

Leaving a Trail: Personal Papers and Public Archives

Part Two – The Archivist’s Story

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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 second article in a two-part sequence in this issue.

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 seconde 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.¹

This second article in a two-part sequence continues the narrative in the preceding article and is intricately linked to it. The two articles, originally conceived as one piece, describe how an emeritus professor of storytelling, folklore, and children's literature (Part One) and an archivist for faculty papers (Part Two) collaborated 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 interactions – how they think and perhaps changed their thinking throughout this collaboration – emerges through mutual references in their respective articles, as does the extent to which their personal stories affect the nature of their work and autoethnographic approach.² We therefore recommend reading the two articles in sequence so that references, terms, analogies, and stories gain full context and connection. Whereas Part One contains the donor's story about turning over decades of work for public consumption, Part Two comprises the archivist's story about working with a donor, gaining her trust, and explaining appraisal and archiving.

Good storytelling was important to us. It moved us away from traditionally academic writing so we could portray what archiving means for a particular donor and what working with a donor and explaining archiving and appraisal 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.

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

2 See Betsy Hearne, "Leaving a Trail: Personal Papers and Public Archives – Part One – The Donor's Story," *Archivaria* 86 (2018): 68–88, for an explanation of autoethnography and related literature.

The Archivist's Story

I am somewhat skeptical when it comes to metaphors and stories. The world and viewpoint of a storyteller is quite different from the world and viewpoint of an archivist, whose business it is not to tell stories but to preserve rich source materials, which may end up being used for future stories and other kinds of communication. Perhaps skeptical is too harsh a term: I frequently do not understand metaphors and stories told to me or I question them, as the young witch Tiffany did in *The Wee Free Men*, by Terry Pratchett:

A lot of the stories were highly suspicious, in her opinion. There was the one that ended when the two good children pushed the wicked witch into her own oven. . . . Stories like this stopped people thinking properly, she was sure. She'd read that one and thought, Excuse me? No one has an oven big enough to get a whole person in, and what made the children think they could just walk around eating people's houses in any case? And why does some boy too stupid to know a cow is worth a lot more than five beans have the right to murder a giant and steal all his gold? Not to mention commit an act of ecological vandalism? And some girl who can't tell the difference between a wolf and her grandmother must either have been as dense as teak or come from an extremely ugly family.³

This made for interesting conversations between folktale scholar Betsy Hearne and me.

Our two articles evolved during these conversations as we co-operated in archiving her papers and writing about this process. The interactive nature of our work together is expressed through mutual references in our respective articles and is characteristic of the human condition: through our interactions, we leave traces, inescapably, in the other person's subsequent thoughts, word choices, and actions. Betsy struggled with archiving; originally, she almost saw it as a permanent loss of her materials and as representing an end or death of her work and, I am sure, metaphorically, of herself. The way I see it, though, we can choose to do what Astrid Lindgren describes – that is, briefly refer to

3 Terry Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men* (New York: HarperTrophy, 2003), 66–67.

death, clean the house (or send stuff to the archives), and then go on with the business of living: “Every day, Astrid talked to her sisters Ingegerd and Stina on the phone. As they grew older, the conversations always began with the words, ‘Death, death,’ so that the subject was out of the way and dealt with. Then they talked about other matters.”⁴ “I don’t mind dying,” she said elsewhere. “I’ll gladly do that, but not right now, I need to clean the house first.”⁵

In Betsy’s article, I now see where my attempt to help her comprehend archiving as an essentially hopeful undertaking – as a harvesting and sowing of seeds – came to fruition. Because she has children, I compared archiving one’s papers to having and raising children who will grow up and grow away, and over whose lives we have little to no control. Both experiences are about leaving a meaningful imprint beyond one’s own life, one hopes, but with no guarantee of what will happen thereafter. In my own writing, I now see Betsy’s influence as a scholar of storytelling in that she made me realize its importance in my work. I had long used stories, actually anecdotes, to explain to donors what I do, to gain their trust, and to frame their act of archiving in a way that was meaningful to them. Without putting a name to my telling of anecdotes, however, I just did it, and I had failed to recognize this as a conscious and continuous method to get my work done.

Paths through the Past II

*The anthropologists got it wrong when they named our species Homo sapiens (“wise man”). In any case it’s an arrogant and bigheaded thing to say, wisdom being one of our least evident features. In reality, we are Pan narrans, the storytelling chimpanzee.*⁶

Betsy describes her “hoarding” of stories and artifacts, the documents connected to her work, and the questions collecting raises for her. Her personal and profes-

4 “Death, Death,” Astrid Lindgren official website, accessed 20 March 2018, <http://www.astridlindgren.se/en/node/957>.

5 “Astrid Lindgren Dies in Her Sleep,” *Guardian*, 28 January 2002, accessed 20 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jan/28/news>.

6 Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart, and Jack Cohen, *The Science of Discworld II: The Globe* (New York: Random House, 2002), 32.

sional questions differ partially from what I will ask; mine will try to reflect the potential public interest in preserving certain (hi)stories and to focus on the characteristic, representative, unique, and historical values of the materials. As I think about this, three anecdotes come to mind, which I relate here because I believe – echoing Betsy's precise words – “that the stories we remember (and some we do not) shape our decisions and even our lives.”

I grew up in Vienna. But on weekends and in the summer, we lived in a small village, Wolfenreith (“the meadow where wolves meet”), in a very poor and remote area, Dunkelsteinerwald (“the dark stone forest”), which seemed to be decades behind the rest of Austria. The 350-year-old farm we lived on was the centre of my universe, as were the village's other farms and the animals with whom I spent much of my time. Even at the age of eight or ten, I knew I was watching a world that no longer existed elsewhere. It was a vanishing way of life in terms of skills, practices, tools, and the people shaped by them. Timid as I was, I must have been sent by my mother to pick up something; otherwise, I would never have gone to our neighbours, two elderly, unmarried sisters. Upon passing through the weathered, grey barn doors and entering the courtyard of their slightly dilapidated farmhouse, I saw one of the sisters. She worked on two long, deep bread troughs, kneading large slabs of rye dough. Turning toward me with thick chunks of greyish-brown dough sticking to her arms, she cheerfully shrugged off my question about how strenuous kneading was. Hardly anyone was baking bread any longer, and no one was baking bread any longer in the old way – namely, once a month or even less often so as to save fuel. This explained the huge amounts of dough and the eating of stale, hard bread for weeks on end. I knew this process was now rare and the sisters were unusual in doing it. They were also unusual in being “spinster” farmers, in living with a male farm labourer, and eventually, in bequeathing the farm to him – against all rules of family and class.

