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“Teaching Community Archiving”

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Teaching Community Archiving¹

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ABSTRACT Community archiving is grounded in grassroots documentation projects. This article, collectively written by an instructor and students of a community archiving course in a professional ischool, describes a process of teaching community archiving in ways that draw on and embrace community archiving principles and ethos rather than operating in opposition to them. It argues that teaching community archiving can create a classroom community that becomes a community archive in itself, and this article acts as one artifact created in the overall process. The article also offers information on the course outline, outcomes, pedagogical approach, and projects – some of which are documented in the text – that may be useful to other archival educators. It emphasizes the value of the personal, affective, and collaborative aspects of archival practice that are emphasized in community archiving practice and literature, and it also draws attention to the ways in which these operate as dimensions of pedagogy and classroom community, allowing both the content and delivery of the class to work in harmony.

¹ Thank you to archivists Jackie Dean and Patrick Cullom at Wilson Special Collections Library for welcoming our class to their space and allowing students to work with some community photograph collections.

RÉSUMÉ L'archivistique communautaire est ancrée dans des projets de documentation provenant d'initiatives populaires. Cet article, rédigé collectivement par un enseignant et des élèves dans le cadre d'un cours portant sur les archives communautaires, décrit un procédé d'enseignement qui embrasse la philosophie et les principes de l'archivistique communautaire plutôt qu'en opposition à ceux-ci. Il soutient que l'enseignement de l'archivistique communautaire peut créer une sorte de communauté d'apprentissage, qui devient en soi un espace archivistique communautaire. À ce titre, cet article fait partie d'un processus plus exhaustif. Il offre également de l'information sur le plan de cours, les objectifs du cours, l'approche pédagogique ainsi que les projets, dont quelques-uns sont mis de l'avant dans le texte. Cette information peut être utile à d'autres enseignant.e.s en archivistique. L'article souligne la valeur des aspects personnels, affectifs et collaboratifs des pratiques archivistiques, qui sont mis en évidence dans la littérature et les pratiques archivistiques communautaires. Il attire également l'attention sur les manières dont ces aspects fonctionnent en tant que dimensions de la pédagogie et de la communauté d'apprentissage, permettant d'harmoniser le travail sur le contenu et l'environnement formant la salle de classe.

Introduction

About 10 years ago, Terry Cook noted that, over time, “the archive, or archives, or archivists”² go through shifts in mindsets as new ways of theorizing and practising archival work become legitimized and widespread. Cook traces the profession’s shifting mindsets across four coexisting frameworks, finally exploring the most imminent one: community archiving. He notes that this framework is “on the horizon, one not yet a fully formed paradigm to be sure.”³ Cook is pointing to the accumulation of a critical mass of activism, scholarship, and changing practice that has led to calls for archivists to shift some of the fundamental “hard-won mantras of expert, of control, of power, and instead, to share archiving with communities.”⁴

In Cook’s theorization, community archiving is not merely an acknowledgement of communities’ grassroots efforts to practice their own archiving – or to oppose imperialist and colonial records – but is actually a responsibility of the profession itself to encourage participatory archiving, practice emotional and cultural sensitivity to the people who create and are described in records, and move archival theory and practice to a “radical re-imagining of its purpose.”⁵ In other words, the boundaries dividing communities and formal archiving dissolve enough to change professional mindsets about archival work.

If community archives indeed represent a professional mindset, then it seems that any professional school that prepares archivists might want to incorporate the concepts and practices of community archiving into its curriculum. Placing these concepts and practices among other essentials, such as appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, instruction and outreach, and digital curation not only prepares future professional archivists for the broadness of their work but also influences the field to further legitimize community archiving. Given the somewhat newer status of community archiving in the profession and its naturally amorphous nature, how to teach it is a worthy question.

2 Terry Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 95–120, 113.

3 Cook, 113.

4 Cook, 113.

5 Cook, 116.

This article is collaboratively written by a professor (Kuecker) and professional archives students (Beattie, Bee, Conley, Gillespie, Hollis, Norwood, Ostrander, Southern, Steitz, and Wang) who recently completed a semester-long course in community archiving that embraced both grassroots and professional aspects of community archiving. We write this to share our joy over participating in community archiving through coursework and to share ideas that may inspire others' coursework and class designs. In the spirit of community, we co-wrote this article, which describes how our class was organized and reveals many of the student-created materials generated in this class. Our article begins by describing some of the important dimensions of community archiving, which help situate our coursework and information on the basic course design. This is followed by introductory details about the design of that course, including the pedagogical approach, stated outcomes, and projects. Our article then goes on to describe how we implemented storytelling with individual, family, and collective histories and epistemologies; explored our positionality and sticky relatedness; conducted personal archiving projects; and completed community-oriented final projects, which were conducted collaboratively or independently.

Important Dimensions of Community Archiving

Just as the proliferation of community archiving inspired Cook⁶ to suggest that a new framework was on the horizon, community archiving, in practice and theory, has only grown since, often at intersections of activist-based archiving and interdisciplinary influences impacting the field of archival studies. Long before the archiving profession paid much attention to this form of archiving, there were volunteer-run, community-based archives that existed as unofficial repositories. Jeannette Bastian and Andrew Flinn point out that “the origins of community archives are obscure but it does seem clear that in a wide variety of guises, community archives have existed ever since groups of people have felt the need to affirm themselves and their own identities,”⁷ through things like small-town repositories and temple genizahs. But the term *community archives*,

6 Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community.”

7 Jeannette Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds., *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, Memory and Identity* (London: Facet Publishing, 2019), xx.

which seems to have arisen in the 20th century, is often associated with activist projects, like the 1972–present Lesbian Herstory Archives.⁸ Many of these archives “materialize around ethnic, racial, or religious identities, gender and sexuality orientation, economic status, and physical locations,”⁹ making an impact on the documentation of marginalized communities. It is clear that community archives “are activist in their very nature.”¹⁰

The activist nature of community archives also connects closely to cultural archives and post-colonial archives, as Bastian noted in her study of local archives in the United States Virgin Islands.¹¹ There, island communities aim to re-establish their cultural identities outside colonial structures, and to do that, they need to rework their established archives: to imagine and remember themselves outside of Western colonial records and recordkeeping traditions. For Bastian, such post-colonial cultural archives are not only about rearranging and redescribing existing Western colonial records; they also expand the very definition of archives to incorporate broader cultural practices and objects like performances and monuments into the space. By doing so, post-colonial archives remain connected to and even directly include the living cultural activities that generated typical forms of records. Such close and rich connections ground the archives in community expressions, re-centre community identities and ownership, and expand beyond established colonial institutions.

