Counterpoint

Places Apart: Archives in Dissolving Space and Time

BERNADINE DODGE

The challenges facing archivists as we move into late-modern, post-industrial society are significant. They range from overwhelming quantities of electronic records, demands for quick and direct access to information, and the complexities of freedom of information/privacy and copyright legislation to severely curtailed funding and threats to the very existence of some archival institutions and positions. These challenges force us to re-examine our current professional practices at this *fin-de-siècle*, formulated as they have been within a context of modernity: that complex of ideas, practices, and institutions which accompanied science and the market in the development of the Western world. I would suggest that it is theoretical considerations of the changing concepts of the social in which we, as archivists, are currently situated that warrant our most rigorous investigation. There have been some calls, embedded within debates about such matters as appraisal, provenance, the archivist-as-historian, the handling of electronic records, approaches to public service, and the custodial/post-custodial discussions, to broaden archival analysis into the area of the socio-cultural.[1] A few observers have commented on the blurring of both process and substance which constitutes archival epistemology. I believe that we need to extend these conversations to include general deliberations on the transformation of the institution and the mutation of the object, which attend a global technological info-culture where neither "time" nor "place" is stable and can be taken for granted. I regard our failure to adopt a radical stance in the face of postmodernity, with its dissolution of such concepts as "place," as problematic. We are soon going to have to clarify our direction as professionals in a world where older concepts of space and time have collapsed, where the cultural has been subsumed within the social, and where a diffuse, transnational economy is all-pervasive. If we are not prepared to respond to fundamental changes in the circumstances of our location in the social, we risk becoming increasingly isolated and self-referential, engaging in endless, circular, tautological arguments.[2] We risk having our expertise appropriated. We risk being side-lined as new kinds of information brokers effectively move around in

market-driven spaces servicing consumers of information; and, not least, we risk becoming uncompetitive in attracting funding for our institutions, whether from an increasingly indifferent State or from its corporate body double.

In the postmodern world, entertainment, information, and communication technologies provide experiences more real than the real. This hyperreal world blurs the boundaries between the cultural, the political, the economic, the sexual, and the social.[3] Differentiation between mass and high culture is disappearing; history is no longer perceived as linear and evolutionary; legitimating metanarratives have collapsed into pluralism and individualism; and the possibility of stable meaning and identity has dissolved. The humanistic, modernist notion of the autonomous, rational individual has been challenged by the phenomenon of the discursively-produced subject. The media constitute the subject-as-consumer; a fetishism of information and its goods and services controls large sections of the economy; reason, scientism, and positivism are no longer transcendent principles for the acquisition and use of knowledge. An overarching, all-pervasive global economy leaves the nation-state with no fixed address, dis-integrated; the globally-situated cultural now incorporates all areas of the social, including state power and the psyche, and is in turn subsumed within the economic.[4] Capitalism and state relations are disoriented and social fragmentation extends to subjectivity and the disintegration of the self. The production of electronic information radically alters traditional notions of time, community, and history, while simultaneously blurring the distinction between reality and image.[5]

Analyses of interrelationships between media, technology, and the social have ranged from the observations of Walter Benjamin, to the Frankfurt School of critical theory (especially Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno), to the Situationist International and its founder Guy Debord, to Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan presented a rather optimistic view of the future and popularizers such as Alvin Toffler, Peter Drucker, and John Naisbitt offered a variety of strategies, some more simplistic than others, for managing in a post-industrial environment. But it is in the "lacerating nihilism"[6] of Jean Baudrillard that the apocalyptic spectre of late or postmodernity is most effectively, if extravagantly, brought together in all its complexity from strands of McLuhan, de Saussure, Dadaism, Kafka, and Lukács. According to Baudrillard, the new technologies of information, media, communications, and record production now involve the reproduction of objects, not, as before, as simulacra or copies of an idea, but as simulations, as objects produced in the first instance for the purpose of being reproduced by binary code; as copies without any original. Sampled realities, because they can be stored, manipulated, and infinitely reproduced without degradation, are not reproductions, they are representations. This is Baudrillard's third order of simulacrum: the object and the sign are one and the same. The signified is the signifier; objective reality is experienced as hyperreality. Information proliferates; it becomes slippery and un-