I felt it was incumbent on me to do something to record them and others in the village. Even as a kid, I already understood that these kinds of people were not represented in the historical record, though I did not yet know the reasons why. I even pondered doing some kind of oral history, without knowing the word for it. I knew I should talk to them, ask them questions, and chronicle their experiences. But I was too shy; I did not and could not do it. The regret I felt then – the regret of not learning, of not preserving something of these people and their way of life, both of which have vanished without much trace – has not abated in the years since.

During childhood, I had also come to understand time as relative. I had tried to come to terms with the lives of dayflies, for instance, which buzzed around us on the farm and which, I was told, lived for only a day. It could not be, I thought. It was not fair. And so I worked out that what was a day for us would be – and would feel like – a lifetime to them. Their sense of time and of experiences had to be more finely tuned or more quickly paced than that of giants like us, I argued with myself. Their sense of time and ours must be relative. And that consoled me when the evening settled in on us and I saw their dead bodies scattered on the wooden floor.

At one point, I even came to understand time as unique – each moment here and then irrevocably gone. Nothing could pin it down and stop it. When I was 11, I stood in my room, this time in Vienna, looking out on the city's streets. I seem to remember it being quiet – the calm and soothing boredom of a Sunday evening – but it bothered me that I would never again experience this particular moment of standing there, next to my desk, looking out the window, and being calmly bored. I would not even remember the moment. It would be forgotten and forever lost. That bothered me, and so I stood there and wrote down where I stood and when, precisely noting the time to the second with a red pen on tissue paper, the only paper available on my desk. I even added a postscript of having corrected the note a mere four and a half minutes later. Folded into tiny squares, with the red ink bleeding through its various layers, the tissue then lay in a wooden drawer of the miniature armoire that my carpenter grandfather had built as a shop model and that two generations of kids had used as a toy. And there I rediscovered it, decades later, after having become an archivist. In the intervening years, I had forgotten the tissue paper and the recorded moment. Both made me laugh – at my urge to stop time, pin it down, and record personal history that was utterly meaningless to anyone else and even to myself, except in helping me to fondly unearth the kind of kid I used to be.

The three anecdotes – about elderly farm women, dayflies, and a passing moment – illustrate lessons I also learnt as an archivist. Certain (hi)stories are worth preserving in public; others are not. Some are barely meaningful even to oneself (which brings up many issues regarding today's social media). And history and time will mean different things to each of us. These insights have also helped me understand one of the most important activities of archivists: namely, appraising what should be preserved.

Charted Terrain

There's always a story. It's all stories, really. The sun coming up every day is a story. Everything's got a story in it. Change the story, change the world.⁷

This article addresses the story of a person's life: her experiences and activities in the context of her times. It is a story about where a life intersects with public interest. And it is a story about public interest in preserving, as Betsy notes, what self reveals about society, and as I would add, what society reveals about self – which is not always the same thing.

Being willing to hand on and archive one's papers is an eminently meaningful act in the life of a person. Every individual has but one life, which is unique and (usually) precious to that person. This makes leaving a public legacy a one-of-a-kind experience for each person, but each donor with her papers is just one of many for an archivist. Herein, I think, lies the basic difference in how we – Betsy as a donor and I as an archivist – approach this process and our interactions, as uncharted or already charted terrain.

When Betsy first mentioned that she was writing a narrative about archiving, I was intrigued. Self-reflective archival donor stories do not exist; neither do self-reflective donor-cum-archivist stories (or if they do, they are exceedingly rare; I could not find any).⁸ When I suggested that we could write a dual story about archiving her papers from the viewpoints of the donor and of the archivist, with the text reflecting the interactive nature of our endeavour, she was willing.⁹ But this raised a difficult question for me: How do I insert myself into her story? I eventually realized that this is the same question an archivist should ask herself

7 Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 26.

8 Geof Huth counts only 19 articles in the *American Archivist* up to 2016 that include donors in their abstracts, while Rob Fisher states that "donors of archival fonds are largely absent from our professional discourse." Geof Huth, "Donors and Archives: A Guidebook for Successful Programs," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 201–4; and Rob Fisher, "Donors and Donor Agency: Implications for Private Archives Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 79 (Spring 2015): 92. Fisher shows how archival discourse has ignored or framed donor interactions over time; he discusses donor agency, and he is absolutely right in pointing out that a focus on donor relations is not necessarily a postmodern turn but perhaps a return to older archival manuals and their acknowledgement of donor relations. See also *Archivaria's* recent issue on personal archives: *Archivaria* 76 (Fall 2013).

9 In a move that is atypical – the archivist moving toward the donor's way of doing things – I departed from my usual academic style in this article and took up the narrative style that Betsy had spent a lifetime developing.

when closely working with any donor: How do I insert myself into her life? To be successful, I will have to enter her home. By hearing about her past, I will enter her memories and perhaps affect them; I will dig through her successes and failures; I will help preserve some of her footprints.

To both questions, I have but one answer. This interaction is not about me but about another person's life; her accumulated legacy of thoughts, dreams, struggles, actions, choices; of missed or denied opportunities; and of what she preserved on the way. I do not insert myself, except to tell illuminating anecdotes, and anecdotes are different from stories. They typically do not have a beginning or an end; they lack the development of a theme; they lack context; they are illustrative (usually of only one thing). I tell copious anecdotes, in the sense of analogies, when I work with private donors. While I even tell anecdotes about myself, these always serve to create a good working relationship, explaining what I do and why, comparing or contrasting a donor's papers to those of others, familiarizing donors with the process in general, and making it easy for them.¹⁰ It is of little relevance to readers and donors who I am.

Or is it?