Even within the formal profession, community archiving appears in many ways. Sometimes, this has simply been as an interest in documenting communities to include “nontraditional sources,”¹² which could be as straightforward as recording oral histories to document a theme or region. Such work tracks alongside developments in social history and public history that aim to include

8 Bastian and Flinn, xxi.

9 Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, “‘To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing’: Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives,” *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56–81, 61, <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.56>.

10 Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge, “Archivist as Activist: Lessons from Three Queer Community Archives in California,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (2013): 293–316, 295, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-013-9201-1>.

11 Jeannette A. Bastian, “The Records of Memory, the Archives of Identity: Celebrations, Texts, and Archival Sensibilities,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 121–31, 123.

12 Robert Horton, “Cultivating Our Garden: Archives, Community, and Documentation,” *Archival Issues* 26, no. 1 (2001): 27–40, 27.

more of the quotidian and the general public as both source and audience. Further, community archiving emerges from a basic concern: that what is not documented may be lost, what is not represented may be maligned, and what is misrepresented may present a danger. Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez suggest that we can apply the idea of *symbolic annihilation* to see that “marginalized groups are misrepresented or absent in a variety of symbolic contexts, from media to museums to tours of historic sites”¹³ and the archival record. Symbolic annihilation provides a way to theorize how archival exclusion can act as a kind of systemic violence that does not simply passively forget but, potentially, actively harms.

In this spirit, many professionally aligned community archiving projects involve the community not only in the documentation of materials but also in aspects of the archival process, such as arrangement and description. Jimmy Zavala, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor describe how “the Southern California Library encouraged the participation of users in appraisal and description practices, and described the community, not the archive, as the owner of the material they possess.”¹⁴ Such projects are inspiring in their collaborative nature, but they also pose challenges to traditional archival practice, as noted by these authors, who explored how community archives like the Southern California Library serve as sites of resistance. In this work, official archival processes were revised to allow for more reciprocity between the archive and those who were the subjects of the collection. Ricardo Punzalan and Diana E. Marsh remark that the field is embracing a “dialogue around the ‘ethics of care’ to address and redefine museum and archival labor. . . . archival scholars have also advocated for archivists to consciously adopt reparative actions that redress decades of undermining historical accountability and social justice in archival spaces.”¹⁵

With these things in mind, a course on community archiving had to engage the spirit of activism and reflective dialogue that is so present in the literature

13 Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez, “To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing,” 59.

14 Jimmy Zavala, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor, “‘A Process Where We’re All at the Table’: Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 45, no. 3 (2017): 202–15, 202.

15 Ricardo Punzalan and Diana E. Marsh, “Reciprocity: Building a Discourse in Archives,” *American Archivist* 85, no. 1 (2022): 30–59, 31, <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.1.30>.

and praxis. As Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge attest, “archivists have been activists within their communities for many years,”¹⁶ and the same is true for many students in archival programs, who bring with them the desire to enter the profession – but never at the cost of their own ethics. In many cases, there is little to no boundary between the community archiving projects and the activists/archivists themselves, as many in our classroom community came to the table with the idea that archiving would be a way to contribute to their communities.

To bring these ideas to bear in the classroom, we worked throughout the semester with Caswell’s community archiving principles, making the following concepts central to our lexicon and thought processes:

1. *Participation*: community archives should involve the community in collection, appraisal, and access decisions.
2. *Shared stewardship*: community archives take care of and steward the community’s records for the community, not for other interests.
3. *Multiplicity*: community archives should be open to different formats and to diverse and even conflicting viewpoints.
4. *Activism*: community archives practitioners should articulate their political motivations for memory work and use memory work for political liberation.
5. *Reflexivity*: community archives practitioners should continually reflect on and discuss their own positionality; their shifting relationships with the community; and the changing political, social, and professional contexts of archival labour.¹⁷

16 Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge, “Archivist as Activist,” 294.

17 Michelle Caswell, “Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives,” *Archival Science* 14 (2014): 307–22, 311–14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6>.

6. *Valuing affect*:¹⁸ community archives should acknowledge, respect, and include affective labours, personal meanings, and the emotional weights of records beyond institutional values, “objective” measurements, or literal interpretations.

Caswell proposed the first five principles when studying records that document human rights abuses, adding valuing affect in a later work. To be sure, she did not propose these as a totalizing framework but as adaptable and flexible key themes for community archive projects. In her own work, these principles help centre survivors and victims’ families and prioritize their concerns. For our class, these principles also worked well as principles for a collaborative pedagogical practice that explored and embraced community archiving.

Course Design

Artifacts from the course and the pedagogical logic behind many of our decisions are shared throughout this article; this section describes the course design that was undertaken in preparation for the class. This course was a standard three-credit-hour graduate-level class in an ischool. It took place over one semester and attracted many students in the archives and records management track as well as a few students who focused on varieties of librarianship or information science, for a total of 23 students. The course was a special-topics class that had been offered in the past by other professors but had not historically been regularly taught each year. There was no existing curriculum for the course, so Kuecker designed it in the semester before it would be taught.

One of the biggest challenges in creating this class, for Kuecker, was figuring out ways to incorporate hands-on, experiential learning in the classroom. In archival description courses, for example, he has students create finding aids and transcribe records so that they can truly participate in these processes. Community archiving, on the other hand, requires more deliberate consideration of identity, background, lived experience, and the purpose of record-keeping in the first place. It seemed inappropriate to have 23 students simply

¹⁸ Michelle Caswell, “Affective Bonds: What Community Archives Can Teach Mainstream Institutions,” in Sebastian and Flinn, *Community Archives, Community Spaces*, 21–40.

participate in an existing community archiving project – particularly because they did not have membership in the same communities.

This problem, so to speak, helped illuminate how the class could go forward. There was something in community archiving that was deeply personal and reflective: 23 students could not all do the same community archiving project, and they could not simply be tasked with joining existing communities and assuming they would be able to help – or even be welcomed. Building on this, Kuecker decided that the course would focus precisely on those personal and reflective qualities that are essential to community archiving, preparing students to consider their subjectivity and their purposes for recordkeeping, and building empathy for others' methods of documentation. Not only would this inform community archiving practices, it would inform a reflexive professional practice, as well. Students could interrogate the roles and principles of archival studies and learn about how to perform documentation in both grassroots and professional ways, perhaps blurring lines between the two.

This ethos led Kuecker to develop the following outcomes for the course:

- Students will consider the purposes of institutional and grassroots archives.
- Students will discuss community archive projects and partnerships in the US context.
- Students will craft subjectivity statements to consider their positionality within communities and the profession.
- Students will research communities and their records.
- Students will identify tactics for engaging with and training community volunteers in institutional archives.
- Students will engage in interdisciplinary research related to intersections of community and gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, tradition, and the arts.