manageable. The word itself has been emptied of meaning and rendered a trite circumlocution, an "all-purpose weasel-word."[7] Information resides nowhere and everywhere. It reveals no author, occupies no space, promises no authenticity, exhibits no historicity. It flows anonymously across space and time. Information as record may be ephemeral, or timeless, locked and inaccessibly attached to obsolete media, forever indecipherable, zombie-like, the living dead of the document world. At other times, information explodes off paper into thin air and circulates seemingly independently from any point of origin, ready at all times to be manipulated, changed, replicated, endlessly reproduced, or effaced at will. It cannot easily be contained in time and place. Moving across and between nations, it encounters no more boundaries than it would moving across a reading room floor. Borders which formerly kept societies apart are entirely permeable, transparent to a flow of information, images, ideas, and people.[8] Past societies were anchored in time and space, held together by territorially-based political and bureaucratic authorities and/or by history and tradition.[9] We, on the other hand, experience the co-presence of past, present, and future and a new era of telecommunications distinguished by speed, omniscience, and ubiquity.[10] In the world of cultural producers, an authentic, "real" world can neither be portrayed, nor parodied. Cultural artifacts can only play on existing stereotypes, the production of pastiche, and palimpsest.[11] As archivists, concerned with the authentic, this crisis of representation is dismaying. It affects our perception of both the real and the derivative, the former somehow diminished by virtue of its being reproducible.

Universities with their core disciplines have been the traditional power base of nation-states, and, along with other institutions of legitimation, are struggling to survive.[12] We cannot hope to be isolated from the same circumstances which challenge them. Many writers are currently exploring the role of the intellectual at a time when the nation-state is in the process of being supplanted by the multinationals and no longer requires an intelligentsia to provide ideological legitimation or contestation. Nation-states, reduced essentially to the provision of law and order, relying on seduction of the rich and repression of the poor to create a controllable, though heterogeneous public comprised of super-consumers, have no need of the culturally cohesive citizenry formerly produced by cultural institutions functioning as one of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses.[13] Bill Readings notes that "Within the global economy, national history and culture...are merely variants of one 'universal'—as in a giant theme park or shopping mall, to be appropriated by tourism and other forms of commercialism."[14] These sorts of observations are surely crucial to everything that we as archivists do. When economic activity is cut loose from political control and overrides conceptions of the public good, and, when the global market obliterates meaningful nation-states and leaves in their wake small, localized groupings of citizens bound by common interests and desires – or ethnicity, for example – but uncontained by any generally recognized

national themes or commonalties, then our cultural roles – as defenders of heritage, as preservers of the past for its use in the future, as protectors of the juridical function of the record, and as participants in the management of the life-cyle of masses of undifferentiated information – must be re-examined. Readings writes in *The University in Ruins*:

> The notion that culture matters is ineluctably linked to the ascendancy of the nation-state as a political formation, and a decline of the nation-state means that the question of power is no longer structured in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of subjects from cultural participation.[15]

If Readings is right in asking "what is the point of a university in a posthistorical world," then we as archivists should ask the same question of ourselves inasmuch as we also have enjoyed our roles as contributors to the production of the legitimating metanarratives of modernity. However subtly we may feel or sense these currents of change as we go about our work, a shift in the tenets and practices of all professions is indicated, none more so than that which concerns itself with authenticity, impartiality, provenance, legitimation, accountability, context, evidence, authority, and history-as-progress.