Upon further thought, I take back that statement; at least, I should qualify it. As any deep understanding of historical research demonstrates, and as the history of science and so-called postmodern writings in archival sciences show, our understanding of human history is flawed as long as it ignores how particular biographies and societal or communal contexts shape what we do and how we do it. Granted, the particular influences will differ in extent and significance. But neither humans, their social systems, nor the technologies they devise are neutral, objective, or isolated pieces of a puzzle. To return to our theme: self and society shape each other.¹¹

10 You may infer from this that I do not think much of teaching young archivists to give generic two-minute sales pitches or elevator speeches about what archivists do.

11 In response to my 2010 talk in Scotland on the agency of historical museum curators, Terry Cook brought up the lack of studies describing archives and archivists as historical cultural actors. I agreed with him but linked this gap to the absence of primary historical sources. Susanne Belovari, "It Ain't Quite So! The Museum Archival Paradigm under Close Inspection" (presented at the conference on Memory, Identity and the Archival Paradigm: An Interdisciplinary Approach, The Centre for Archive and Information Studies, University of Dundee, Scotland, 2010). In my experience, archivists are bad keepers of their own records. There are ways around this, and one way is to describe and situate today's archival work within its contemporary contexts; see, e.g., our two articles and autoethnographic approach.

While archival science has professional guidelines, policies, and training for dealing with donations, and while every archives is situated in a specific institutional framework, each archivist also brings her life experiences, overall knowledge base, and personality to the table. Over the years, I have written and presented extensively about archivists and archival institutions as historical cultural agents.¹² Yet it is only in the last few years of working exclusively with private donors that I have been able to carefully observe and deeply reflect on how my own history and identity may also shape a collection. Both will shape my interactions and therefore my success with a donor as well as the way I will appraise materials and carry out all other archival processes. My history and identity may modify – sometimes even “construct” – what will be preserved as a collection of papers or digital files.

My anecdotes, then, are signposts to how I insert myself as a historically located individual into my daily work as an archivist. I use my own experiences to highlight certain archival practices and principles, and I link them to Betsy's story. But these anecdotes do not, and do not have to, add up to revealing my own life history. It is Betsy's story after all, and Betsy's interactions with the archives.

In my interactions with individual donors, I find myself continuously adjusting which analogies I come up with and how I tell them. Like stories, anecdotes depend on context to become meaningful. What makes sense and is meaningful to a professor of comparative biosciences who studies trans fats and who immigrated from Germany after World War I may very well differ from what is persuasive to the son of a feminist economics professor who was a Holocaust refugee, or from what I tell a landlord who carefully studied up on relevant history to help save the papers of a radically right-wing, racist, white-nationalist professor of classics who denied the historical reality of the Holocaust.¹³ That I chose these three specific examples – I wrote them down without realizing at first what had made me select them – says something about me. What it says about me will remain unclear, however, except to those who know that I am Austrian, that I am

12 For example, Susanne Belovari [sic], “Five Archival Issues and their International Implications,” in *Anais: III Encontro de Arquivos Científicos*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 26–27 September 2007 (Rio de Janeiro: Museu de Astronomia e Ciências Afins, 2008), 45–59, http://www.mast.br/images/pdf/publicacoes_do_mast/anais_3_encontro_de_arquivos_cientificos.pdf; Susanne Belovari, “Professional Minutia and Their Consequences: Provenance, Context and Original Identification and Anthropology at the Field Museum of Natural History,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 143–93.

13 Except for Betsy, the names of all donors described here have been omitted; examples are drawn from my professional career over the years.

a former Holocaust restitution historian and archivist for the Jewish Community of Vienna, that I have done research into the history of race theories and certain aspects of National Socialism, and that I had been close friends with one of those three professors. My experiences shape the way I relate to the world, to donors, and to records, in terms of how I tell stories, what examples I select, what materials I am able to recognize as significant, and how I understand the importance and potency of records now and for future uses.¹⁴

Mounted Butterflies and Archival Ecosystems

Not every donor has Betsy's willingness to engage with her "self" and with what archiving means in the context of her life. For donors like her, the process of donating papers to an archives may become a long internal dialogue, part and parcel of a person taking stock. And it is a kind of accounting, a bookkeeping of one's life, a counting of pluses and minuses, successes and failures, regrets and perhaps worries about what may be left for them to do at this later stage in life. Nonetheless, it may also be the point and process through which they rediscover long-forgotten projects, activate ideas formerly abandoned due to lack of time, or identify new projects to tackle.

Some donors just want to get rid of the clutter in their house, office, or storage. Others focus solely on what they create at any point in time. This was the case for an African-American composer I worked with. The moment a piece was done, he moved on. He did not want to be bothered about recordkeeping or thinking about archiving; he wanted to compose. A few donors consciously negate death and any end to their creative work or, older and seriously ill, they fear losing the last bit of control they have over their lives – i.e., over their papers and thus the yield and gathering of their long endeavours – and they will not part with anything. Quite a number of potential donors have preserved nothing. Privately and publicly, they see no need or reason for their history to be known.

¹⁴ Over almost 20 years, I have worked with both institutional and personal records creators and have found that I need to develop the same kinds of relationships of trust and use the same kinds of examples and anecdotes with both groups. Moreover, faculty papers, like most people's papers, include work and personal materials; see, e.g., Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, "Toward the Archival Multiverse: Challenging the Binary Opposition of the Personal and Corporate Archives in Modern Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 76 (Fall 2013): 111–44.

I encounter donors or their families in emergency scenarios involving house sales, deaths, hospital stays, terminal diseases and dementia, and very old age. Rarely do I work with faculty when they first retire. Most continue to do research and are unwilling to part with their papers at this time. Or, as in the case of Betsy, I meet individuals who consciously choose to do this ahead of time, to take an active part in the process, and who are delighted to have their work and experiences come to fruition in new ways and for future generations. In almost all cases, whether donors intensively involve themselves in the process of archiving or merely transfer their papers to the archives, I end up addressing a number of similar questions and concerns.