While collaboration would be important in this class, rigour and organization would also be needed to get at these outcomes. Thus, students would engage in typical, pre-determined seminar-style readings and discussions – many of which are cited in this article. But in addition, they would also have opportunities

to select their own reading groups and read one book-length text¹⁹ related to community archiving, which they would then present on, teaching to the class their takeaways from the reading and discussing these together. In addition, they would have to complete several projects: a reflexivity statement directed toward their relationship to the archival profession or grassroots effort; a personal mini archive; and a community research project. In-class discussions were collaborative and dialogic spaces. In all cases, the course design stipulated some things, like the readings and genres of projects, but the projects themselves were designed to be fluid and adaptable to each student's interest, and the direction of classroom discussion was co-determined.

The course design is indeed important, but the pedagogic delivery is perhaps more important to the success of a class that centres on personal and community documentation. Kuecker wanted the delivery of this course and the general vibe in the classroom to mimic the values of community archiving. It was essential that this class – focused on a content area in which we emphasize the importance of lived experience, reflexivity, trust, activism, and the power of grassroots community building – be taught from an approach of feminist pedagogy, where personal experience is welcomed into the room and assignments, where authority over classroom discussions is shared among instructor and students, and where the personal histories of the students and instructor are as relevant as theory.

To help foster this environment, students were welcomed into a classroom where music was playing, and before getting started on a lesson, Kuecker would read a poem that often related to the discussion theme of the day. In a classroom, music can serve as “padding,” allowing people to talk to someone without the fear of being heard by others.²⁰ The music also served as an organic conversation starter for students and professor alike. When the music stopped, this signalled to students that it was time to come together for our group discussion. Kuecker would then read the students a short poem – both to ease them into the idea of

19 The students could choose to read one of the following: Jeanette Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History* (New York: Libraries Unlimited, 2003); Marika Cifor, *Viral Cultures: Activist Archiving in the Age of AIDS* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); Susan E. Keefe and Junaluska Heritage Association, *Junaluska: Oral Histories of a Black Appalachian Community* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2020); Alana Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive* (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2014); Jason Lustig, *A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

20 David James, “Bringing Back an Old Technology: How and Why I Use Music in the Classroom,” *Teaching English in the Two Year College* 31, no. 3 (2004): 311.

talking in a shared space and as an act of care, a notion he came to as a father. It seems that, at some point, we all age out of being read to and being asked to read to others. Our teachers read to us in early elementary school, and if we were fortunate, our parents read to us as children. But one day, we have to read to ourselves. Kuecker read the poems to his students as if to say, “Sit back, relax, and let me tell you a story.”

The poems were not the only stories told in the class. A core element of the feminist approach to pedagogy, according to bell hooks, is to encourage the sharing of lived experience in the classroom. She writes that many professors “devalue including personal experience in classroom discussion”²¹ because, for one, it displaces the professor as the “‘privileged’ transmitter of knowledge.”²² In other words, everyone is the expert of their own experience, so welcoming this notion of shared expertise into the space downplays the authority of the professor, which is unattractive to some pedagogues. Some professors may also “ censor the telling of personal histories in the classroom on the basis that they have not been ‘adequately “theorized.””²³ In such contexts, lived experience is less epistemologically legitimate because it has not been analyzed or written up by an expert. For hooks, however, personal experience can often “deepen discussion,” particularly “when the telling of experience links discussions of facts or more abstract constructs to concrete reality.”²⁴ In our community archiving class, the class discussions were often designed to welcome stories alongside discussions of practical, theoretical, conceptual, or ethical archival studies and community archiving texts. In the dialogic space of the classroom, contributions from students who spoke precisely about the assigned reading mingled with contributions from students who might share personal memories, work experiences, or family lore related to the reading. This was a welcomed approach, given the ethos of community archiving at large; we wished to legitimize the variety of ways information circulates within shared spaces. This classroom dialogue often planted seeds that grew into individual and collaborative projects, some of which are described throughout this article.

21 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994.), 85.

22 hooks, 85.

23 hooks, 85.

24 hooks, 86.

The Pedagogy of Individual, Family, and Collective Histories and Epistemologies

As noted, community archiving as a practice is rooted in the principle of participation and the power of a community to decide what should be collected, saved, and shared about its own history. This principle, as defined by Michelle Caswell, depends on a “bottom-up approach to archives”²⁵ where all contributing participants are treated as experts regarding their own experiences. This is an essential component of the activism inherent in community archiving because many community archives arise in response to the way “groups have been ignored, misrepresented or marginalized by mainstream archival repositories.”²⁶ The community archive thus introduces new stories into the historical record, providing a response to the omissions or misrepresentations of mainstream archives. Voice, knowledge, and a sense of expertise are immensely powerful, affirming the existence of people and communities and even operating as a form of liberation.²⁷

Similar principles can apply to teaching community archiving as well. We knew that the success of our class depended on students’ identification as members of the class community and their sense of investment in the work, which was individually and collectively produced. It also depended on the instructor acknowledging students’ status as experts in a setting where they would normally be treated as novices.

One way to share experiences and expertise was through practical, collaborative documentation work, which was done as an entire class. For instance, our class volunteered to rehouse photographs in our institution’s Wilson Special Collections Library. Working in pairs and small groups, we rehoused and relabelled hundreds of portrait negatives that were part of a community photograph collection from Charlotte, North Carolina. Some of the students had done archival processing work, and many had not, so processing these photographs at large tables together became a way both to care for materials and to care for each other. Archivists from our institution walked through what to do, the instructor aided, and students helped each other. This work felt like collective labour

²⁵ Caswell, “Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse,” 311.

²⁶ Caswell, 313.

²⁷ Caswell, 314.

and was a way to share responsibility among ourselves and with our university library community. The various levels of expertise worked to build trust among all parties, and the collaborative processing was a way to invest in the relationships between students, instructor, and library staff.

In the spirit of working from the ground up and sharing expertise, our class also wanted students to have more opportunities to teach each other. Our class divided into book groups, based on interest, to investigate the practices of community archiving projects that have been written about in monographs. Each small group was given responsibility for teaching the rest of the class about their chosen text and engaging the class in a community-building activity inspired by the text.

In one instance, several students read *Junaluska: Oral Histories of a Black Appalachian Community*,²⁸ a book about a geographical and cultural community in Boone, North Carolina, not far from our institution. We learned that community archiving in Junaluska took the form of co-creation and storytelling – core practices for preserving the memory of a community that is disappearing because of gentrification, real estate, and other forces that are eroding what once held it together. Mimicking the community’s practice of creating quilts that represent “places, events, memory, landmarks, and some of the people,”²⁹ the students who worked on this book walked the class through a hand-drawn quilting activity, where students completed their own squares that served as materialized memories of the moods from the spring 2023 semester and included images of student tattoos, neighbourhood landmarks, blooming flowers, and the sly classroom spider. Together, we were able to produce something that could have only come from our classroom community and that could live on as a materialized memory.

