

Leaving a Trail: Personal Papers and Public Archives

Part One – The Donor’s Story¹

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ABSTRACT Archives reveal multiple ways in which a person or institution’s path intersects with public interest. New generations can gain insight from the legacies of others’ ideas, actions, and influences, studying the past to affect the future. What those generations conclude will depend on the footprints left for them to follow. In this collaboration, an emeritus professor of storytelling, folklore, and children’s literature joins with an archivist for faculty papers to preserve the evidence of the former’s lifetime work. Although they approach their tasks differently, both narrators draw on long-term research experience to inform and describe the process with which each is involved. The importance of their interaction emerges through mutual references in their respective articles, as does the extent to which their personal stories affect the nature of their work and self-reflective approach. This connectivity allows them to portray what archiving means for a particular donor (Part One) and what working with a donor means for a particular archivist (Part Two). Their intent is to think in a visionary way about why and how donors and archivists do what they do, engaging readers to connect personally as well as intellectually along the way. This is the first article in a two-part sequence in this issue.

1 I would like to thank Susanne Belovari for joining me with such a collaborative spirit, Deborah Stevenson for scanning my book covers when I was far from home, and Jennifer Douglas for effectively shepherding this unusual set of articles through the publishing process.

RÉSUMÉ Les archives révèlent de multiples façons dont le parcours d’une personne ou d’une institution rencontre l’intérêt public. De nouvelles générations peuvent en apprendre beaucoup des idées, des actions et de l’influence de personnes, en étudiant le passé pour influencer sur l’avenir. Ce que ces générations concluront dépendra des pistes à suivre qu’on leur aura laissées. Dans cette collaboration, un professeur émérite en narration de contes, en folklore et en littérature jeunesse s’est joint à un archiviste responsable des documents d’archives universitaires pour préserver les preuves de l’œuvre de sa vie. Bien qu’ils aient approché leur tâche de façons différentes, les deux narrateurs s’inspirent de leur expérience de recherche de longue haleine pour façonner et décrire le processus dans lequel chacune des parties est engagée. L’importance de leur échange ressort dans les références mutuelles que les auteurs font dans leurs articles respectifs, tout comme l’importance de leurs récits personnels ont un effet sur la nature de leur travail et sur leur approche d’autoréflexion. Ce lien leur permet de présenter ce que l’action d’archiver signifie pour un donateur en particulier (première partie) et ce que le travail avec un donateur signifie pour un archiviste en particulier (deuxième partie). Leur intention est de repenser de façon visionnaire pourquoi et comment les donateurs et les archivistes font ce qu’ils font, tout en invitant leurs lecteurs à se joindre à eux sur le plan personnel et intellectuel en cours de route. Ceci est la première partie d’un article en deux temps paru dans ce numéro.

Introduction

I think how little we can hold in mind, how everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life, how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on.²

Archives reveal multiple ways in which a person or institution's path intersects with public interest. From archives, future generations can gain insight from the legacies of others' ideas, actions, and influences, studying the past to affect the future. What those generations conclude will depend on the footprints left for them to follow.

In this collaboration, an emeritus professor of storytelling, folklore, and children's literature joins with an archivist for faculty papers to preserve the evidence of the former's lifetime work. Although they approach their tasks differently, both narrators draw on long-term research experience to inform and describe the meaning and process with which each is involved. The pattern of their interaction emerges through mutual references in their respective articles, as does the extent to which their personal stories affect the nature of their work and self-reflective approach.

Storytellers find a nest of narratives under every rock. Archivists look in the same place and find a den of records. What forms their different perspectives? Both roles involve collecting and selecting, but to variant purposes, and both approach the same rock with different questions. To the storyteller, every artifact, document, and record tells a story – but what story? How and why will it be shaped? By whom and for whom? Storytelling is, to some extent, a process of giving and withholding information for effect, whether the purpose is scholarship, entertainment, education, religion, commerce, or other enterprises. No effective story can tell all. What is left out is as important as what is left in.

The archivist gathers records for a collection, stewarding multiple resources as a whole in historical context and creating a source of raw materials that researchers can delve into for unpredictable reasons and myriad modes of developing their own stories. Because in this case the donor's work is understanding

2 W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (New York: Modern Library, 2011), 24.

the nature of *story*, she at first made the assumption that archiving was a process of storytelling and she was the teller. It took some listening to the archivist for the donor to discover herself as a noun, not a verb. She – or rather, her work – is the raw material on which others may draw in shaping *their own* new stories. Nor is the archivist the teller; rather, the archivist is the assembler of this and other donors’ records for future tellers.

However, good storytelling was important for us. It moved us away from traditionally academic writing so we could portray what archiving *means* for a particular donor and what appraising and working with that particular donor *mean* for a particular archivist. Our goal was to think in a visionary way about how and why we do what we do, encouraging readers to connect personally as well as intellectually.

The Donor’s Story

*Each of us moves about every day amid the silent record of who was here before us, fifty years ago or a hundred or a thousand.*³

In 1964, I began my professional career as a lowly assistant children’s librarian and storyteller at a small county library in Wooster, Ohio. When I retired in 2007 as a professor and writer, I was too busy to weed the 40 plus file boxes (roughly a box per year) I moved from my office to my house. In 2017, still writing, but more slowly, I finally determined to donate my 53 years’ worth of papers and digital files to the University of Illinois Archives. This process of archival donation began, as research often does, with an elementary question: What is involved? Next came more challenging queries: What drives and energizes the project, what does it mean, and who is it for? Eventually, a classic dialogue between observing, investigating, and articulating raised the deeper question: Where does an educational path lead us, or leave us?