It is unlikely that archivists will skewer and mount donors like butterflies in a case (though this is sometimes tempting). Such a pinned butterfly, as Betsy suggested, would indeed tell a limited story. Walls and drawers full of mounted butterflies may be simultaneously cruel, instructive, and beautiful, but this is not what archives are about, in the best sense of the institutions. Archives collect and preserve records of institutions and people by provenance – i.e., by records creator – and in context. Without this context, a mounted butterfly would indeed tell a limited story to future generations. For example, recipe collections (and most cookbooks) are akin to “artificial collections,”¹⁵ and this is what makes my research into the Jewish and non-Jewish creators of Viennese cuisine so protracted and difficult. Recipes are typically not authored; lists of ingredients are not covered by intellectual property rights, and recipes usually were appropriated without reference to who came up with them. Without provenance and context, it is nearly impossible to uncover the particular histories and historical contexts of recipes and their inventors.¹⁶

Now, I can tell donors about the debates among historians and archivists in the 19th century, which focused our attention on the essential role of provenance and context, among other things, to accurately and authentically document human history, its agents, and their responsibilities. A few donors may be interested in that. (Some may prefer an analogy to archaeology, for instance, which works with a similar concept called provenience; individual shards of clay looted

15 What archivists call artificial collections contain records from many records creators and often from unknown sources.

16 Susanne Belovari, “‘One Cuisine, Two Nations’ – Vanillekipferl and Fladen: The Viennese Cuisine until 1938,” *Das Jüdische Echo* (forthcoming).

from unknown sites tell very little about who, what, when, where, and why.) But for most donors, archival concepts come alive when connected to an archival anecdote with which they can identify viscerally.

Take the following example: The National Socialists (NS) wanted to get rid of Austrian Jews, originally through a complicated process of emigration that fleeced them of all their possessions, and eventually through genocide, when the outside world refused to accept Jewish immigrants. NS records of Jewish emigration are exceedingly rare, however.¹⁷ Little is known about how, for instance, the NS organized emigration of Austrian Jews in detail, what steps or outside NS directives were part of this process, or which offices and individuals were involved. Working for the Jewish Community of Vienna, I had identified six bundles of unique emigration records that could have documented this process across various administrative NS units and the historical decision-making process it involved. Instead, the documents were mistakenly re-sorted by temporary staff. Staples and paper clips were removed, with the honourable but misled intention to bring together scattered pages referring to individual Holocaust victims or refugees. Provenance and original order, and therefore the possibility of precisely retracing the NS emigration process and related issues of accountability, were irreversibly destroyed.

It is easy to recognize the principle of provenance in this instance while knowing that few types of records involve this kind of historical urgency, but an example like this will help, and has helped, persuade donors to keep their papers together. Too many of them are still tempted to carefully select parts of their collections and send these to various institutions and individuals.

Whenever I cannot think of any meaningful real-life example for a donor, I invent an illustrative historical anecdote – and of course tell donors that it is fabricated to make a point.

Warts and All

Donors usually understand that keeping things together does not mean that archives can keep everything, which raises the question of appraising – i.e., of

17 When I worked as Holocaust restitution historian and archivist for the Jewish Community (IKG) of Vienna, I was charged to redesign and rebuild its historical institutional archives (closed down by the NS in 1938).

selecting what may have permanent historical value – and connects back to my anecdotes at the beginning of this article. Betsy and I had long conversations about this. Actually, because she was already working on her article, she sat next to me while I appraised her papers. I could not only ask questions but also ask her to evaluate some materials herself – for instance, to decide which drafts of her books were significant drafts, whose preservation would be instructive for future researchers. Digging through Betsy's boxes while sitting on the floor of her attic room, I could explain what appraisal was about and how I was doing it. Appraising together will not work with most donors (due to lack of time or interest, location of appraisal, etc.) nor does it have to be done. Explaining appraisal is essential, though, because through understanding it, donors begin to trust my work and me.¹⁸

Next to contemplating why they would or should archive their papers, appraisal is at the forefront of their concerns. It usually happens in their spaces – be they storage rooms, homes, or offices – which is in contrast to later transformations of their papers, such as processing at the archives, migrating digital files, or conservation treatment off site. And for many, it is a sudden insight, perhaps even a shock, that not everything they have accumulated over the course of their lives through conscious collecting or happenstance may be of permanent historical value. In this, appraisal is an eminently significant action for them personally as well as for all of us because it defines what papers and records will survive.

I became aware of this as a postdoctoral researcher, when I tried to assist a Hungarian Orthodox rabbi living in New York who was searching for his two sisters. Evidently, both had survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp; then their tracks disappeared. My (ultimately unsuccessful) search lasted over 10 years, and at one point, I travelled to the archives of a global Jewish charity organization in New York. Having located the organization's refugee cards

18 For me, building trust and explaining what I do is largely independent of format considerations; see, e.g., my example below regarding digital files of the Johannes-Wagner-Schule. Betsy has not handed over her digital files yet, but we did quickly survey her desktop files; her website was archived in 2017. I shared with her my hybrid collections handout, Susanne Belovari, "Donor Conversations re Hybrid Collections, i.e., Physical and Electronic Materials: A Document for Donors and Archivists," *Practical E-Records: Software and Tools for Archivists* (blog), 24 August 2011, accessed 12 March 2018, <http://e-records.chrisprom.com/donor-conversations-regarding-hybrid-collections/>. I showed her TreeSize Pro, to help her get a quick overview of her digital files, and I told her that I could take care of weeding (using the same criteria used for her analog materials) and file migration; Susanne Belovari, "Simple and Expedited Digital Appraisal/Processing – Testing Software and Developing a First Simple Workflow," *Journal of Archival Organization* 14, no. 1–2 (forthcoming fall 2018, then available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332748.2018.1503014>).

apparently tracking the sisters and the ship they had boarded, I wanted to find related administrative papers identifying the sisters and where they had landed. Unfortunately, previous staff had appraised records strictly according to what has been called the evidential value of records, preserving the cover letter that documented the charity's administrative role in organizing a ship to relocate refugees after World War II. Attached shipping lists mentioned in the letter, which listed individuals, personal data (essential for identifying them conclusively), and destination ports, had been removed as "irrelevant" and discarded. While researchers can retrace the functioning of involved offices based on the surviving records, the secondary value of records (here, information contained in the shipping lists) was ignored – at a time when the lack of surviving historical Holocaust records was known and it was clear that families would continue searching for relatives for decades to come.