In addition, our class used discussion time to not only discuss texts and projects but to also tell stories in order to practice reflexivity and engage in the multiplicity of perspectives, both of which are core principles of community archiving. We all read philosopher Gloria Origgi’s paper “Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Trust”³⁰ before class. This piece served not only as an interesting

²⁸ Keefe and Junaluska Heritage Association, *Junaluska*.

²⁹ Keefe and Junaluska Heritage Association, vi.

³⁰ Gloria Origgi, “Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Trust,” *Social Epistemology* 26, no. 2 (2012): 221–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2011.652213>.

source of theoretical discussion about the nature of epistemology but also as a launching point for understanding the way that *multiplicity* often manifests in the welcoming of epistemological differences in archival collections through both form and content. Origi's paper asks us to ponder how we know what we know and why we feel that what we know is true and to be trusted. What type of knowledge is legitimate to us, and why? She introduces the idea that, when we immediately feel that other people have no credibility, we are "paying an *epistemic injustice* towards these people."³¹ In getting at this, we explored the way that reliability, credibility, and trust circulates in our relationships with others and how that ultimately informs our own prejudices, emotions, and beliefs.

After a short discussion of the text, Kuecker told the class a story about a piece of family lore that, through a chance encounter with another story, was ruptured. In his family, there was a death that had always been described as "accidental" – but upon reading Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*³² during college, he came across a scene that made him question the validity of the claim that this death was indeed an accident. In her memoir, Bechdel describes watching her father walk out in front of an oncoming truck while she looked on. Bechdel tried to understand what happened: did her father truly not see the truck and walk right in front of it to his accidental death, or did he plan a suicide and perform it right before her eyes? Upon reading this story many years ago, Kuecker began to distrust his own family's story about a family member whose car had "stalled" on a train track. This story offered a way to open a question to everyone in the room: have you ever had an epistemological rupture, where something you knew to be true suddenly seemed like a complete sham?

The discussion that followed became one of the richest moments of storytelling in the entire semester, as many students eagerly volunteered to tell family stories, often sharing things they had not discussed with others before. There were multiple stories about deaths that did not add up, little lies about marriages and pregnancies, childhood antics and troublemaking, and strange grudges that had been held for decades. Rather accidentally, sticking with this discussion and welcoming anyone to the table to share their story without pressure or expectation led to laughter, tears, and a comfortable vulnerability. As each person

31 Origi, 223.

32 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007).

shared, they were validated. This activity was organic, exploring lived experience as it intersected with epistemology and operating as a prompt for collaborative reminiscence, a notion proposed by Sarah Baker and Zelmarié Cantillon.³³ Not only did it provide space for reflexivity and multiplicity, but it also suddenly made that dimension of *affect* feel prominent in the class, both because of the activity's ability to affect and the willingness of some to be affected. The stories brought out "what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things . . . already somehow present,"³⁴ otherwise known as affect.

Techniques that centre on vulnerability, originating with the professor's, are a common practice in the critical pedagogy of thinkers like bell hooks. She writes, "My willingness to share, to put my thoughts and ideas out there, attests to the importance of putting thoughts out there, of moving past fear or shame. When we all take risks, we participate mutually in the work of creating a learning community. We discover together that we can be vulnerable in the space of shared learning, that we can take risks."³⁵ The storytelling aspect of community archiving is a perfect space to explore this risk-taking pedagogical method that will affectively impact the energy of the classroom space. Not only that, but such moves make way for another dimension that is just as important in community archiving as it is in pedagogy: a sense that the classroom "functions more like a cooperative where everyone contributes to make sure all resources are being used, to ensure the optimal learning well-being of everyone."³⁶

Exploring the Stickiness of Positionality

There is a stickiness that comes along with such co-operative learning spaces; welcoming affect into the space of collaborative reminiscence forces us to reflect on our own positionality among all the things we know, feel, and think. Sarah Ahmed introduces the concept of *stickiness*, in association with affect theory, to refer to the complicated and often unshakeable relationships, connections,

33 Sarah Baker and Zelmarié Cantillon, "Zines as Community Archive," *Archival Science* 22, no. 4 (2022): 539–61, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09388-1>.

34 Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

35 bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 21.

36 hooks, 22.

and emotions carried by both individuals and objects. Ahmed explains that she is seeking the relationality among all of these things – particularly in terms of how they influence justice or injustice: “I want to consider the relation between emotions and (in)justice, as a way of rethinking what it is that emotions do.”³⁷ Stickiness is a useful concept for thinking about how the relationality between things and people – what gets “bound together,”³⁸ what we are drawn to, and what we turn away from – all has an affective dimension. Thus, embracing affect in our course also helped us explore our own relationships with people and things.

In community archiving, there is no illusion that we might be archiving from an objective standpoint, and thus it becomes essential that we explore our own positionality in reference to our projects. Alana Kumbier’s work in *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive*³⁹ emphasizes this, challenging traditional archival approaches by asking us to consider how a critical examination of these approaches in LGBTQ+ archiving could improve archival practices more broadly. Kumbier presents a case study of their own personal project to archive a drag king community in Columbus, Ohio, called H.I.S Kings. They explore some sticky positionality: Kumbier holds dual status as an insider to the community who is also an outsider due to their position of trying to document the community – a goal that other community members do not often share. Their positionality is frequently in flux as they move between the two roles, depending on the actions they are performing or the conversations they are having. Being both an insider and an outsider is not a particular benefit nor weakness but, rather, a sticky situation that forces them to negotiate their positionality.

Issues like this have been explored for years in qualitative research, where many studies were launched as personal projects. *Insider research* happens when a researcher shares an identity with the study participants, which creates a certain level of understanding, establishes trust, and yields more authentic results than those an outsider could produce. At the same time, however, there is a stigma associated with being an insider as some might say that the researcher is *too inside* to analyze their findings from a fair position. What is more, participants often assume the researcher knows a great deal about the subject matter

³⁷ Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 191.

³⁸ Ahmed, 91.

³⁹ Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*.

and thus do not supply them with enough information.⁴⁰

The sticky positionality of being both an insider and an outsider, and the affective dimensions of the relationality between researchers and the people and things we are working with, can become prominent aspects of community archiving work in ways that are worthy of consideration. For our course, one of our assignments was to write a statement or prepare a creative project that would help each student reflect on the stickiness at play in positionality. These statements or projects had to be directed toward a specific population, set of objects, or general idea, so that the student's positionality was being explored in relation to something specific.

For example, Alona Norwood's statement explores her positionality as a formally trained community archivist working with Black history in the Appalachian Mountains. She notes that, while she shares some identities with the community with whom she works, she is also coming to them with the goal of gathering and preserving stories, which could be thought of as extracting knowledge. She notes that while she shares identities with the community, her research as an archivist – oral histories, census data, and school records – illuminates aspects of a collective past she had not been aware of before. She has settled on the idea that her positionality is one of kinship, rooted in empathy and people-centred stewardship. However, this kinship has also made her wary of the ways that institutionalized practice and professional archiving might impact her community, thus destabilizing some of her faith in core archival principles.