Initially, the path led me to Susanne Belovari, archivist for faculty papers, and we began what in traditional storytelling would be an oral “call and response”

3 Penelope Lively, *The Presence of the Past: An Introduction to Landscape History* (New York, HarperCollins, 1976), 9. A noted British novelist and nonfiction writer, Lively has won both the Booker Prize for her adult fiction and the Carnegie Medal for children’s books, which I contrasted in Betsy Hearne, “Across the Ages: Penelope Lively’s Fiction for Children and Adults,” *Horn Book Magazine* 75, no. 2 (March/April, 1999): 164–75.

process of advancing our respective areas of knowledge. Although the eventual result was two separately authored articles rather than a single article in dialogic format, we extensively discussed each other's steps along the way, both in conversation and via email. As I reflected on the substance and donation of my papers, she responded with explanations about the process based on her experience of archiving papers from many different research areas. Both of us have crossed disciplinary boundaries in our work and found this to be a productive process. My work explores stories and storytelling in oral, print, and electronic traditions, while hers involves collecting and preserving stories implied by or embedded in the papers of each donor, whatever his or her discipline may require in the way of background research. Regarding each other's expertise, we both started with "beginner's mind," a Buddhist state of open curiosity that leads to enriching questions and enhanced understanding.

As Susanne and I met and talked, our own stories began to intersect. Although many years separated us in age, both of us by chance had experienced living in time warps as children: she summering on a 350-year-old Austrian farm, and I growing up in a poor rural area of central Alabama in the 1940s. We were both aware of what British writer Penelope Lively refers to as "the presence of the past." Also by chance, some of Susanne's research specializations and mine have overlapped. Although neither of us is Jewish, her work recreating the historical Jewish archives of Vienna and her employment as a Holocaust restitution historian had taken her to Israel, where I had spent time studying at the Hebrew University and had taken courses on anti-Semitism. I examined most of the newly published children's and young adult books on the Holocaust during four decades of work as a reviewer (1968–2008). But this common interest was beside the point of our work together. As will become apparent in her article, she has appraised and processed the papers of researchers in varied areas, selecting and organizing rich source materials for future research. We agreed that, to some extent, both of our own personal stories were bound to affect our work, and that we would use an autoethnographic approach, which I have explored previously through narrative inquiry and autoethnographic writing.⁴

Autoethnography "is an autobiographical genre that connects the personal to

4 See, for example, Betsy Hearne, "Folklore in Children's Literature: Contents and Discontents," in *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, ed. Shelby Wolf, Karen Coats, Patricia Enciso, and Christine Jenkins (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 209–23; and Betsy Hearne, "'Your One Wild and Precious Life': A Tale of Divergent Patterns in Narrative and Musical Development," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* no. 210–211 (Fall 2016/Winter 2017): 153–65. Citing myself with such frequency seems awkward but perhaps unavoidable in an essay about archiving my own work.

the cultural, social, and political”⁵ and can be further demarcated as analytical autoethnography (developing theoretical explanations) and evocative autoethnography (focusing on narrative presentations).⁶ The latter method affects the narrative’s organization and structure, often leading both the writer and the reader from one story to the next to perceive and map emergent patterns, rather than imposing thematic or theoretical structure on a body of knowledge. My article reveals a chronological pathway of stories that marked the trail of my archiving project, which was complicated by the fact that my work – both writing stories and writing about stories – brings them constantly to mind. “Hansel and Gretel,” for instance, was my first portal – a natural one for a folktale scholar who felt lost and abandoned in the woods of archiving. My mother’s personal folklore of loss appeared next; then my own academic and professional stories arose as I browsed through the papers with Susanne. Mapping the stories led me to connect with the inner process of memory and ideas, literally re-collection.⁷

Before going further, I should make a disclaimer: my prior understanding of archives is limited to reading occasional books such as Arlette Farge’s *The Allure of the Archives*,⁸ Susan Howe’s *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives*,⁹ and recently, some of Susanne’s publications.¹⁰ Despite the fact that I earned a

5 This wording appears in several of Carolyn Ellis’s collaborative essays and is taken here from Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Carolyn Ellis, eds., *Music Autoethnographies: Making Autoethnography Sing/Making Music Personal* (Bowen Hills, QLD: Australian Academic Press, 2009), 7.

6 Laura L. Ellingson and Carolyn Ellis, “Autoethnography as Constructionist Project,” in *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (New York: Guilford Press, 2008): 445–66.

7 As a narrative scholar, I have been especially interested in using stories to understand stories and in querying the relationship of stories to self-knowledge. I probe these questions “narratively – that is to say, eventually – through a combination of stories and reflection on a lifetime of work. . . . We are often surprised by our lives and then left to figure them out in time. An effective story rarely explains its meaning directly but rather allows readers to construct meanings in reflection of their own experience. And reflection, I suggest, represents a balance of outer and inner knowledge. . . . Self-knowledge doesn’t mean that you don’t acquire as much knowledge as possible outside of yourself, but that ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ knowledge permeate and transform each other.” Betsy Hearne, “Ida Waters Turns Off the Lights: The Inside and Outside of Knowledge,” in *Beyond Methods: Lessons from the Arts to Qualitative Research*, ed. Liora Bresler (Lund, Sweden: Malmö Academy of Music, 2015), 153–64.