How do we envisage ourselves working in a social characterized by the loss of authority of the intellectual elite over culture, a social controlled by seduction or, alternatively, repression, and managed by and subservient to the economic? Our dilemma is shared by many. The educated elite became accustomed to setting standards, elaborating principles, formulating social tasks.[16] Academics, painters, novelists, composers, and knowledge and cultural workers are all experiencing a period of uncertainty as their talents and services cease to be required and as the authority that they formerly enjoyed is eroded through the creation of a market-dependent citizenry which is effected by destroying any skills (technical, social, psychological) that do not make use of marketable commodities. This is the process of seduction by market forces which fills the vacuum left after the withdrawal of the State from culture.[17] This replacement of the State by the market is of utmost importance to us. In the modern world, culture "connotes power of the educated elite and knowledge as power; it denotes institutionalized mechanisms of such power: science, education, arts."[18] It is now the market which creates, controls, and sells culture.[19] As noted, the State is left with no more than the role of managing the repression of those too poor to participate fully in consumption: those who consume only the necessities of life rather than the products of leisure and culture, the latter carrying what Marx called exchange-values rather than use-values. We, as archivists, are left to re-evaluate our place in this new system. Will we be compliant participants in the commodification of culture and the attenuation of any cultural role oriented to some conception of public good? Or is there perhaps an alternative which allows us to assume a viable cultural role that does

not preclude our taking responsibility for ensuring that crucial inclusive and representative archives of the future are extracted for preservation from current information systems? Will this latter alternative be available to us even though these information systems may be created and managed by organizations and institutions whose interests, and thus resources, lie elsewhere? In other words, can we devise ways to strike a balance between our old role as specialists in symbolic production and the new demands of economic specialists?[20]

Some theorists are arguing that we will become a new intermediary class of cultural workers who will provide ways and means to popularize and interpret texts and cultural practices.[21] It may be that one of our most important tasks will be to remind people that those flat masses of information are not really homogeneous, but have been made to appear that way through their presentation via electronic media. We may be able to restore a sense of heterogeneity, a layered complexity, to the depthless surfaces of simulacra by insisting on applying our rigorous regard for provenance and *respect des fonds* to *all* records, however difficult the task may be, given the opaque nature of electronic data. How we interpret and apply those principles will have to be formulated and reformulated as we move through new social spaces and struggle with uncontrollable quantities of "information." We are, for example, increasingly pressured to provide electronic access to digitized images of documents and photographs. This growing demand, not just from researchers, but often from our own institutions, anxious to present themselves as vigorous "players" in infotech society, must not seduce us into making decisions which fly in the face of archival principle. Scanning selective photographs from our holdings and making them available electronically is a temptingly easy, relatively cheap, audience-pleasing procedure. Maintaining context, clarifying provenance, and protecting copyright are more difficult and need to be thoughtfully addressed. Traditional archival practice argues an ethos of impartiality. We have, *in the first instance*, not sought to be responsible for the creation of culture, though ultimately we are an undeniable locus of articulation for just such a consequence. The decisions we make *vis-à-vis* digitization are another point at which we enter subjectively into cultural discourse and, hence, the potential consequences of those decisions need to be carefully considered.

As to the direction that our services to users might take, we must remember that the products of our archival activities—our finding aids, our repository guides, our students, our researchers, our conferences, our literature, the organizational structures of our professional associations—all contribute to the constitution of the social. They do not in any sense simply reflect an already constituted reality. Our users are in a very real way the product of how we conduct practices. As Baudrillard notes, the consumer (of archival information, for example), in the personalized act of consumption "ends up as an object of economic demand."[22] Similarly, the significance of our profession has been underscored by increasing awareness that "the archive...is not only the place