Then and there, I realized that unknown and unnamed staff, perhaps even archivists, had shaped the historical record, that most records get discarded for broad-ranging and professional reasons, that such condensing of historical materials needs to be done carefully and will benefit from either a sweeping encyclopedic range of knowledge or from very particular subject knowledge, and that certain types of records – in my example, refugee cards with their administrative codes – need additional contextual information or they will become undecipherable.¹⁹ Primarily, it was this realization, a realization of the archivist's role in preserving records, that made me want to become one a few years later.

If one thinks about it, appraisal should not come as a surprise to donors or institutional records creators. They themselves all weed, i.e., remove materials. They do so throughout the functional life of these materials but also before handing them over to an archives. Primarily, it is their desire to reduce the quantity of materials they have to store in desks, filing cabinets, basements, or computers. Equally tempting, though, is an inclination to remove anything that may show them in an unfavourable light. Conflicts, failures, weaknesses, inactions, concealed alliances, and acts for which one should be held accountable if they were revealed: all these tend to conflict with the image we create of ourselves or

¹⁹ Fifty years after these refugee cards were used to track individuals, I could not find anyone at the organization who could decipher the codes on the cards, which reference documents and biographical information. It took me six years and research across the globe before I located the ship's log book in France and the ship's records in the National Archives in Rio de Janeiro. What I found was that the woman listed on the cards was born the same year and had the same last name as the sister, with one significant difference: it was her married name.

the public image we would like to project. It is here that I am somewhat uneasy about donors themselves weeding their papers. Particularly at the end of one's life, the temptation to rewrite the record must be overwhelming. There are a few donors I have worked with who actually appreciate the importance of documenting these kinds of facets and revel in it. Most do not. Some very carefully vet their papers before they let me even see them. This is one reason I would rather have an archivist do all the appraising, one who ideally should know that it is precisely at the ruptures, fault lines, and hidden troves that historical truths may emerge most clearly.²⁰ Archives will take it, warts and all.

A Map of Coordinates

Appraisal, though, does not happen in a vacuum. What I can do in any particular appraisal is influenced by many factors. There are institutional mandates and settings, sometimes legal requirements, and particular collection policies and appraisal theories. There is the availability of staffing, funding, and resources; the condition of papers and storage rooms; and the time provided to the archivist.²¹ There is also the content of the papers themselves, the particular history of a records creator and the historical context in which she operated, the universe of surviving records elsewhere, and thus the uniqueness or representativeness of the materials. And, as noted, there is what I, as archivist and historically located self, will bring to the process.

How do I explain this to donors? While I tell them about working conditions and the conditions of collections I have encountered elsewhere – largely to make them feel better about the condition of their papers, for which they frequently are quite apologetic – I also point out when I may know something about their

20 Similarly, corporate archives and those of private organizations may be instructed or tempted not to preserve unfavourable records of their institutions unless legislation and outside bodies demand and regulate such recordkeeping.

21 When cockroaches crawl over records, sewage drips from paper, and mould flourishes in colourful profusion; when I shiver from cold or drip sweat in 100-degree weather; when there is no light, no table, no chair, and no Internet, and I do my work folded up like a grasshopper crammed between shelves, boxes, and filing cabinets; when I have but two hours to do it or I face 3,000 feet of hoarded junk – then these conditions will affect how I appraise, even when I know that I am facing exceptionally significant materials and make an effort to cope with these kinds of conditions.

field. I let them know that I read up on them and their work,²² and anecdotes then illustrate my part in the process. For example, I tell of my project at a German state archives in 2017. There, I appraised the digital records of the Johannes-Wagner-Schule Nürtingen, which was founded in 1846 and eventually became a day and boarding school for hearing-impaired children from pre-school through grade nine.

During that project, I noted how my background may have helped me identify historically significant visual materials. As a former Holocaust restitution historian who had disabled childhood friends in our village, I knew that kids with disabilities had not been seen much in public and had not been considered capable of doing “normal” activities such as skiing or cross-country running in Germany and Austria, even decades after the NS had routinely murdered disabled inhabitants during WWII. Given this historical context, early photographs and videos documenting disabled children’s participation in such activities are noteworthy. Without a lifelong interest and exposure to crafts and handicrafts, I also might not have recognized that practice- and craft-oriented projects are a real strength of the school – a strength that was not discussed in any of the records I saw. I therefore tried to document each step of such projects and all types of these activities, including their various products, be they building a pocket e-bike, constructing a hotel for wild bees, visiting an industrialized bakery, or engaging in a variety of crafts, sports, and games showcased during school events such as the Advent market or field trips. Note that games may be different for hearing-impaired children. Without a lifelong concern about gender equality, I also might not have noticed or documented the impressive gender equality in school activities ranging from soccer to technical workshops.

Of course, I tell donors about the archives appraisal guidelines and give examples of why I adjust these in exceptional cases. Usually, I will not take tenure dossiers, but when a professor had studied tenure rejections of women faculty and had sued the university, I preserved the dossiers she collected and restricted them. I do not take student papers, but when the same faculty member

22 Having an interdisciplinary academic background (I took courses in 20+ departments) and knowledge of eight foreign languages turns out to be of great value here. In Betsy’s case, I read several of her academic and creative publications, which placed her work in context and helped me talk with her about her work and appraise her papers. The mere fact that I did so went a long way toward persuading Betsy to deposit her papers with our archives; see Betsy Hearne, “Leaving a Trail: Personal Papers and Public Archives – Part One: The Donor’s Story,” *Archivaria* 86 (2018): 68–88 for a selection of her writings.

was possibly the first to teach courses on feminism in the US, I retained early student papers and a few from later years to document how students' perceptions changed over time, and I restricted them. I do not keep duplicates, but when a Dutch scholar had microfilm copies of rare Peruvian archival records of the Quechua indigenous people in the Chuschi district, I kept them. Peruvian archives are hard to get to; and the Shining Path, an eventually militant Peruvian organization, and the Peruvian government destroyed many churches and civic buildings that were storing historical records in Chuschi. There was no guarantee that originals still existed. I also do not keep research interviews for which there are no consent forms, but when an Egyptian-Lebanese-Swiss scholar did the first recorded interviews of North African women talking about genital mutilations and abuse of women in the early 1980s, I kept the audio recordings and restricted them.²³