8 Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

9 Susan Howe, *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives* (New York: New Directions / Christine Burgin, 2014).

10 These include, for instance, Susanne Belovari, “Professional Minutia and Their Consequences: Provenance, Context and Original Identification, and Anthropology at the Field Museum of Natural History,” *Archival Sciences* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 143–93; and Susanne Belovari, “Historians and Web Archives,” *Archivaria* 83 (Spring 2017): 59–79.

PhD from the University of Chicago Graduate Library School (closed in 1989), my own archival research was confined to archives of oral tradition like those at the University College Dublin, where 19th- and early-20th-century folk variants collected by folklorists (often Scandinavian) were handwritten in large books and accessed by tale type. More typical was my work in special collections on chapbooks or early volumes featuring folk and fairy tales. These books – both text and illustrations – bear a resemblance to museum artifacts. In fact, some of my most valuable resources were housed in libraries attached to museums, such as the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum), the British Museum Library, and the Pierpont Morgan Library (now the Morgan Library and Museum). For this reason, my observations as a relative newcomer to the archival process stray into analogous examples of museum art and artifacts that serve, as archives do, to tell us stories about people and objects long gone.

But I will start with a folktale as metaphor.

Uncharted Terrain

When Hansel and Gretel get lost in the woods, their fate depends on undependable elements: pebbles, breadcrumbs, moonlight, and luck. Each of these variously fails them, but eventually (with the addition of pluck), they make their way forward to a victorious conclusion. However, the narrative map is visible only to those who watch the plot unfold. The children have no idea where they are going or how they will fare. They are by turns frightened, foolish, surprised, excited, and confused. They are all of us who survive the woods. Along the way, it is not so easy to see the forest for the trees, but at the end, they – and we – can look back and see what went wrong and what went right – not only where we have been but also why. Sometimes, this process leads to despair, depending on the choices we have made. Ideally, it leads to wisdom that we can pass on as potential guidance for others who come after us, especially those who feel abandoned in the woods. Our experience can provide a “narrative compass.”¹¹

Since my life's work has been about stories and storytelling, I have naturally used narrative in the form of fiction, poetry, scholarship, essays, and memoir

11 Betsy Hearne and Roberta Seelinger Trites, eds., *A Narrative Compass: Stories That Guide Women's Lives* (Champaign-Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

– and now archiving – to make sense of my 75 years. The evidence, if not the meaning, is overwhelming as I review my papers in hopes that they might be useful to future researchers in children’s literature and folklore. Even after my initial weeding,¹² there remain about 24 file boxes full of manuscript drafts, correspondence, course materials, speeches, lecture notes, audiotapes, videotapes, and administrative records, plus two shelves of published journal articles and books. This counts neither the many volumes of book reviews to which I contributed, as children’s book editor and reviewer for two major review journals, nor the computer files in virtual storage that present a whole new order of challenge as different systems have “aged out.”¹³ The published records are somewhat ordered by date and genre, but the unpublished materials, both physical and digital, have accumulated in disarray as office sites and electronic systems have changed. Juggling professional and family pressures diminished the time available to organize these records consistently; producing (both children and work) always took precedence over storing what got produced, and files ended up at home as often as at the office – wherever they were finished before the next deadline loomed. In an age of ever more acute space limitations, retirees often fill up their own attics or basements with career-long “remains of the day” (apologies to Kazuo Ishiguro).¹⁴

The point of this article is not to perform a post-mortem on the remains of my work but to explore the process of archiving what I have done, with occasional examples. I am emphasizing the inner experience as well as the outer, the internal reactions as well as the physical realities. In order to make this a creative process, I see my papers as “pebbles, breadcrumbs, moonlight, and luck” for researchers who want to share or follow my trail on their own path of

12 Stage one, the retirement move from institutional to home office, involved days of shredding the most obvious discards; stage two involved struggling alone in an attic through a few boxes and discarding papers that should have been saved, according to a librarian who, over lunch, suggested the necessity of help from an archivist (and had blanched at my mention of recycling letters with fantasy writer Madeleine L’Engle that were written prior to my interview of L’Engle for an article in *School Library Journal*); stage three, sorting with help from that archivist, is described here.

13 For a native of the “Paper Kingdom” past, this feels like crossing an armed border and has included many visits to computer technicians, who often cannot make global changes but must depend on the files’ author to detect every document that has to be converted from variously dated systems – all preceded by vigorous separation of personal and professional records. Several of my old computers are at war, and I have barely begun the time-consuming process of negotiating a truce.

14 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

scholarship. The term *breadcrumbs*, by the way, not only recalls the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale trail but also refers, in current usage, to a type of secondary navigation system that reveals the user's location in a website or web application.

One of the first issues in this complex process involves a challenging question: Is it hubris even to consider donating my papers to archives that I have imagined as encompassing the work of geniuses in literature, science, and social science? The answer has little to do with modesty. Archives are less about self than about what self reveals about society. I am donating my papers not out of a sense of my own professional and academic importance, but out of a sense of the importance of my field, which has not always been taken seriously as an area of study. Within a broad spectrum of archival contributions, mine may be valuable for two reasons: (1) their focus on literature for youth in the second half of the 20th century, a period of dynamic publishing developments that reflect major social change; and (2) their testament to the crucial nature of storytelling and story lore from everyone's earliest to elder years.