for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past... The archivization produces as much as it records the event."[23] Our practices as archivists have both responded to and prompted societal concerns and corresponding demands for evidence and documentation relating to those concerns. We have performed valuable services in providing glimpses of struggles and experiences of peripheral voices so often drowned out by hegemonic discourses. We have acquired, preserved, described, and directed researchers to documentation on the lives of women, gays and lesbians, and previously invisible ethnic and racial groups. We were the ones who provided the journals, letters, diaries, account books, and store receipts for the social and labour historians. It is one of archives' finest ironies that traditional practices of appraisal and acquisition sometimes resulted, albeit inadvertently, in documentation on the lives of the "other." While we gathered and preserved evidence of bourgeois, Eurocentric male culture, we also, "between-the-lines" and in passing, occasionally preserved the record of the outsider. I am thinking now, for example, of the ways in which court records have been used to reveal all manner of detail about working women's lives through "marginalia": the testimony of neighbours to inquest juries; judges' doodlings on their bench notes; petitions got up by neighbours and entered as evidence, then preserved along with official court documents. The subsequent research use in this instance is quite independent of the forms and functions of the creating body, and I also question whether appraisal based on "pertinence" would have anticipated such use. I think in some ways we have been excellent Foucauldians, working away at professional activities which foreground local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate, and fragmented knowledges; resisting as far as is possible the tendency to unify, filter, order, and arrange into a coherent, linear narrative, the documents in our care, while our modest mediations provide accessibility and form a nexus between information and knowledge. Our profession is consistent with, and essential to, the genealogy of knowledge project conceptualized by Foucault. It would be a shame to abandon those responsibilities which entail our active involvement in the substance of the *fonds* and provide the best chance we have to serve our traditional users and work with new seekers of historical "representation."[24]

For the past ten years, there have been lively and vital debates surrounding the issue of appraisal. The unprecedented masses of public records now being generated in a variety of media have prompted a re-examination of the traditional, quasi non-interventionist approach. The arguments on all sides have tended to present archival practice as adhering strictly to one narrowly-defined model or another. I do not believe it is the case that many professional archivists base appraisal on the content of the records alone, arriving at some projected future "pertinent" research use in isolation from other criteria, with no reference back to the context of the creating body, no allowance for the record as evidence of the actions and transactions of that creating body, and no

determined commitment to impartiality so far as is possible. Neither can I entirely agree with the characterization of archivists as antiquarians, sitting back passively while records roll in without conscious reflection on the context of their production and on their location in the grand scheme of things. The proponents of macro, top-down appraisal posit a more aggressive strategy, based on an analysis of the context of the creation of the records and the value and place of the creating body within the social. The enduring archival dilemma of neutrality pertains in each of these approaches. The assignment by the archivist of social and historical significance, whether to the creating body, to the content of the records themselves, or more passively through our arrangement and descriptive practices, is always contentious, since without some Archimedean point of observation the professional practices of the archivist are never entirely objective. A carefully reformulated appraisal technique, defined and situated within archival theory, makes excellent sense; such reorientations of focus are adjuncts of a dynamic episteme.[25] Perhaps we need to see methodological proposals as suggestions which are more, or less, appropriate for certain times, in certain places, and in certain situations. My contention is that our practices, and the motivations for them, are infinitely subtle and multi-faceted, whereas the texts which describe them tend to present a picture of archival activity which underestimates this complexity. I have chosen the appraisal debate not to address the issues themselves, but to illustrate ways in which archivists (or any one else) engage in conversations between and amongst themselves and, in effect, both constitute and are constituted by those discussions. What I want to suggest is that we need to examine carefully not only the theoretical and methodological implications of those conversations, but the discursive sites in which they are located. The logistical problems which electronic records present to the archivist are real and pressing. We may, however, be in danger of succumbing to another round of "tyranny of the medium"[26] if we in any way compromise the principle of provenance for the convenience of the "information management" of electronic records, quantities of public records, or in the cause of providing instant and universal electronic access to decontextualized scanned images. It is not surprising that issues surrounding electronic records are at the forefront of discussions. The problems facing archivists day-to-day on the shop floor are significant. Nor is it unexpected that granting agencies have an interest in issues surrounding the appraisal and preservation of electronic records. It is in the interests of those same (State) agencies that official public records, data, and gobbets of information necessary for State participation in a global economy and for the provision of domestic law and order be available. The issue of electronic records is not, however, generally central to the history of women, of the working classes, of aboriginals, of citizens of non-industrialized countries, of most peripheral or "illegitimate" citizens and subjects, except as they engage with bourgeois Western officialdom. Notwithstanding our obligation to the juridical and evi-

