idea of a moratorium was first mooted by the ANC's Commission on Museums, Monuments, and Heraldry in March 1992. The Commission's Archives Sub-committee subsequently called for "a moratorium on the destruction of records relating to the history of the struggle and to the organization of popular movements which may be in the hands of the security services." "Preliminary Report," p. 14. At the ANC's Conference on Culture and Development in 1993 it was resolved that "there should be an immediate cessation of the destruction of all State records regardless of existing policy." (I quote this from my own conference notes.) The Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) recommended that "a moratorium should be declared on the destruction of records in all security-related departments until the new National Archives Commission has undertaken a review..." ACTAG, *Final Report*, p. 96. ACTAG's Archives Sub-committee later called for a moratorium on the destruction of "records related to land transactions and of all records by the military, police, National Intelligence, State President's Office and Department of Justice subject to urgent review of disposal authorities." ACTAG Archives Sub-committee, "Archives in South Africa," p. 19.

89 The draft Bill provides for the appointment of Commission members through a process of public nomination. Nominees should be "knowledgeable and/or have an interest in archival matters." The Minister is constrained to take provincial interests into account and to ensure that the Commission "reflects to a reasonable degree the demographic and gender realities of South Africa."

90 A similar role is envisaged for the KwaZulu-Natal Archives Council in draft provincial legislation prepared by the KwaZulu-Natal Project Task Group: Archives Services. Drafters of archival legislation in the Free State and Northern provinces are pursuing the same course. At the national level, debate around the National Archives of South Africa Bill has seen proposals that the Commission should actually formulate appraisal policy and review individual appraisals. Another proposal is that the Minister should approve individual appraisals. See also notes seventy-eight and eighty-one above.

91 Macro-appraisal first became an issue in South African archival debate during Eric Ketelaar's visit to the country in 1992. His account of the Dutch PIVOT Project was received with scepticism within the State Archives Service. However, subsequently, the writing of Terry Cook on appraisal and the Canadian macro-appraisal approach raised considerable interest. This was the primary consideration behind the State Archives Service's invitation to him to visit the country in 1994. His explosive impact led directly to the Service's establishment of an Appraisal Review Committee which in 1996 recommended the adoption of macro-appraisal.

92 Schellenberg offers two distinct and, arguably, conflicting methodologies for the identification of records with informational values, on the one hand, and those with evidential values on the other.

93 Most general and standing disposal authorities are issued not on records *per se* but on functionally-based systems of records classification. In certain areas of practice appraisal occurs at the supra-organizational level.

94 State Archives Service, "Report on Current State Archives Service Appraisal Policy." The Report recommends a phased introduction of macro-appraisal. This development will have to receive the approval of the National Archives Commission.

95 For an account of this concept, see for example J-P. Wallot, "Free Trade in Archival Ideas: The Canadian Perspective on North American Archival Development," *The American Archivist* 57, no. 2 (1994), p. 385.

96 The State Archives Service has subordinated the collecting function firmly—in 1995 private records made up 5.4% of the Service's total holdings. See note fourteen above. In contrast, in Canada, where the concept of "total archives" originated, private records make up roughly half of the National Archives' holdings. Verne Harris and Clive Kirkwood, "The State Archives Service and Manuscript Collections," pp. 5-6.

97 With the exception of the National Film, Video, and Sound Archives, whose audio-visual holdings contain a significant quantity of oral testimony, and a single accession in the Central Archives Depot, the State Archives Service's repositories are devoid of oral sources.

98 Graham Dominy, "Archives in a Democratic South Africa," p. 74.

99 Sandy Rowoldt has proposed that details of oral sources in South Africa should be included in the National Register of Audiovisual Material. Sandy Rowoldt, "Some Thoughts on the Processing of Oral History Recordings for Inclusion in the National Register of Audiovisual Materials (NAROM)," *AMLIB Newsletter* 56 (1994). The possibility of creating a national register specifically for oral sources is also being considered by the State Archives Service.

100 The lack of consensus on this issue also reflects uncertainty about the functions of the National Living Culture Commission proposed by the Arts and Culture Task Group. Clearly the functions of this Commission and of the National Archives vis-à-vis oral sources will have to be integrated.

101 For exploration of the issues involved see Verne Harris, "Public Access to Official Records," and Verne Harris and Christopher Merrett, "Toward a Culture of Transparency." South Africa's final Constitution recognizes the right of public access to official information—the Open Democracy Bill, which is currently in a pre-Parliamentary debate phase, is designed *inter alia* to legislate this right.

102 See, for example, Arts and Culture Task Group's Archives Sub-committee, "Archives in South Africa," paragraph 5.6(ii).

103 This found expression in the State Archives Service embarking on public programming in the period 1990-94, as I mention elsewhere in this article.

104 See Verne Harris, "Community Resource or Scholars' Domain? Archival Public Programming and the User as a Factor in Shaping Archival Theory and Practice," *South African Archives Journal* 35 (1993).

105 Ibid., p. 12.

106 The South African Library listed one hundred such institutions in 1985—*Directory of Manuscript Collections in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1985). Others have been established since then.

107 Worth special mention are the Cory Library (University of Rhodes), the William Cullen Library (University of the Witwatersrand), the South African History Archive, the Mayibuye Centre (University of the Western Cape), the Alan Paton Centre (University of Natal), the Killie Campbell Africana Library (University of Natal), and the ANC Archives (University of Fort Hare).

108 The one outstanding example of successful inter-institutional cooperation is the building of computerized national registers—over forty collecting institutions participate in the registers. Most of the credit for this must accrue to the State Archives Service. See Clive Kirkwood, "Inter-institutional Co-operation in the Computer Retrieval of Information on Private Archives: the South African National Register of Manuscripts (NAREM)," in Dick Sargeant, ed., *The National Register of Archives: An International Perspective. Essays in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of NRA* (London, 1995).

109 Verne Harris and Clive Kirkwood, "The State Archives Service and Manuscript Collections," pp. 8-9 and fn 17.
110 Ibid., fn 18.
111 The draft Provincial Archives of KwaZulu-Natal Bill does the same for a KwaZulu-Natal provincial archives service.
112 The ANC's Culture and Development Conference, for example, recommended that: "The Freedom of Information Act should also refer to private information. For example, multi-national corporations have vast amounts of information of public interest, and mechanisms such as the courts or tribunals must be set up to ensure access if the public interest overrides privacy provisions." (I quote this from my own Conference notes.)
113 I was privileged to read a draft of Terry Cook's paper "Interaction of Archival Theory and Practice since the Publication of the Dutch Manual in 1898" for the 13th International Congress on Archives (China, September 1996). This outstanding piece of scholarship demonstrates how South African discourse on archives connects with a wider international discourse.
114 J-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 5, 45, and 51.
115 Terry Cook, "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85), p. 49.