My own story blends many kinds of stories: professional, scholarly, creative, pedagogical, and personal. These five categories form the first pattern to emerge, but of course, such categories are not compartmental; they can, at best, only be represented as intersecting Venn diagrams. What clues, then, does a future researcher need to track associated items through this maze of information? In addition to organizational problems, archiving involves deep editing because the selection and deletion of copious papers affect future researchers' discoveries. Who makes such decisions: the author of the papers, with her intimate knowledge and specialist background, or the archivist, with her knowledge of issues such as material space, electronic access, urgency of demand, and historical context?

The ideal balance requires dialogue between the author and archivist, with considerable expenditures of energy by both. Unless the author of the papers simply boxes, tapes, and ships them off unsorted, archiving involves reviewing the evidence of her activity. This review can be physically, mentally, and emotionally intense, especially during a period of aging, when energy is limited and health fragile. Reviewing often means re-experiencing – and grieving for – lost people and lost worlds. By its very nature, becoming archived is becoming past. At some point, a person stops, but the world keeps going. Even for those who work to the very end, there is an end. However, during transitional stages after retirement, a sense of loss often precedes a realization of how the past can resurface in new directions. Archives suggest a future informed by past knowledge.

As in many traditional stories, a helper figure supports my progress; Susanne provides guidelines that are, if not magical, certainly sensible and sensitive. She appears when most needed throughout the archival process, which has been modernized, like many new versions of fairy tales, to include different points of view.

Paths through the Past I

I am a hoarder of stories and of the artifacts associated with them. I even hoard stories *about* stories, which has led to a lifelong pursuit of folktale variants, how they are collected, who tells or publishes them, and how they are interpreted, adapted, and reformatted. But collection raises the inevitable questions of dispersal: What to keep and what to let go? What does saving things mean, and to whom? As I go through my papers, two stories come to mind, which I relate here because I believe that the stories we remember (and some we do not) shape our decisions and even our lives. Both true stories – often repeated and in much more detail – come from my mother, Elizabeth Gould (1906–1998). In the first, a fire burns down the dilapidated, small-town Alabama plantation house that she and my father have rented and struggled to turn into a clinic on the lower floor and a living space on the upper. All of my father’s new medical equipment is destroyed, as are my mother’s notes for her dissertation on medieval vaulting and her entire library of art and art history books – not to mention everything else they own, except my mother’s concert harp. Somehow, she wrestles it down the stairs while a young boy rescues the baby, my oldest brother. She walks all night afterwards, letting go of dreams and accepting her current reality: a poverty-stricken community surrounded by pine woods.

The second story describes a trip from Alabama to break up her family’s 150-year-old Ohio homestead, which is filled from cellar to attic with her parents’, grandparents’, and great-grandparents’ things. With limited time away from her husband and three children, she desperately discards, gives away, auctions, burns, or saves generations of relics. One artifact in question is my great-grandmother’s box of herbal recipes. My great-grandmother (1834–1928) was a pioneering Mennonite midwife who wrote down remedies in her Swiss-German dialect. On the phone with my father, my mother mentions her quandary over what to do with these recipes. “Throw them away,” says my father

the doctor. “They’re worthless.”¹⁵ Into the fire they go, archival treasures lost to history and to the scientific investigation of folk medicine.

The tone dominating both these stories is not a triumphant celebration of indomitable spirit, but a sense of deep regret for love’s labours lost. Every object my mother manages to preserve from the Ohio homestead – including a tin candle mould, an early 19th-century teapot, and an 1851 wedding quilt – she handles with profound respect. Each evokes stories that keep history alive and emphasizes the importance of ordinary families to history, something sorely missing from my high-school courses and college major in history. Her stories reveal the larger narrative canvas of women’s work and its loss to public awareness. The 21st century constantly witnesses the unearthing of women’s long-buried work. Even as I write this, for instance, museums have just begun to exhibit work by the first woman photographer, Anna Atkins (1799–1871), who – without a camera – made botanical prints using chemical solutions exposed to sunlight.¹⁶ It is no secret that historical obscurity is gendered. Housewives did not retire, and even their most gifted and inventive work was not archived, though folk culture centres and even a few museums now recognize and make space for crafts such as quilting.

The personalized awareness, bequeathed to me through my mother’s family stories of strong women who were adversely affected by circumstances, both informs and deeply shapes my research on children’s librarians, book editors, authors, illustrators, storytellers, and the socio-cultural dynamics that have affected them. The stories of their work deserve saving. Twentieth-century pioneers of literature, librarianship, and storytelling for children created a female-dominated field, often unrecognized and underappreciated in both public and academic spheres. Because I developed professionally during a revolutionary 1960s transition between traditional and innovative children’s literature, I became involved in controversies over new realism, censorship, aesthetic evaluation, socio-cultural provenance, and folklore. These were the years when

15 Betsy Hearne, “Midwife, Witch, and Woman-Child: Metaphor for a Matriarchal Profession,” in *Story: From Fireplace to Cyberspace – Connecting Children and Narrative*, Allerton Park Institute series, 39, ed. Betsy Hearne et al. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998), 37–51.

16 Benjamin Genocchio, “Where Art and Botany Coupled, Photography Evolved,” review of “Ocean Flowers: Impressions From Nature in the Victorian Era,” at the Yale Center for British Art, *New York Times*, 4 July 2004, accessed 24 March 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/04/nyregion/art-review-where-art-and-botany-coupled-photography-evolved.html?_r=0.

Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) and Louise Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy* (1964) were challenged as subverting moral values. Both Max and Harriet were forgiven (even rewarded!) in spite of their “unacceptable” behaviour, and the protagonists who followed them went from bad to worse in the view of many concerned parents, teachers, and librarians.

As the children’s book review editor of *Booklist* (published by the American Library Association) and later of the *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* (then published by University of Chicago Press), two key professional journals, I received many letters of objection to such books and answered them as a defender of intellectual freedom for young readers. As both a book review editor and a university professor, I corresponded with, wrote about, met, and sometimes befriended leading figures such as writer Virginia Hamilton (1936–2002), illustrator Trina Schart Hyman (1939–2004), editor Margaret McElderry (1912–2011), and critic Zena Sutherland (1915–2002). Their publications are important, but their letters, speeches, stories, mementos, and drawings also reveal their rare independence as thinkers and doers, often characterized by a sense of mischief and outright defiance. Along with other important women in the field, they revolutionized decisions about what books children would read or hear read aloud again and again and about which art is imprinted on children, who view every page with absorption. Now these women are gone, and with them, much evidence of an epic era that can help us understand the present and contribute to the future – depending on access to their archives and, in this case, to my own.

Pebbles and Breadcrumbs

I am looking through several fat folders of correspondence when I realize a serious problem. Much of myself is omitted. Frequent letters to me from my editor of 30 years (and friend for 38), Margaret K. McElderry, crop up in the papers, but there are hardly any from me to her, which makes only half a story. One of her letters, for instance, includes positive editing suggestions for my recent book manuscript but also expresses deep concern for me, without specifying why she is worried. Because of the date and context, I know this is in response to my news about the University of Chicago’s closing its Graduate Library School, where I was on the faculty. Amidst the disillusioning and arduous process of

dissolving a school to which I was devoted, xeroxing copies of “personal” letters I sent did not seem important; without a secretary, I just mailed my letters and turned to the next crisis. In a separate folder, however, I preserved official documents, some confidential, that defended the school’s excellence or spelled our doom, because closing an entire school – considered the best in the U.S. but not profitable enough according to the University of Chicago’s administration – struck me as “historical.”

In spite of such inconsistencies, even half a story can reveal a lot of truth. Margaret McElderry fostered great books not only through her recognition of talent and her skill in editing, but also through her personal attention to, and care of, the authors and illustrators with whom she worked. The relationship between editors and authors in mid-20th-century children’s literature involved long-term commitment, a process of development rather than a product sold to the highest bidder. It should not escape researchers’ notice that, from a historical perspective, parallels between the later corporatization of both publishing and of universities bear consideration. Increasingly, in the second half of the 20th century, profit motives have redirected both literary and educational establishments – a trend that my archival records and the university’s, given enough connective context, exemplify in miniature.

Even more lost than the half-told tale is the tale told orally and never written down or referenced. This kind of oral information, often important to understanding a subject’s context, usually disappears into an archival black hole unless it finds its way into letters or other documents that may not immediately relate to the storyteller or her listener but rather to a third, fourth, or farther hearsay source. During our many dinner table conversations, Margaret McElderry often recounted anecdotes about her authors and illustrators; only a few of these stories found their way into an essay I wrote about her¹⁷ and into valuable commentary by children’s literature critic and biographer Leonard Marcus.¹⁸ McElderry was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about 20th-century publishing for children, only a glimmer of which lights up current understanding. As W.G. Sebald writes

17 Betsy Hearne, “Margaret K. McElderry and the Professional Matriarchy of Children’s Books,” *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spring 1996): 755–75.

18 Leonard Marcus, “An Interview with Margaret K. McElderry – Part I,” *Horn Book Magazine* 69, no. 6 (November/December 1993): 692–704; Leonard Marcus, “An Interview with Margaret K. McElderry – Part II,” *Horn Book Magazine* 70, no. 1 (January/February 1994): 34–45; and Leonard Marcus, *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children’s Literature* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

in his brilliant 2001 novel *Austerlitz*, about a man searching records to understand his past, “how little we can hold in mind, how everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life.”¹⁹

As a museum commentary points out about the portrait of an unknown man by an unknown 17th-century Dutch artist, “His anonymity is a reminder that our lives exist in the memories of the people we know, and these memories can disappear within a generation or two.”²⁰ The portrait appears in a 2017 National Gallery of Ireland exhibit, “Forgotten Faces,” the online description of which notes, “We can try to decipher these mysterious images by examining the individuals’ gestures, costume, accessories and settings. Ultimately, however, this display of forgotten faces encourages us to consider people’s anxiety about time, memory, identity and legacy, and how portraiture provides us with the illusion of permanence in a changing world.”²¹

The same could be said about elder scholars perusing their work for archival storage. In a sense, archival records are portraits or self-portraits, but scholarship is a living, organic, ever-changing activity. What one learns from a pinned butterfly is necessarily limited. Accessing “the whole story” from archival sources seems illusory at best because each artifact evokes many memories that may be important for a full picture but will never be accessed. This realization can seem hopeless to an elder whose impact is waning and who has little time for future development or extension of ideas. In addition, public and even private interaction can decline beyond the parameters of a structured career. The audience diminishes and with it the stimulus of synergy. Retired elders whose work has been vitally discussed during the course of a career are often gradually marginalized or at best confined to a liminal space.