dential function of the record, and with the ready acknowledgement that the massive quantities of public records, many in electronic form, must be expeditiously dealt with, the issue should not precipitate anything like a crisis in confidence in our ability to manage such records using modified or variant practices consistent with archival theory. Institutional memory is not "at risk," as some would have it: it is the object of our every glance, in every facet of every way we relate to one another, in every thought we form; it is written on our bodies and manifested in countless social structures. We are the subject of, and subject to, official discourses. It is tenacious, enduring, in no way vulnerable. We need to incorporate the appraisal and description of non-current electronic records into our existing, albeit adjusted, archival practices, while maintaining a praxis which facilitates inclusiveness and content analysis at some point in the life-cycle of the document. However we see our profession *vis-à-vis* that of the historian, we have to see ourselves as being at the very least "historistic": our professional practices constitute knowledge out of information situated in a specific "here and now," and in spite of our subjective location within a variety of discourses, our cultural responsibility requires that we struggle to ensure the most equitable, value-neutral, representative, and comprehensive historical record possible using methodologies most likely to fulfil our role as preservers of evidence, accountability, and authenticity.

Assuming an effective role as "interpreters" and "situators" of records and as defenders and/or providers of context may depend on our ability to loosen the bonds between epistemology and methodology: abandoning neither the content nor the intent of the former but finding new ways to work when "all that is solid melts into air." Unlike museums, arising in the nineteenth century from the chaos of "curiosity cabinets," the roots of archives as evidential authorities and mnemonic aids existed centuries before Cartesian notions of linear progress and scientific knowability enveloped Western thought. We have an advantage in being a profession which allows us to reflect back on an earlier era, however grounded our professional practices and principles may be in Enlightenment dogma and serving the needs of industrial modernity. This distancing can remind us of the mutability of practice and procedure. A concept which may serve as an approach to our archival practices is *bricolage*.[27] The *bricoleur* is prepared to fabricate solutions on the fly, out of materials at hand; to be guided by standards of practice internal to a profession yet prepared to borrow, with amendments, theories and practices from other professions. We can utilize the experiences, suggestions, and observations of multiple allied professions. We need not, for example, entirely supplant the familiar historian with the exotic information technologist as an ally-of-choice and overseer of procedural renovations. Our methodology could be seen as more like "nomad science" rather than "state science." "Nomad science" aspires to be "heterogeneous, flowing, discontinuous, indefinite, ambulatory, and potentially radical."[28] Our age is likely to be one of permanent transition and, as Umberto Eco has said, "we will

spend a lot of our time developing hypotheses for the exploitation of disorder."[29] We need to maintain our commitment to the principle of provenance, while accepting a flexible interpretation which allows us to make decisions on a case-by-case basis as to where the *fonds* begins, where the series stops, and when to pay attention to the substance, the form, the function and/or the structure of records and/or their creating bodies. We need to ensure that our professional archival practices are pliant enough to accommodate all media, and both public and private records. We need to be able to assert intellectual control over, and accept responsibility for, records both physically on-site in our care and also those remaining *in situ*.[30] We must, as a profession, iterate more clearly and more often that corpus of archival theory which we agree is inviolate, and which identifies and determines our profession. The innovation of techniques and practices grounded in, and proceeding from, that body of principles may then be modified and revised as circumstances require. The appearance of new conceptions of place, space, and time need not necessarily involve the effacement of traditional concepts which have grounded archival theory, nor should they be allowed to distract us from our professional responsibilities. In a hyperreal world, a profession which values context, accountability, framework, and authenticity is more important than ever, indeed it is indispensable. A pragmatic eclecticism would put our practices between art, craft, and science, which I believe is the safest place to be at this moment. It is this kind of thinking which may let us work quite happily and productively amidst the "ruins" of our late-modern institutions.