Like that of many others, Norwood's reflexivity has led to questions about community-based archives acting as alternatives to mainstream archives and repositories like academic institutions.⁴¹ Community archives can serve marginalized groups of people, often through participatory practices that do not usually occur within official archives, but academic intuitions are increasingly interested in "legitimizing" community archives through partnerships. This presents a new *sticky* relationality not only between the archivist and the community but also between the members of the community archive, its things and objects, the institution, and professional archival practices. Students in our course were very

40 Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (2009): 54–63.

41 Yusef Omowale, "We Already Are," *Sustainable Futures*, September 3, 2018, <https://medium.com/community-archives/we-already-are-52438b863e31>.

interested in exploring the ways these relationships could be mutually beneficial. Yusef Omowale notes that one way to do this is to “do our best to . . . learn from the accumulated wisdom of the existing profession, but also refuse attempts at incorporation which will only further alienate our communities from themselves.”⁴²

Reflecting on our own positionality created the space for us to consider how to be mindful and careful in our community archiving practices in order to avoid letting the work become extractive. Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee’ Murrain, and Skyla Hearn, archivists who work at the intersections of community archiving and African American history, note that “community partners bring wisdom, knowledge, and expertise of their neighborhoods, traditions, and memory. They do not need to see their collections and stories co-opted by any institution.”⁴³ They found not only that it helps if the community and the archivist have some shared and intersecting identities but also, most importantly, that there is great power in approaching the community with “authenticity, sincerity, and as equal partners.”⁴⁴ Just as community members may question the intentions and perspectives of the archivist, the profession, and the institution, the community archivist must also equally interrogate these aspects through considerations of the sticky relations that influence all dimensions of this work.

Creating Personal Archives First

Community archives can challenge both traditional archival standards and traditional narratives of historical belonging. Institutions that see these records as secondary to the more important task of retaining documents with high social currency find themselves confronted by this shift in narrative. Community archives, however, seek not always “to supplant public archives but to reorientate them: to redress the balance of existing collections and to persuade archivists to conduct searches closer to the ground and for categories of record which

⁴² Omowale, “We Already Are.”

⁴³ Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee’ Murrain, and Skyla Hearn, “This [Black] Woman’s Work: Exploring Archival Projects that Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker,” *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 8, <https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.25>.

⁴⁴ Powell, Smith, Murrain, and Hearn, 8.

they had previously neglected or, at all events, under-rated.”⁴⁵ In the process of curating community archives, it is possible to begin to “rethink where, how, and when history happens.”⁴⁶

Using HIV/AIDS domestic archives as a background for his research, scholar Stephen Vider pushes back against traditional understandings of the archives, arguing that “whose domestic life gets represented, saved, and preserved is already a reflection of social capital and legibility.”⁴⁷ In many archives that host collections of the everyday, the emphasis remains on individuals of high profile and privilege instead of the quotidian – things of everyday people. Vider also suggests that, in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, “for many queer people, surviving family members often failed, or chose not, to preserve the material ephemera of their everyday domestic lives.”⁴⁸ Vider posits that this may occur because “public expressions of private experience disrupted a sense of American uniformity.”⁴⁹ Similarly, these public expressions of private experience were central to our understanding of teaching community archiving. The positionality of both students and instructor contributed to our ability to understand this work. Our own processes of documenting private experiences helped us situate ourselves within not only our own narratives but also the narratives of the community archives with which we worked and interacted.

As a class, we launched a personal documentation project that was inspired by the community archive known as the Bedside Table Archives.⁵⁰ In the Bedside Table Archives, organizer Rebecka Taves Sheffield photographed and catalogued objects in the bedrooms of lesbian and queer women who wanted to participate in her curation. This project presents several interventions into traditional archival methods. First, through the records that it creates and documents, the Bedside Table Archives insists that “the intimate domestic lives of lesbian and

45 Audrey Linkman and Bill Williams, “Recovering the People’s Past: The Archive Rescue Programme of Manchester Studies,” *History Workshop* 8, no. 1 (1979): 111–26, 114, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4288261>.

46 Stephen Vider, “Public Disclosures of Private Realities: HIV/AIDS and the Domestic Archive,” *The Public Historian* 41, no. 2 (2019): 163–89, 189, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26862129>.

47 Vider, 166.

48 Vider, 166.

49 Vider, 179.

50 Rebecka Taves Sheffield, “The Bedside Table Archives: Archive Intervention and Lesbian Intimate Domestic Culture,” *Radical History Review* 120 (Fall 2014): 108–20, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2703751>.

queer women are not only important enough to document but that this culture actually exists.”⁵¹ Second, the project poses an intervention into the “the exceptionalism of established lesbian and gay archives that tend to privilege the unusual or extraordinary events, organizations, and people who have contributed to our queer social histories.”⁵² Sheffield explains that the amplification of “extraordinary queerness” in traditional archives “provides a false sense that the records kept by established lesbian and gay archives can appropriately and adequately evidence the lives of lesbian women.”⁵³ The Bedside Table Archives combats the idea of *extraordinary queerness* as a marker for archival worthiness, while continuously working at the grassroots level to actually preserve lesbian and queer domestic life. Sheffield’s emphasis on personal documentation allows an interesting intersection between community and ethics to emerge.

Inspired by this project, our class read Sheffield’s article about her project and then spent two weeks working on our own personal mini archives, which were meant to document – and celebrate – the banality of everyday life. Students documented things like spring-break road trips, a daily walk, CD collections, stuffed animal collections, recipes cooked, illness, the neighbourhood cherry blossoms (figure 1), the contents of a truck glove box, screenshots saved on a laptop, love letters to Mom from Dad, things hanging in the closet (figure 2), points of view while recreationally reading (figure 3), stressful calendars, solo movie trips, stuff from the dumpster that made it into the house (figure 4), and lonely weekends.

In addition to the photo documentation, students reflected on their mini personal archives, theorizing about how the objects revealed something about their state of mind, and in particular, the state of their relationships, at the time they collected them. In “Love Letters to Trash,” Cassilyn Ostrander writes that, in doing this project and documenting all the things she has gathered from the trash and donation pile,

I realized how much my scavenger mentality influenced my interest in archives. I love seeing how people live their lives and how they present themselves. . . . I think it’s interesting to think about how an item

51 Sheffield, 114.

52 Sheffield, 114.

53 Sheffield, 115.



FIGURE 1 *Example from personal mini archive on found cherry blossoms, Margaret Steitz, 2023.*



FIGURE 2 *Excerpt from personal mini archive on curated closet, Sophie Hollis, 2023.*

gains or loses importance over time to people, thinking about how the previous owner came to own it, how they came to discard it in the way that they did. . . . There's also something about the lack of curation in alley/dumpster finds compared to a thrift store, where a gatekeeper decides what is worth money to resell and present in their business.