To document catastrophic historical events, I will most likely keep everything.²⁴ For example, when I worked with Holocaust records, I spent an immense amount of time and effort using tweezers to pick up paper fragments the size of a couple of alphabet letters in an effort to reassemble and preserve the names and thus identities of Holocaust victims or survivors (see figure 1).²⁵ At the same time, and equally importantly, Holocaust records – even their fragments – may have become iconic and gained emotional value over time. The Orthodox rabbi from New York asked me to search in Debrecen, Hungary, where he lived until he and his family were deported in 1944. He wanted to have at least a signature of his mother or father, who were both murdered in Auschwitz – some physical trace when there was nothing left of them: no record, no photograph, no memorabilia, no gravesite. (I failed.) As vivid memories pale, people may begin to understand such physical traces as offering solace, bearing testimony, helping commemorate, and condensing or evoking complex histories for affected individuals and communities. They become de-contextualized objects standing in

23 The length of archival restrictions may differ given types of materials, relevant legislation, donor agreements, and institutional policies.

24 Susanne Belovari, "Archival Insight: An Archival Information Tour: 1816–1905–2007," *NEA Newsletter* 35, no. 4 (2008): 4–8; and Susanne Belovari, "Archives under Siege: A Concept and A Case in Point," in *Proceedings of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Research Forum*, San Francisco, California, 26 August 2008 (Chicago: SAA, 2008), 1–14.

25 Susanne Belovari, "Construction of the IKG Archives Framework and its Instructional Manual: Archives Work Report June 2002 – June 2004," (internal report, Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, Vienna, Austria, 2004), 1–130.

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1	" 1031/41	445.--	
1	" 3120/41	445.--	
1	" 3368/41	445.--	
1	" 1033/41	445.--	
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1	" 3597/41	1.445.--	
1	" 3402/41	445.--	
1	" 1027/41	930.--	
1	" 3115/41	890.--	
2	" 3713/41	445.--	
2	" 3714/41	890.--	
1	" 3422/41	445.--	
2	" 3532/41	445.--	
1	" 3634/41	445.--	
1	" 10304/1	445.--	
1	" 3119/41	737.--	
1	" 3499/41	890.--	
2	" 3632/41	445.--	
1	" 3500/41	42.679.--	
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Personen:

- Schnitzer Stefanie
- Schwarz Norbert
- Eygen Hilda
- Dicker Nikolaus
- Egger Auguste
- Feititschek Edith
- Ferber Gustav
- Feller Gustav
- Friedrich Margarete
- Friedmann Elsa
- Gelles Heinz
- Grunfeld Alfred
- Heitler Richard
- Jelinek Edith
- Mor Franz
- Menda Hans
- Rosenrauch Kurt
- Saloschin Margarete
- Schimerlik Max
- Schwarzbart Katharina

FIGURE 1

A Holocaust name list. Source: Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde (IKG) Wien / Jewish Community of Vienna, 2003. Photo: Karl Nessmann.

for the larger context of genocide – in my example – with people presuming that they know what was being evoked or commemorated and that the individual item is equal to the task at hand. The original task of conveying specific knowledge pales in comparison.²⁶

Donors appreciate both clear guidelines (of what the archives is and is not collecting) and flexibility (that acknowledges extraordinary circumstances). This helps them see their papers in relation to others. The illustrative examples create a cognitive map – a landscape of coordinates – that helps them begin to evaluate their own papers and understand why and how I appraise.

"I Am Burning Them": Distrust and Disarray

Interestingly, many donors, and in particular those in the sciences, are tougher in their appraisals than I may be. Many consider their publications to be their sole and primary contribution to the historical record. This may be for a variety of reasons, among them humility, though it may also be an acknowledgement that each person usually can contribute just a small piece to modern science, which is nowadays increasingly done in large groups whose members may be scattered across the globe. Scientists may dislike the fact that records document mundane political and societal factors that influence the formation of new research fields, and that they document how scientists vet grant applications, handle industry sponsorships, or collaborate with regimes, for instance. They may subscribe to a vision of science as "neutral," unaffected by society and thus presumably progressing on its own terms. Whatever the reasons, numerous scientists preserve little of their correspondence, records of engagement in professional organizations, administrative papers, or even research notes. For them, the findings of the history and sociology of science still have not registered – or perhaps they registered all too well if it is in their interest to obfuscate certain aspects of their work.²⁷

²⁶ Susanne Belovari, "Continuity and Change: Record Creators and Record Values" (paper presented at International Council on Archives – SUV seminar, Reykjavik, Iceland, 13–20 September 2006), 1–9, <https://experts.illinois.edu/en/publications/continuity-and-change-record-creators-and-record-values>; and Cornelia Brink, "Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps," *History and Memory* 12, no. 1 (2000): 135–50.

²⁷ When archival literature began to reflect the history and sociology of science, it was referred to as *postmodern* or as questioning paradigm; John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth,

By contrast, more recent newcomers to academia (including the sciences) tend to recognize the political and societal nature of their academic endeavours. They not only preserve records of conflicts, failures, and obstacles they experienced, but also have been the only ones in my work so far who challenge the archives or the institutional setting within which the archives must function – and thus any future commitment to preserving their papers and making them accessible. It has been minorities and in particular women who have raised these issues with me. They cite historical examples of widespread indifference toward collecting the papers of preeminent women in the past. For instance, one faculty member quoted Jane Addams' original sentiments in this regard: "I have been many places and seen many people and lots of letters have come to me. Some are important internationally. I do not know what to do with them and rather than leave them to go into the hands of disinterested persons I am burning them."²⁸

These women also state their distrust of handing over their papers to particular institutions where politicians have been appointed to head universities or boards of directors, for instance. From past experience, they expect these administrators to bring their political ideologies to the task of running the institutions and determining what university archives may preserve, while they know from historical evidence that, even in the best of cases, their records may have long lingered unprocessed and unused in faraway storage rooms. Society's institutions, records, archives, and thus histories have long ignored or marginalized these groups.