While we seem to be increasingly embroiled in a postmodern world of flickering images, flat, timeless, surface representations, and montage, I believe that we, as archivists, can work as if time can be contained and place exists. There is a second concept which might be useful as we find ourselves situated within a new socioeconomic configuration. We might reflect on the postmodern understanding of nostalgia. The concept of nostalgia has become a way of expressing the belief that the past can be used to stabilize and anchor experience in the present: the idea that the only workable conception of the "real" might be how representations of the past serve to create a mythical *Gemeinshaft* which is often cited as an intersection of desire.[31] Fredric Jameson has argued that the end of history is the central theme of postmodernism and that our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past; we have begun to live in a perpetual present, and in perpetual change, that obliterates traditions.[32] In the world of the fragmented subject, the quest for meaning and coherence, the search for one's own story and the preservation, or perhaps the reclamation, of the self are powerful impulses. Though expressed in modernist terms, the following passage from David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* describes this phenomenon:

The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity, objects from the past are

the source of significance as cultural symbols. Continuity between past and present creates a sense of sequence out of aleatory chaos, and, since change is inevitable, a stable system of ordered meaning enables us to cope with both innovation and decay. The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis, it is a social emollient and reinforces national identity when confidence is weakened or threatened.[33]

Many of the characteristics of postmodernity reflect a sense of nostalgia: pessimism and loss of confidence in the future with reference to traditional, pre-modern ideals which may never have actually existed but which are seen to be psychologically appealing and essential as a base for moral and critical judgement. Archivists, through their professional practices, cannot avoid being part of the fabric of moral systems and ethical arguments. As Stauth and Turner note, without a relatively coherent community grounding a system of values, activities involving judgement, social analysis, valorization, and aesthetic criticism become impossible.[34] If contemporary social commentators must necessarily be melancholic and backward looking, we have a part to play in grounding their activities. We will increasingly be required to adjust our practices to the massification of culture by providing service to a much broader, more amorphous range of users than we are used to doing, and by addressing localized, disparate discourses and desires, if not national identity. Though we may no longer position ourselves or our professional practices within the parameters of modernity's metanarratives, this would be a very bad time to abrogate our cultural responsibilities when one of our most strategic directions may lie here. This of course is at odds with the direction which the State itself is taking. The political climate in which we will be working includes a State which is increasingly relinquishing its responsibility for the public good. The late-modern State, assailed by the complexities of a global economy, has abandoned any sense of being much more than a collaborator with private interests, preoccupied with the data requirements of a commodified universe, and taking only severely attenuated responsibility for political, social, and cultural matters. It will be up to us to "sell" ourselves as suppliers of identity, explication, and coherence through preservation of contextualized historical knowledge and collective memory.[35]

Part of our mission will be the maintenance of physical archival constructs: visual, spatial, tangible "monuments" which suggest permanency and continuity; not just *places*, which can be virtual, but actual *spaces*, of memory.[36] Archives can, with libraries, museums, hotel chains, packaged tropical holiday compounds, asylums, prisons, and hospitals, be read as the non-places of supermodernity.[37] The archival repository and the collective *fonds* within it will no longer *necessarily* be restricted to a physicality predicated on walls, shelves, and boxes. But the continued presence of archives as heterotopia,[38] or places apart, physically containing fragments from a time when time moved slowly enough to be discerned, and acting as a visual site where records in all

media can be accounted for, is a worthy objective. Foucault refers to the idea of "accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place *all* times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place...."[39] Our recognition that the nostalgic impulse is becoming ubiquitous, dominating fashion, film, literature, and art, should serve to remind us that archivists are masters of the backward glance. The radical potential of our profession lies in recognizing this nostalgic impulse and the power of narrative and "story-telling," which are inherent in any archival research guide or finding aid, and in the *fonds* themselves, to satisfy the desire for connectedness and comprehension. Paul Ricoeur has described historical narrative as one of the chief ways humans cope with the experience of temporality.[40] We can suggest meanings, anchor texts, and restore boundaries, both temporal and spatial, to an increasingly incoherent and undelineated world.

Barbara Stafford writes, "no one denies that civilizations and cultures are falling apart in a technologically altered and accelerated environment. As mass society becomes unglued, what structure will suture together the life of the mind"?[41] It may be that archives, and the intellectual activities of archivists, will have a critical role to play in addressing that question.