Like Ostrander, the other students each added text to their personal mini archive curations that recorded their thoughts on the relationship between everyday habits or environments and the craft of documentation.



FIGURE 3 *Example from personal mini archive on an avid reader's point of view, Simone Gillespie, 2023.*



FIGURE 4 *Example from personal mini archive on love letters to trash, Cassilyn Ostrander, 2023.*

Because of the emphasis on personal documentation, many of these projects focused on miniature forms of community with which they were intimate – such as the students' own families; the projects themselves, however, also drew out similarities between personal documentation, community archiving, and ethics. Kumbier, when discussing the motives and methods for preserving ephemera in their drag king communities, advocates for archiving from the ground up. They write, “In archiving from the ground up, archivists work with members of the communities and cultures we hope to document, instead of creating projects or building collections on their behalf.”⁵⁴ It is important to note that, when “archivists act for others . . . we reify a hierarchy between archivists and participants, in which archivists are the primary (or sole) decision-makers, and participants are informants and donors.”⁵⁵ Students, documenting single aspects of their everyday worlds in their personal projects, felt this play out as they

⁵⁴ Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*, 125.

⁵⁵ Kumbier, 137.

pondered how to act as their own personal archivists, beginning their work in their bedrooms or trucks.

In this way, a personal documentation project was useful not only for practising and archiving the self but also for thinking about broader aspects of community archiving at large. Kumbier mentions that archivists must consider numerous ways in which they exercise power, including by initiating projects, identifying which groups can and should be documented, deciding where collections will eventually reside, conducting outreach and education activities, determining scope and methods, and ultimately deciding the arrangement and description of the records.⁵⁶ Many students mentioned negotiating some of these actions in their personal projects, struggling with scope, curation, and description. For example, Margaret Steitz shared in her reflection that while the choice to photograph cherry blossoms around town might seem impersonal, it was actually an attempt to deal with the fact that she could remember thoughts and feelings more than she could remember what she was doing; she is someone who is often in her head. Documenting the cherry blossoms was a way to capture the things happening around her at a specific season and moment. It was a grounding activity that enabled her to take a moment to appreciate the reality of everyday life, brought on by the craft of documentation. The instructions for the project advised students to “document reality,” an idea that indeed troubles scope, arrangement, and other processes. Her decision to focus on cherry blossoms is evidence of her adaptation of a very fluid idea to a personal collection policy and scope.

Most prominently, concerns about privacy and the exposure of personal things – the thought that one might be judged by one’s collections – helped highlight why many communities would not want archivists in their worlds in the first place. Many students described feeling trepidation about documenting aspects of their personal lives because documentation acts also as evidence, and most likely, as access. One student described having the project itself interrupted by illness, which made it impossible to document anything other than the illness itself; they documented what they could see from the couch, how many times they had to call out of work, and all the tea they consumed. Such documentation is not meant for everyone to see – an idea that would resonate with many communities who do not want their materials officially circulated

⁵⁶ Kumbier, 133.

or even collected. What is more, students reported feeling unsure about which of their own documents and objects were even worthy of documentation, illustrating how easy it is to feel that one's own life and collections are inadequate compared to those of others – to experience a kind of imposter syndrome related to collecting and archiving. But when students volunteered to show their work to the class, the responses were laughter, excitement, and often fascination, demonstrating that there is great interest in any thoughtful collection.

It may seem counterintuitive to invite so much individual and personal documentation work into a course that has *community* in the title. Perhaps doing so represents an oblique perspective, but it is through personal archiving that students have the opportunity to reflect on creatorship. Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills's work has accentuated the way in which personal archives have been othered in archival theory, always placed in opposition to more official records.⁵⁷ The personal aspects of records are often revealed in their activation – for example, does this record allow for experiences, emotions, and memories to emerge, giving people the space and time to reflect and feel?⁵⁸ In addition, Douglas has argued that, when creating documents, creators are often aware of the archival potential of those documents.⁵⁹ Thus, having students practice personal and collaborative documentation in the space of a professional archival school helps blur the usual distinctions between “official” and “personal.” What is more, bringing personal records into the collaborative space of a classroom certainly activates the records in the context of community, revealing the way in which community archiving can embrace individual creatorship, as there is no stipulation about when the community aspect of the work becomes relevant.

In addition, students controlled their own work and held great power over what they documented, how they presented it, and how personal the materials were. They enacted a ground-up approach to archiving that is valuable in community archiving. This project fostered the idea that participating in archiving at any level can be meaningful and that every single person can make a “significant contribution . . . to a collective memory articulated through

⁵⁷ Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills, “From the Sidelines to the Center: Reconsidering the Potential of the Personal in Archives,” *Archival Science* 18, no. 3 (2018): 257–77, 257–58.

⁵⁸ Douglas and Mills, 274.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Douglas, “A Call to Rethink Archival Creation: Exploring Types of Creation in Personal Archives,” *Archival Science* 18, no. 1 (2018): 29–49, 37.

archival collections.”⁶⁰ Everyday archives draw heavily from this framework of archiving from the ground up, particularly when we are interested in preserving the everyday, domestic, bedside, and general detritus of average human lives. Kumbier’s assertion that “the decision to work from the top-down is often a non-decision; alternative approaches aren’t widely taught in archival courses or represented in the professional literature,”⁶¹ though in our case, we worked from the ground up.

Community-Oriented Final Projects

This time working on personal archives helped prepare students for a final inquiry project that allowed them to explore any aspects of community archiving with which they wished to work. For this project, some students formed their own small groups around content areas of interest, and some opted to work alone. Several decided to collect oral histories on topics that were rarely collected but that related to their own identities, such as anecdotes from queer bluegrass musicians and stories from bartender’s careers. To do this, they recorded and transcribed their work and provided reflections on how to grow these projects and get more storytellers.

Two students decided to document food culture by creating community cookbooks, following a long tradition of community documentation that exceeds the boundaries of formal archiving. Madeline Conley’s community cookbook, “The Commune Cookbook” (figure 5), is an expression of *speculative archiving*. She writes that, living in this moment in the Anthropocene, her mind is centred on survival, with the result that she dreams of starting a commune where friends can build homes on shared land. In this speculative scenario, the cookbook acts as both a manual and an oral history to celebrate love and comfort in the dire times that require off-the-grid solutions. She says, “This is speculative archiving. The thought behind this term in this sphere of archiving is that young people who exist on society’s fringes are creating something that will defiantly outlive them.” Her recipes were gifted by friends, and her manual is intended to be circulated among friends as a manifestation of hopes for a good future.