They are justified in their concerns. I make no bones about this when they question me. There is not much I can do about the past. I can tell them about the history of my institution and my work. I can show them around the archives and talk about our holdings, policies, and deeds of gift. I can tell them about archives elsewhere that may be interested in their papers. I even encourage them to send the papers there if they are considering it. They need to feel comfortable with where their papers will be preserved and how they

MN: Litwin Books, 2009); see also Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Post-modern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (2002): 171–85; and Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009).

28 Jane Addams, in conversation with Lucy Biddle Lewis and reported by Lewis in 1935. "Jane Addams Collection: Provenance," Swarthmore College Peace Collection, accessed 13 February 2018, <https://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/DG001-025/DG001JAddams/provenance.html>.

will be used. However, I do point out how their papers, if they agree to donate them, will be studied within the original institutional context in which they themselves worked and created them. Within this context, their papers may be able to raise questions about problematic portrayals or fill possible gaps in the historical record of the university and larger community. Here, I think it may help that my academic background and community involvement shows a consistent concern with marginalized groups and their histories. In some situations, it may even help that I am a woman and was born abroad, although I work very hard to ensure that records creators form an opinion about me based on my academic and professional qualifications instead of any inherent features of mine. Ultimately, however, a donor's decision boils down to their developing trust in me and the institution.

Another group of faculty who originally were not welcomed in academia reacts quite differently when asked to donate their papers. Even in the 1950s and '60s, Jewish professors still encountered overt anti-Semitism and resistance to being hired on campus.

The way I've described the situation in Illinois at that time, much to the annoyance of the old guard, is that for some time the department wouldn't have hired a woman, or a Jew or a foreigner. That went on until about 1955, just after I got my degree. It wasn't that they had a sudden change of heart like St. Paul at Tarsus. What happened was that in the mid 1950s there was a real teacher shortage and they were having a hard time staffing classes. This was when all the GIs were coming to the universities. So, they were very hard up.²⁹

Many of these faculty are Holocaust refugees and have relatives who are Holocaust survivors or victims. These donors are highly motivated to preserve their historical records, including those of their families, precisely because their histories had been traditionally ignored and because they had faced annihilation in Europe and persecution and discrimination elsewhere. In addition, their cultural and religious heritage has always respected the written word and an analytical interaction with it, and they have therefore maintained a deep

29 Marianne Ferber, professor emerita at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Czech Holocaust refugee, cited in Mary C. King and Lisa F. Saunders, "An Interview with Marianne Ferber: Founding Feminist Economist," *Review of Political Economy* 11, no. 1 (1999): 83–98.



FIGURES 2–5

Photographs showing institutional and personal records I appraised in location (in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Indiana). Clean rooms and nicely boxed up materials such as Betsy's would be less spectacular. Photos: Susanne Belovari, 2006–2017.

sense of loyalty to preserving the written word, which translates into trusting archives and libraries.³⁰

Clearly, appraisal and archiving do not happen in a vacuum. And the onus is not only on the wider institution housing the archives, the archives itself, and the archivist. It is also on the records creator, who is not always the same as the donor. If records creators do not label, structure, and select what they keep throughout their lives (this is even more important for digital files), and if they – or their relatives – do not store the material in relatively good conditions, my appraisal will be hampered and might be limited (see figures 2–5).³¹ This is the reality. It is a reality of limited resources and of limits to my ability to work under certain conditions and to second guess, for example, what tens of thousands of unlabelled slides, hundreds of unlabelled computer disks, or statistical computer printouts without codebooks may include and how significant they may be.

I was once called into the house of a deceased architecture professor. We were two archivists, in fact, but we had only two hours to appraise the content of about 10 rooms because the house was up for sale. I had researched ahead of time and knew I was not dealing with someone of the stature of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), Eileen Gray (1878–1976), or the up-and-coming “slum architects.” One room contained tens of thousands of slides in metal boxes, stored in cabinets, on shelves, or higgledy-piggledy on top of or under tables. The most I could do therefore was take a quick look at all the metal boxes, most of which were unlabelled. Once I realized they were largely typical architecture teaching slides, I could only make a quick, educated guess at what to preserve:

30 This reverence for the preservation of the written word had unintended and deadly consequences during the NS regime. In spring 1938, the NS forced the IKG to relinquish and close its archives. As the last pre-Holocaust IKG archivist, Dr. Leopold Moses (1888–1944) was the only one with access to the genealogical registry and archival materials and was forced to answer “race” inquiries by various NS offices until 1943. (Moses and his wife were deported to Auschwitz in December 1943 and murdered in 1944.) The IKG could have destroyed its own archives; it chose not to do so in contrast to some German political associations, which thereby obstructed NS efforts of going after party members. Of course, the same IKG records the NS used for its purposes made it possible for others to do restitution research and learn about Holocaust victims and refugees decades later.

31 As will be later processing and access. I once received about a dozen boxes of office files, beautifully labelled and organized using a complex colour-coded labelling system from the 1950s. The efficient secretary had overlooked two issues, though: (1) the staff used at least seven or eight different shades of each colour, especially reds, and the colours had faded over time and become indistinguishable, no longer visually indicating where particular sections coded in one shade of red ended and another started; (2) they had not included a code key explaining what each colour and section was about. We were therefore unable to figure out the original labelling and arrangement system.

namely, boxes with descriptions as to location and dates and slides of local and regional projects.

Another faculty member began to collect records of women and progressive movements in the 1960s and to keep her own records when she realized that these kinds of primary sources, including those of Jane Addams, had been neglected. This was a worthwhile endeavour except for two issues. First, the faculty member's two houses contained approximately 3,000 linear feet of materials. Much of it was thrown loosely into dilapidated boxes, stuffed into bookshelves, heaped up in disordered piles, or stored in filing cabinets whose labels were not necessarily accurate. There were mouse droppings, mould, critters, and cat urine. And there were deadlines: one house was put on the market, and the other was to be emptied (so that the couple could move back from the nursing home). Second, the faculty member had kept everything: decades of chequebook slips, birthday cards, medical records, junk mail, runs of newspapers from the *New York Times* to local periodicals, thousands of unlabelled photographs, papers sent to her, tax returns, and decades of printed-out emails and listserv messages. Many boxes and piles contained some of everything, probably reflecting how materials had piled up at the time and during several moves.