Notes

1 Very early on, Terry Cook suggested the uses of intellectual history for archivists. See, for example, such vigorous and thoughtful articles by Cook as: "Nailing Jelly to a Wall: Possibilities in Intellectual History," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980–81), pp. 205–218; "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 123–134; "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, 1992). In a 1984 article, "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984–85), pp. 28–49, Cook issued perhaps the most explicit call to archivists to move beyond pragmatics to issues such as knowledge, communications, and societal dynamics. Hugh Taylor's response to Cook's paper, "Through the Minefield," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985–86), pp. 180–185 is useful, as is Taylor's "Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980s," *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984), pp. 25–37. In a book review appearing ten years ago, Brien Brothman admonished archivists to be culturally aware of the social and historiographical issues affecting their inescapably subjective practices; see *Archivaria* 23 (Winter 1986–87) pp. 133–135. See also Brothman's "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 78–100. Other writers who address archival practice and who allude to a transformed social include Barbara L. Craig and Heather MacNeil. See Craig's "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in Perspective," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 135–141, and MacNeil's "Archival Theory and Practice: Between Two Paradigms," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994), pp. 6–20. A recent article by Carolyn Heald, "Is There Room for Archives in the Postmodern World?" *American Archivist* 59

(Winter 1996), pp. 88–100, expressly addresses some implications of postmodernity for archival roles and functions and offers very useful observations. See also her essay, "Are We Collecting the 'Right Stuff'?" *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), pp. 182–88. This brief overview of some reflections on general archival theory is far from exhaustive. I have not included writing which addresses specific issues such as the use of diplomatics, the management of electronic records, and appraisal issues, nor the archivist-as-historian debate, though many of these authors offer very useful broad general perspectives in the course of developing their theses.

2 Dick Hebdige, "After the Masses," in Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry Ortner, eds., *Culture/Power/History* (Princeton, 1994), p. 226.

3 Douglas Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-De-Millennium," in Douglas Kellner, ed., *Baudrillard* (Oxford, 1994), p. 8.

4 Herbert I. Schiller, "The Global Information Highway: Project for an Ungovernable World," in James Brook and Iain A. Boal, eds., *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information* (San Francisco, 1995), p. 21.

5 Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture and Social Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1991), p. 115.

6 Chris Rojek, "Baudrillard and Politics," in Bryan S. Turner and Chris Rojek, eds., *Forget Baudrillard?* (London, 1993), p. 121.

7 An expression used by Fritz Machlup, quoted in Robert Everett-Green, "Information Please," in *Queen's Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (Summer 1997), p. 206.

8 Jim Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past," in Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe, eds., *Theorizing Museums* (Oxford, 1996), p. 46. David Roberts writes about museums without walls, as space and time are obliterated by technologies of reproduction which allow the promiscuous mixing of all art of all eras: David Roberts, "The Museum and Montage," in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988), p. 552.

9 Krishan Kumar, *From Post-Industrial To Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World* (Oxford, 1995), p. 10.

10 Claudia Donà, "Invisible Design," in John Thackara, ed., *Design After Modernism* (London, 1988), p. 158.

11 Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London, 1997), p. 11.

12 Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, 1996). Readings describes the movement of the modern university from its position as an ideological apparatus of the nation-state to a new role as a market-driven bureaucracy devoid of its "modern" cultural *raison d'être*. Also, in *Roll Over Beethoven: The Return of Cultural Strife* (Hanover, 1993), Stanley Aronowitz looks at the culture wars in universities "not merely in the ideological terms in which they are framed, but in connection with the breakup of the old knowledge paradigms that have been ineluctably linked to economic and state institutions." Chapter 7, "The Authority of Knowledge," pp. 203–243, is an especially useful overview of the crisis in knowledge. Aronowitz analyzes this crisis as a crisis generated by postmodern thought within a modern state, while Readings pictures a crisis of postmodern thought in a postmodern state within global society.

13 Zygmunt Bauman, "Is There A Postmodern Sociology?" in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988), p. 222.

14 Readings, *The University in Ruins*, p. 45.

15 Ibid., p. 117.

16 Bauman, "Is There A Postmodern Sociology?" p. 218.

17 Ibid., p. 222.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Mike Featherstone, "In Pursuit of the Postmodern," in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988), p. 206.