In some ways, however, “becoming archived” offers rebirth for a life’s work. Deriving perspective from one’s accrued knowledge represents a debut into the historical framework of information, presaging new dialogues within a not-yet-imagined landscape of conversation. In the same way that our children grow up and away, our work grows up and away. (We are all parents of something.) The chronological development of my ideas moved from traditional modes of

19 Winfried Georg Sebald, *Austerlitz* (New York: Modern Library, 2011), 24.

20 National Gallery of Ireland, “Forgotten Faces,” exhibition label, 1 July – 31 October 2017.

21 “Forgotten Faces,” National Gallery of Ireland, accessed 12 December 2017, <https://www.nationalgallery.ie/forgotten-faces>.

scholarly writing²² to emerging modes such as narrative inquiry, autoethnography, and even creative nonfiction,²³ none of which darkened the doorway of my doctoral education. From 1977 to 2017, my creative writing broadened to encompass poetry, fiction, folklore, picture books, and creative nonfiction.²⁴ Archived drafts and letters related to 14 children's books, 8 adult books, and more than 50 articles and essays show the development of themes and intersections.²⁵

Before sifting through my papers, I got a call from a researcher, Paul Allen, who was writing a book about Eleanor Cameron (1912–1996), an award-winning children's book author.²⁶ He asked if I knew her and how I would describe her. I replied that we had been acquainted, that I had admired her fiction and reviewed her books positively, but that I remembered her as being quite opinionated. After some hesitation, he mentioned that he had found in her archives a letter to me, criticizing a manuscript I had sent her. (Unlike me, she kept copies of the letters she wrote as well as many of those she received.) I vaguely remembered the incident; it was from 40 years prior, in 1977. At a dinner, she had asked me about my writing and invited me to send her a draft of my second novel, *Home* (1979), to which she responded with harsh negative criticism.

I had long since gotten over the pain of that exchange and learned what my editor, Margaret McElderry, told me afterwards: never show an early draft to anyone but your editor or trusted writing group! Paul courteously sent me a copy of the letter, which at this point made me smile. Then, in sifting through my own papers a short time later, I came upon an early draft of my novel with severe comments all over it in handwriting that was neither my own nor my editor's. The light dawned, and next I found the original letter from Eleanor Cameron.

22 For example, Betsy Hearne, *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

23 For example, a memoir excerpt: Betsy Hearne, "The Cobra's Son," *Ninth Letter* 12, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015–16): 96–102.

24 For example, Betsy Hearne, *Love Lines: Poetry in Person* (New York: Macmillan / M.K. McElderry Books, 1987); Betsy Hearne, *Seven Brave Women* (New York: HarperCollins / Greenwillow Books, 1997); Betsy Hearne, *Wishes, Kisses, and Pigs* (New York: Simon & Schuster / M.K. McElderry Books, 2001); Betsy Hearne, *Hauntings: Tales of Danger, Love, and Sometimes Loss* (New York: HarperCollins / Greenwillow, 2007).

25 A key factor in my decision to donate my papers to the University of Illinois Archives (rather than to others that had contacted me) derived from its policy to keep papers and published works together rather than to deposit the latter separately in the library, which would require different access points to the subject's work and risk the weeding of "dated" publications.

26 Paul Allen, *Eleanor Cameron: Dimensions of Amazement* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018).

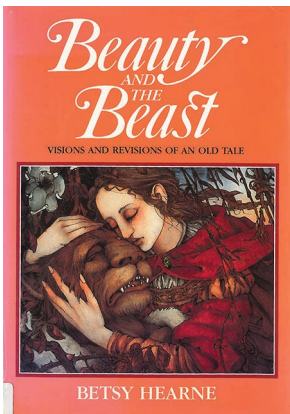
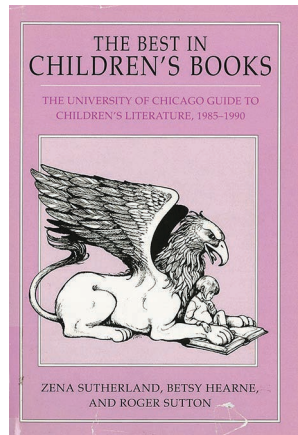
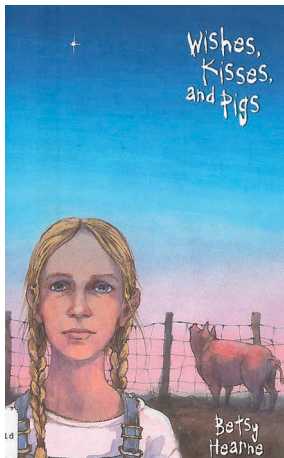
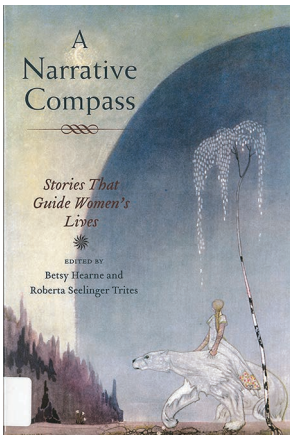
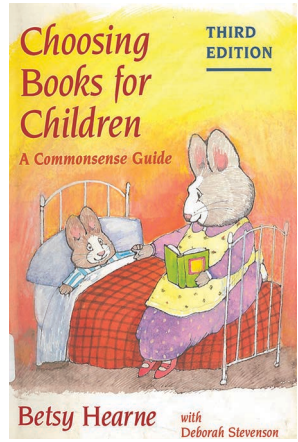
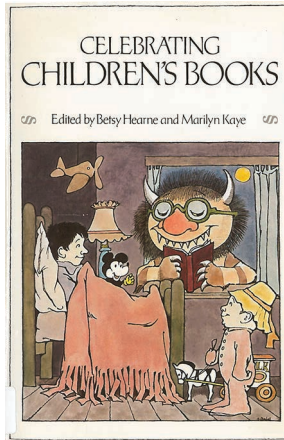
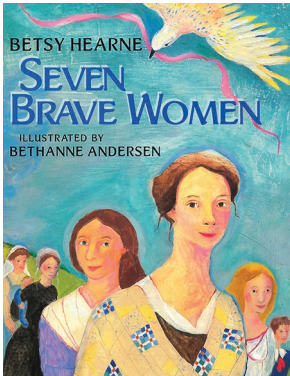


FIGURE 1: A selection of books by Betsy Hearne.