⁶⁰ Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material*, 151.

⁶¹ Kumbier, 127.

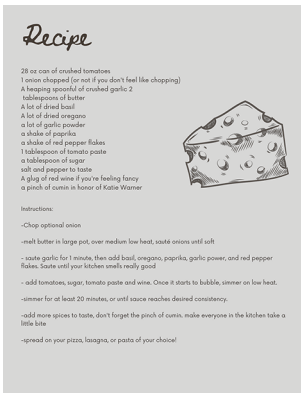


FIGURE 5 Excerpt from “The Commune Cookbook,” Madeline Conley, 2023.

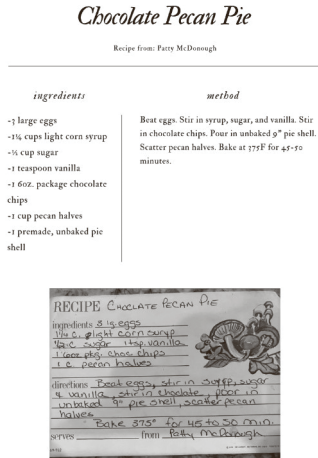


FIGURE 6 Excerpt from Belle’s family cookbook project, showing page with recipe and accompanying photo of recipe card, Belle Kozubowski, 2023.

Another student, Belle Kozubowski, also created a community cookbook, but hers was an expansion of her personal archive project, which had included photographs of her most successful baked breads. She created a community archiving project to document family recipes from multiple generations. In her cookbook, a page is devoted to each recipe (figure 6), and many include stories from the family members who contributed them. Kozubowski’s cookbook also features a handmade cover to incorporate the significance of craft not only in the content but also in the form (figures 7 and 8). Many of the recipes also feature photographs of the original recipe cards. This artifact is intended to stay in the



FIGURE 7 Cover of Belle's family cookbook project, showing her handmade design, Belle Kozubowski, 2023.

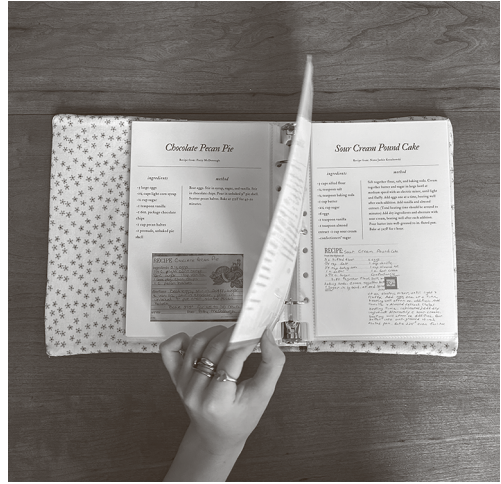


FIGURE 8 Excerpt from Belle's family cookbook project, showing her handmade design, Belle Kozubowski, 2023.

family as an heirloom and to be added to over the years, as evidence of the family's food culture.

Inspired by the way zines operate, not only as archival documents but also as a way of connecting people, Penny Bee, Hannah Southern, and Margaret Steitz created a zine that operates as a guide for facilitating a zine workshop as a means of community archiving. The project was inspired by the workshops organized by Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon, where residents of Norfolk Island, Australia, collaboratively created a zine titled *See You at the Paradise/Ketch Yorlye Daun Paradise*.⁶² The two workshops, which took place in June 2021, provided Norfolk Islanders with the space, time, tools, and materials for co-creating a zine that focused on the former site of the Paradise Hotel in Kingston. In their article, Baker and Cantillon explain that the community response to the removal of the Paradise Hotel reveals the “broader contestations regarding heritage, politics and cultural identity that are being grappled with on Norfolk Island.”⁶³

62 Baker and Cantillon, “Zines as Community Archive.”

63 Baker and Cantillon, 540.

As residents reflected on their experiences with the Paradise Hotel, they created a zine that brought together archival materials alongside their stories and photographs of the site. In this way, the zine revealed alternate perspectives to the dominant narratives of Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area, while offering an "important resource for community-building and political resistance."⁶⁴

Bee, Southern, and Steitz's interests were piqued by the potential of zine-making to operate as a means of co-creation and participatory documentation in community archiving. Baker and Cantillon argue that, when created as a historical record, "zines can enable communities to tell their own stories in a form that is accessible to them and representative of their own experiences, while also strengthening the presence of the community's stories in institutional settings."⁶⁵ Additionally, the group wanted to integrate the idea of "collaborative reminiscence," which Baker and Cantillon propose as a seventh principle to add to Michelle Caswell's key principles of community archiving.⁶⁶ This group had seen how, throughout the semester, collaborative reminiscence had allowed everyone to participate in a dialogue based on the sharing of personal stories, which triggered other people's memories and allowed for points of connection between those in a shared space.⁶⁷ In sharing, community members actually create new memories together, strengthening the community's identity.

As Bee, Southern, and Steitz explored other examples of co-creation and participatory documentation activities in community archiving – particularly community-archiving projects that utilized workshops – they found that there was a significant gap in the literature. The group speculated that perhaps the limited awareness about such approaches and limited resources for using them meant that only a few community archiving initiatives had used them in workshops. To help guide archivists and professionals who were interested in facilitating zine workshops as a means of community archiving, the group decided to create a mini guide on how to do this; the mini guide itself took the form of a zine, covering salient information and connecting readers to other helpful resources.

⁶⁴ Baker and Cantillon, 540.

⁶⁵ Baker and Cantillon, 543.

⁶⁶ Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse."

⁶⁷ Baker and Cantillon, "Zines as Community Archive," 557.



FIGURE 9 Cover and excerpts from *A Guide to Organizing a Zine Workshop for Community Archiving*, Penny Bee, Hannah Southern, and Margaret Steitz, 2023.

General Education: Artist Boo... A Look Inside: Close Looking E... Creating, Collecting, and Comm... Learning Objectives in Review

General Education: Artist Books and Zines

What's an Artist Book?



The American Southwest Archive pt. 1 by Justin Guthrie - self published by artist

Great question! The answer to this question largely depends on who you ask. As Jessica Pigza, Associate Director for Special Collections & Public Programs at Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library at Yale University explains in their [artist book LibGuide](#):

“The term artists’ books is difficult to define. The debate over the ‘true’ definition of the term has lasted for several decades. [1] The general consensus is that there is no one definition. Many other terms are also used to suggest the same concept: book art, book as artwork, bookwork, artists’ bookworks, book objects, artists books (no apostrophe) and there are likely more. While none of the terms is incorrect (as there is no one definition for any of them either), the term artists’ books

FIGURE 10 Screenshot from “Teaching with Artists Books + Zines: A K-12 Guide,” Callie Beattie, 2023.