21 Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London, 1991), p. 94.
22 Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Objects," in John Thackara, ed., *Design After Modernism* (London, 1988), p. 181.
23 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Eric Prenowitz, trans.) (Chicago, 1996), p. 17.
24 See the article by Carolyn Heald, "Is There Room for Archives in the Postmodern World," *American Archivist* 59 (Winter 1996), pp. 95–96, which re-presents the cultural role of archivists as a discursive practice.
25 I purposely resist using the Kuhnian term "paradigm shift" and prefer to understand suggestions for methodological reorientations in less dramatic terms which leave open the possibility of reconciling the new with past practices. I think that juxtaposing methodologies as "either/or" is unnecessarily restrictive when managing in times of accelerated rates of change, which require the utmost flexibility. Further, by de-emphasising the differences between methodologies, it may be easier to move our attention from the issue itself (in this case, appraisal) to the site(s) of discourse and, by this means, more clearly understand what is being proposed and the circumstances in which it is being proposed, and then consider how we might adopt, or adapt, such proposals to specific situations.
26 A phrase used by Terry Cook in "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives'," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979–80), pp. 141–49.
27 This term was first used by Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1962), pp. 17–18, to describe a way of thinking and acting which is directed by practical problems: the "science of the concrete." I do not mean to suggest by using the term, however, that our practices need not be anchored in sound archival theory. Quite the contrary, though our methodology may be flexible, our body of archival theory must be uncompromised.
28 Stephen Katz, *Disciplining Old Age: The Formation of Gerontological Knowledge* (Charlottesville, 1996), p. 140. Katz is using the term "nomad science" which originated with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Paul Feyerband has also criticized a flawed conception of science as "scientism" in *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London, 1975), p. 23: "The idea of a method that contains firm, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles for conducting the business of science meets considerable difficulty when confronted with the results of historical research." He further notes that firm rules, planted in epistemology, *when violated*, often result in new knowledge.
29 Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (New York, 1986), p. 84.
30 This paper does not in any way presume to address the issues raised by others concerning custodial/post-custodial archival practices. Within the context of this paper, which deals with archives in the larger context of the social, I am obviously arguing for physical archival structures and the removal of records to these physical places for permanent preservation. The concept of *bricolage* however, should prompt one to retain the flexibility to deal responsibly and confidently with those records which cannot be dealt with in the traditional manner.
31 Robert Hollinger, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: A Thematic Approach* (London, 1994), p. 31.
32 Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and Its Discontents* (London, 1988), p. 20.
33 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1990), p. 86.
34 Georg Stauth and Bryan Turner, "Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture," in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988), p. 509.
35 Ibid., p. 317.
36 Useful discussion of archives as actual, rather than virtual, places is to be found in the literature surrounding the custodial/post-custodial debates. See especially, Luciana Duranti, "Archives As A Place," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24.2 (November, 1996), pp. 242–55, which emphasizes the importance of place *vis-à-vis* accountability, authenticity, and guardianship.

37 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (John Howe, trans.) (London, 1995), p. 78. Augé uses the term non-places to refer to places of imagined and imaginary references; that is, the opposite of what ethnologists consider a site of culture localized in space and time. He notes that "without the monumental illusion before the eyes of the living, history would be a mere abstraction...strangely, it is a set of breaks and discontinuities in space that expresses continuity in time." Augé, p. 60.

38 The concept of "heterotopia" was developed by Michel Foucault and reworked by Kevin Hetherington in "The Utopics of Social Ordering—Stonehenge as a Museum Without Walls," in Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe, eds., *Theorizing Museums* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 153–76. Edward W. Soja, "Heterotopologies: A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel-LA," pp. 13–34, and Benjamin Genocchio, "Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces," both in Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, eds., *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* (Oxford, 1995) are other useful examples of analysis using the idea of "heterotopia."

39 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986), p. 26.

40 Noted in Alex Collinicos, *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History* (Durham, 1995), p. 49.

41 Barbara Maria Stafford, *Good Looking: Essays on the Virtue of Images* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 55.