Now, suppose I were dead – a significant problem for biographers tracking down sources of evidence. Paul could have found that draft and compared it with my published novel. Did the changes benefit from her criticism, or pay it no heed? I certainly do not remember, myself, and the book is long out of print, as are some of Eleanor's; but the point is that, in detective work, one archive often leads researchers to another, so the more records that are available, the more mysteries can be solved. Now, we are not talking about the rise and fall of a government here, so what difference does it make? Well, it happens that Eleanor Cameron wrote some influential criticism, including a one-woman crusade against Roald Dahl's book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, much loved by many young readers and listeners.²⁷ And what children read or even have a chance to read depends a lot on children's librarians, many of whom read and attended to Cameron's condemnation of Dahl's books and didn't buy them for their collections. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* survived, of course, in part because of a Hollywood film starring Gene Wilder, and in part because of Dahl's many other irreverent books, including my favourite, *The BFG*, about an incorrigibly uncannibalistic giant. Roald Dahl had an oddball sense of humour, quirky at best and dark at worst, but either way, Eleanor Cameron did not think it belonged in the canon of 20th-century children's literature.

I highlight this example not only as a specialist in children's literature, but also as an elder scholar experiencing what many other elder scholars – whatever their discipline – and elder non-scholars discover in their last years. What do we do with the stuff that has defined us over a lifetime of work? What value does the past hold for the future when all we can know is now?

Moonlight and Luck

Let me return to the National Gallery of Ireland and an exhibit on the artwork of Margaret Clarke (1884–1961), a remarkable painter who used her children and

27 Eleanor Cameron, "McLuhan, Youth, and Literature, Part I," *Horn Book Magazine* 48, no. 5 (October 1972): 433–40; Eleanor Cameron, "McLuhan, Youth, and Literature, Part II," *Horn Book Magazine* 48, no. 6 (December 1972): 572–79; Eleanor Cameron, "McLuhan, Youth, and Literature, Part III," *Horn Book Magazine* 49, no. 1 (February 1973): 79–85; Roald Dahl, "'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory': A Reply," *Horn Book Magazine* 49, no. 1 (February 1973): 77–78; and Kathleen Krull, "Revisiting Eleanor, Marshall, and Roald; or, Having a Sense of Humor in the Millennium," *Horn Book Magazine* 75, no. 5 (September 1999): 564–71.

their nanny as models and featured domestic scenes as well as formal portraits, while also managing her husband’s stained-glass studio after he died. The curator of the exhibit, who gave a lecture on Clarke’s work at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin,²⁸ drew on archives to write the following commentary:

In researching this exhibition I have been inspired by Clarke’s drive and ambition to succeed in the male-dominated art world of her time. Wanting to be recognized for her own merits as an artist, she wrote to Thomas Bodkin (Director of the National Gallery of Ireland from 1927–1935) regarding a review he had written of her 1924 solo exhibition. In it he had praised her work yet referred to her as “Mrs Clarke, the wife of Mr Harry Clarke . . . [and] one of the most brilliant of that remarkable group of students which Sir William Orpen fostered.” In a letter responding to this review she wrote: “I hope I shall be able to attract your appreciation of my individual efforts as a painter, rather than the fact [that] I am the wife of one artist and the pupil of another.”²⁹

Inspired by Clarke’s images, I sought in vain for reproductions of her work, even postcards, in the museum shop. There had been a catalogue, evidently, but only a small print run that had “unexpectedly” sold out. Her husband’s work, on the other hand, was featured in postcards, illustrated books, and objects such as expensive stained-glass facsimiles. The library lecture in conjunction with the exhibit on *Mrs. Clarke* was not mentioned in the art gallery’s summer calendar, a perpetuation of artistic obscurity. After a persistent search and overseas postal cost, I was able to buy a reprint of the catalogue featuring her work, which had been scattered in inaccessible private collections, where it would soon return.

What does all this have to do with Hansel and Gretel and those initial questions: What is involved in archiving, what energizes it, what does it mean, who is it for, and where does an educational path lead us, or leave us? First of all, like Hansel and Gretel, we have no idea where it will lead us or leave us, but that should not deter us from moving forward. Each of us has a story that connects

28 Niamh McNally, “Margaret Clarke (1881–1964): An Independent Spirit” (public lecture, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, 5 July 2017).

29 Niamh McNally, “Margaret Clarke: Portrait of the Artist as a (Young) Woman,” *Totally Dublin*, 24 June 2017, accessed 8 July 2017, <http://www.totallydublin.ie/arts-culture/margaret-clarke-portrait-artist-young-woman/>.

with many others' stories – sometimes accidentally, sometimes as part of a focused search – if we leave a trail. Stories are bigger than the sum of their parts, as we each contribute footprints that become a path.