Such a collection could take a lifetime to tease apart, sort, and appraise for historical significance. Besides, when I appraise, my mind goes numb after looking at the 20th box containing unsorted batches of correspondence in which I may find three significant handwritten letters among hundreds of scribbled notes by friends and family. I knew the importance of her work, her professional and civic activities. I recognized the rarity of some of her collected records. And of course, I persuaded the administration that I could take much more time appraising than I usually do, especially in her out-of-state house. But there is a limit to how much time I can spend on any particular project, and conditions such as these will influence what may survive.³²

32 Under such severe time constraints, the professional experience of having peered through millions of pages of materials can help one do what may appear to be an almost instinctual type of appraisal but what is in fact a recognition of patterns. At a glance, I identified an unusual handwriting and long letter in a box of loose and mostly irrelevant short correspondence and notes; I pulled it out, and it was a letter worth preserving (i.e., it was not the typical family correspondence about birthdays). Or, sitting in the basement, I discarded a box of letters of apparently different provenance addressed to a person with a different first name. Then something alerted me (thinking back on it, it was the paper): these letters were faded, many on crinkled airmail paper clearly dating from earlier times than the rest of the collection. Intrigued, I pulled the box out of my discard pile and put it

The last anecdote I told Betsy refers to a house she routinely walks by in her neighbourhood. Recall the neo-Nazi classics professor I mentioned earlier? Distrusting what he called liberal institutions and their archives, which he believed were going to destroy all his records after his death, he created a trust managed by white-nationalist friends to take care of the house and his papers. He committed suicide in 1994, and his wife died in 1995. Their house stood empty for the next 22 years – no repairs, no heating – by which time, the roof of the old wooden building had leaked and partially fallen in. Ceilings and floors had collapsed. Walls had warped. Rain, snow, ice, and hot, humid summers had done their work. Cups on bottom basement shelves were full of rain water. Mould and critters prospered. Rust and dirt had settled in. Many of his papers and books, some carefully stored and some sitting in piles or in open ramshackle boxes, were wet. Papers in disintegrating boxes had fused into brown wet blots on the floor. Mould grew in green, red, black, and blue. Having done nothing since 1995, his white-nationalist friends and colleagues had brought about the destruction of many of his papers.

The new owner of the house scooped up what I pointed out as potentially historically valuable materials, took them over to a stand-alone garage, and negotiated with the white nationalists to wait two weeks before they would pick up what was left. Thoughtfully, the landlord had provided supplies, table, and chair. But imagine sitting in a garage, with no bathroom or air conditioning in humid, 94-degree weather, and digging through dripping wet materials. The odour and mould make your ears, eyes, and lungs itch and your arms turn red. I spent two weeks there, as many hours as I could take each day, and I got sick, as did my graduate student. I tried to do my best because his work and records needed to be preserved: the radical right, racist, NS literature and pamphlets, the correspondence with leaders of such groups and with the general public, and his writings on these topics are essential to document what happened in reactionary movements across the US, the globe, and as far back as the 1940s (perhaps earlier). Yet working under such conditions, no appraisal will be good enough.

aside because I had no time right then to figure it out. Days later, I went back to it when I discovered that a group of people had known the professor as a youngster under a different name. Hiding behind the name and rather illegible handwritings were rare records of her early activism abroad.

Bolts of Fabric

It is important that we know where we come from, because if you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong.

...

*People aren't just people, they are people surrounded by circumstances.*³³

Human endeavour builds upon what has come before because the past becomes the fabric of what is to come – be it in terms of raw materials, skills, universes of thought and tradition, objects, structures and infrastructures, and the ways in which each of us inserts our historically located selves into new contexts that are themselves historical creations. We can know about this, use it, oppose it, work against it, or ignore it, but the past will always be there. And archives are public sites where the lives of institutions and individuals, their experiences and activities – their past – can seed the future.

At its best, archiving is a collaborative effort between the records creator or donor and the archivist. At its best, both are doing their part in introducing the past to the future. To understand my share in this process, I have come to think of weaving shuttles and their role in creating a piece of fabric – one among other analogies that are meaningful to me. As a tool, weaving shuttles are an effective invention. Originally, the shuttle was a piece of wood, frequently with a hole, to which a thread was tied. Regardless of what they look like or are made of, all weaving shuttles help weavers move a crosswise thread (of the weft) horizontally through the lengthwise threads (of the warp) and so create a piece of fabric. Weaving becomes easier and faster for weavers when they use a shuttle. The kind of shuttle determines the speed with which the weaver works and what the fabric will look like in terms of size, edging, and texture. Useful in helping the weaver create something with her materials, the shuttle is not unlike the archivist, helping donors create something lasting out of strands of their lives – something akin to bolts of fabric, which future generations will cut to their own designs. Perhaps archivists are a bit more than shuttles, but I

33 Terry Pratchett, *I Shall Wear Midnight* (New York: HarperCollins: 2010), 351, 320.

like the image. It is a craft image, a quiet image, a cultural and historical image – all things that I cherish.

BIOGRAPHY Susanne Belovari is Assistant Professor and Archivist for Faculty Papers at the University of Illinois Archives and previously worked at Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University. She worked as Holocaust Restitution Historian and Archivist for the Jewish Community (IKG) of Vienna, Austria. She co-authored the first successful restitution case before the Arbitration Panel for In Rem Restitution (General Settlement Fund) in 2003, and her research into the uses of a Viennese palace before 1938 proved key in winning its return (worth approximately 10,000,000 euros) and rewrote legal history by overturning a previous restitution ruling. Belovari redesigned and re-established the historical IKG archives closed down by National Socialists in 1938, for which she collaborated with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and coordinated an international microfilming project. Since the 2000s, she has served on the board and in numerous offices of the International Council on Archives Section on University and Research Institution Archives. Her recent presentations and publications focus on international archival and digital issues, archivists as historical agents, culinary history before National Socialism, and processing archives under siege, among other issues. Her academic background is in Latin American studies, gender and international development, and the history of colonialism, science, and scientific representations of people and Indigenous peoples.