They created their zine using a digital tool that could be easily learned by many, Nathalie Lawhead's "Electric Zine Maker" (EZM), a printshop and art software self-described as a "playful tool with which you can create cute little things."⁶⁸ EZM is available on itch.io, a website for selling independent video game software, assets, art, and zines, and has continued support from Lawhead, its sole developer. The software has numerous built-in tools for creative assembly of zines in a variety of publishing formats. It encourages playful experimentation through its design, and it operates well as a tool for collaboration through its easy-to-use import and export functions, which allow multiple creators to build and share materials that can be compiled into a single zine.

The group's zine, *A Guide to Organizing a Zine Workshop for Community Archiving* (figure 9), provides an introduction and literature review that explains the motivations for its creation, as previously outlined, as well as overviews of the necessary resources and tools that are available for creating zines in both analog and digital formats, highlighting the capabilities of EZM as a tool. The group believes that using EZM as a collaborative tool makes it possible for individuals and communities to engage in participatory documentation practices by embracing the playful, do-it-yourself (DIY) attitudes of this software and drawing on similar work by others outside of archives proper, such as Griffin's "semi-public diary" project, which documents a life during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁹

Further, by creating not only a zine but also a manual for others to use in community archiving workshops, the group highlighted the use of pedagogy as a route to community archiving. This was also emphasized in others' final projects, including Callie Beattie's ArcGIS StoryMaps guide (figure 10) on how to bring artists' books into classrooms and other community spaces. Beattie is a member of the book arts community and a collector of artists' books. For Beattie, community archiving is about taking archives out into the world so that communities can be inspired by different documentation techniques and materials practices, particularly as they relate to the arts.

Like these examples, all of the final inquiry projects sought to embrace the activism and DIY ethic that is so central to the principles of community archiving.

⁶⁸ Nathalie Lawhead, "Electric Zine Maker (a Work in Progress, Be Gentle, Hug It Often)," *itch.io* (blog), accessed April 26, 2023, <https://alienmelon.itch.io/electric-zine-maker>.

⁶⁹ Sarah Maria Griffin, "How a Game about Making Zines Helped Me Recapture My Creativity in Lockdown," *Guardian*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2021/feb/22/electric-zine-maker-video-game>.

Activities for creating new memory artifacts, like collaging and artmaking, challenge traditional archival practice by suggesting that clipping, cutting, and taking apart are not acts of violence but are actually constructive, healing forces.⁷⁰ Collecting photographs, stories, recipes, and more undermines the capitalist values that – especially in the current shape of innovation culture – suggest that collecting is a domestic and “reproductive” rather than “productive” form of labour; in our case, reproductive labour is of enormous value and there is no strong boundary dividing it from productive labour in the first place. Hands-on projects activating archival materials helped students reclaim the value of their labours and allowed them to gain knowledge by doing what they were most interested in doing. Designing new things – projects, collections, or otherwise – and putting them together was a revealing and empowering process, all done in a low-stakes, supportive environment.

Conclusion

Community archiving is not often part of the formal archival curriculum for reasons that make sense. After all, community archiving is a ground-up process that should involve a great deal of critical community reflection regarding the formal archival processes and goals that make up most traditional curriculum. But it is important to note that classrooms should also be communities, and that archival training should also welcome challenges to established archival practice. As Terry Cook suggested many years ago, even archivists themselves can ask, What are the “inspirational bonds and intellectual possibilities that give meaning to our community?”⁷¹

At the end of the course, we knew our community archiving class had been successful because we did not want it to end; we had begun to feel like a community, even though many of us had never met before. We had come to know each other through shared stories and created new memories. We had generated our own personal documentation processes that explored the value

⁷⁰ Zachary Small, “The Quintessentially Queer Act of Collage,” *Hyperallergic*, November 28, 2016, <https://hyperallergic.com/341239/the-quintessentially-queer-art-of-collage/>.

⁷¹ Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community,” 98.

of quotidian collections and the affective qualities of everyday life. Many of us had developed our own projects in light of the kind of professional archivists we wanted to be, such as oral historians, outreach archivists, digital humanists, and pedagogues. We had started many projects with the intention that they would be carried on for many years.

Most importantly, we were able to see the value that community archiving principles can bring to all archival practices, not just community archiving. What is intrinsic to community archiving is pedagogically rich, akin to bell hooks's pedagogical influences of shared vulnerability, mutual participation, and co-operation.⁷² As hooks describes it,

Engaged pedagogy establishes a mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment that is always present when genuine learning happens. Expanding both heart and mind, engaged pedagogy makes us better learners because it asks us to embrace and explore the practice of knowing together, to see intelligence as a resource that can strengthen our common good.⁷³

As we carried on in our work, we set out to value affect as highly as logic, to legitimize memories and stories, and to offer everyone a seat at the table, knowing that this may invite conflict. We each ended the course with materials that documented our thoughts and work, in the spirit that these things illustrate the vitality and potential of archival materials beyond naive nostalgia for old things.⁷⁴

In that spirit, we believe this class has itself materialized many inspirations and possibilities that emerge from community archiving praxes. And we hope our individual learning and collective growth provide valuable reflections for future archival pedagogy. Now we can rewrite the community archiving principles outlined at the very beginning of this paper for archival pedagogy – for the classroom that is also a community:

⁷² hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 21.

⁷³ hooks, 22.

⁷⁴ Cifor, *Viral Cultures*.

1. *Participation*: archival pedagogy should involve all participants (that is, both instructors and students, in the traditional sense) in course design, evaluation, and knowledge construction.
2. *Shared stewardship*: archival pedagogy takes care of and stewards participants' experiences and skills for the benefit of participants, not for other interests.
3. *Multiplicity*: archival pedagogy should be open to different forms of intellectual and creative works and to diverse and even conflicting viewpoints.
4. *Activism*: participants in archival pedagogy should articulate their political motivations for memory work and use memory work for political liberation.
5. *Reflexivity*: participants in archival pedagogy should continually reflect on and discuss their own positionality; their shifting relationship with the profession and its institutions; and the changing political, social, and professional contexts of archival labour.
6. *Valuing affect*: archival pedagogy should acknowledge, respect, and include affective labours, personal meanings, and the emotional weights felt by its participants beyond institutional values, performance measurements, or standardized rubrics.

If we operate within Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd's definition of a community as "any group of people who come together and present themselves as such"⁷⁵ and of a community archive as "the product of their attempts to document the history of their commonality,"⁷⁶ then our class was a community archiving project in itself, and this article is an additional artifact of that collaboration. Most likely,

⁷⁵ Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 71–86, 75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-009-9105-2>.

⁷⁶ Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, 75.

it would be impossible to replicate the feelings and artifacts of this exact class again, but we hope that this article offers approaches, inspiration, and a general ethos that might inspire other archival educators interested in this kind of work.

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