Everyone has something worthwhile to leave behind, even if it is “only a story.” The challenge is finding how and where to leave it – a dilemma that extends beyond archives and becomes a common problem of the elderly. When I mentioned my effort to archive my papers to a colleague, she said her mother had solved the issue of how to disperse her goods by buying three sets of everything, one for each child, including lamps and bedroom suites! So much for centralized collections. But the same concern is there, the energy required to solve a problem of legacy is there, and a structured process for recipients is there. She is leaving her footprints and imparting her vision to those most important to her. What they do with it remains a mystery for future pathfinders.

Donor's Epilogue: An Ongoing Outcome

*Time and trouble will tame an advanced young woman, but an advanced old woman is uncontrollable by any earthly force.*³⁰

The anticipated conclusion of my part in this story became instead an unexpected episode that threatened to be never-ending, or at least ever-unfinished. I wanted to take a quick look through the boxes Susanne had weeded while we were working in the attic, both to understand more clearly the process and to retrieve anything that she had eliminated but that struck me as important.³¹ This step – whether my cross-check represented curiosity, control issues, or reluctance to face an archives' limitation of space and resources – seemed a postscript, superseded by other pressing deadlines. After all, the hard part was over, and the rest could wait, as it had for so many years. Then, per my request, she returned with two more boxes that her assistant had discarded because the materials were either duplicates or available as publications in the Archives – and said I should let her know if I had any questions. (Most donors agree to having the archives dispose of any items deemed to have insufficient enduring

³⁰ Dorothy Sayers, *Clouds of Witness* (New York: Dial Press, 1926), 254.

³¹ I can easily imagine power dynamics arising between donor and archivist, but this was not the case for us.

value; it is an option donors choose as part of our deed of gift.)

It was time to *finish already*, but in this last task of letting go, my preservation demons set up a howl as each item – even if irrelevant to the archives – swarmed with memories. All those announcements, all those students, all those exchanges, all those *occasions*! Of course, the annual Newbery-Caldecott award dinner programs did not officially relate to me, except as a reviewer or book selection committee member, and surely these must have their own archives elsewhere. They were beautifully illustrated, though, and evoked long evenings – some quite funny, depending on who I sat with. Consigning them to the shredder required another goodbye to departed companions. Out they went, but slowly, along with other examples. Memories, it turns out, cannot be archived.

Unpredictably time-consuming problems also arose in sorting electronic files,³² during the course of which I was asked by a colleague to retrieve material published long ago but somehow omitted from my CV. A web search for citations was unsuccessful, so I tried tracking down the manuscripts in my last three computers, whose systems were incompatible. One I found; the other is still hiding. Electronic files house a graveyard of ghosts, and virtual reality can be ubiquitous but simultaneously elusive. Mysteriously, in writing something new, I occasionally find myself at the library retrieving what used to sit on a shelf or in a file drawer near my desk but has now gone to the archives.

This raises a lingering, perhaps permanent tension between storing old projects and generating new ones in the face of decreasing energy reserves. Already I have turned over two newly published articles and have two nearly finished manuscripts to add: one a book-length memoir and the other a children’s biography of a 19th-century feminist adventurer (many notes and photographs for that one). Perhaps *finishing already* is not my *modus operandi*. Complexity and nuance aside, my archives enterprise has condensed into a question of when to hold on and when to let go. It is a lifelong learning process that affects everything we do. My first professional assistant at the *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* once left a note that popped up whenever I turned on my early computer. It said, “I am not my work.” This message always puzzled me. What

Although Susanne and I had passionate discussions involving differing viewpoints, we seemed to do so on equal footing, with fair resolutions.

32 Susanne has weighed in on this 21st-century phenomenon in Susanne Belovari, “Simple and Expedited Appraisal Process: Testing Software and Developing a First Simple Workflow,” *Journal of Archival Organization* (forthcoming).

a weird way to start a day's and – as mostly happened – a night's work. But the words lasted a lot longer than the computer. Thanks to Roger Sutton, a subsequent superstar in the world of literature for youth, for that lesson. Maybe I finally get it. During meditation, I breathe in, let it come, breathe out, let it go.

Most of my observations here are about process, but happily, there is also a product, though not in a static or final sense. In this case, as long as the donor is still sending work to the archives, it will continue to grow. Even after the donations stop, however, there is the ongoing interaction of the archives with its users as they generate their own new work. The work comes, the work goes.

BIOGRAPHY Betsy Hearne is former Director of the Center for Children’s Books and Professor Emerita in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She has received national awards for scholarship and teaching in the areas of folklore, storytelling, and children’s literature. Her books include *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale* and *Choosing Books for Children: A Commonsense Guide*. With Roberta Seelinger Trites, she co-edited *A Narrative Compass: Stories That Guide Women’s Lives*. Among her more than 50 essays and articles are, most recently, “Ida Waters Turns Off the Lights: The Inside & Outside of Knowledge” (in *Beyond Methods: Lessons from the Arts to Qualitative Research*, 2015) and “‘Your One Wild and Precious Life’: A Tale of Divergent Patterns in Narrative and Musical Development” (in *Bulletin of the Council on Research in Music Education*, 2016–17). Hearne is also the author of fiction, poetry, and picture books for children, among them *Seven Brave Women*, which won the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award. In addition to several decades’ experience reviewing and editing for book review journals, she has worked with children in both library and school settings. Her website is at <https://ehearne.web.ischool.illinois.edu/index.html>.