

The Resilient Workforce of Oklahoma's Archivists

J.J. Compton, MLIS, CA

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Summary (Abstract)

This thesis is a mixed methodological study of Oklahoma's archival workforce that is particularly attentive to job transitions, technological advances, generational change, and economic pressures. The overarching argument is that Oklahoma archivists demonstrate their resilience through their contributions to state-level organising at the grassroots of the profession. This organising, I show, seeks to bolster resources for the repositories and their communities, ensuring the long term survival of the archive. The key challenges, discussed in depth in this thesis, are Oklahoma's economic pressures and the archival workforce's generational changes. There exists a gap in the literature and data within the United States on archival employees, specifically within Oklahoma's libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs). This research bridges that gap by providing data and qualitative perspectives collected via interviews from Oklahoma's archivists. Most of the participants interviewed were retired or late-career; this allows readers to understand better the lasting impact of their work within the state. The use of oral history employs an insider/outsider research perspective to adhere to standards and practices with the LAM communities. Implications for the state of Oklahoma include the need for diversity of personnel within the profession, a need to make visible the invisible labour performed during employees' day-to-day activities, and the loss of historical information due to lack of staffing and funding within repositories.

Keywords: Oklahoma history, archival history, archival workforce, oral history, generational change, grassroots organising, Oklahoma economic factors, technological advancement, organisational culture, institutional memory

Declarations and Statements

I declare that this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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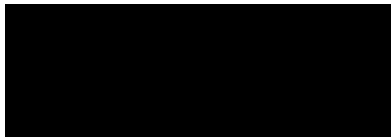


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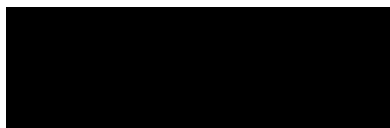


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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be made available for electronic sharing by Swansea University.

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Dedication

To everyone who works in the Oklahoma LAM field, may this work encourage you and advocate for you amidst times of isolation and trial. Your work inspires and creates a more complete historical record for our state. Thank you.

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List of Abbreviations

AAM	American Alliance of Museums
A'CENSUS	All Archivists Survey (2004)
A'CENSUS II	All Archivists Survey (2021)
AFB	Air Force Base
ALA	American Library Association
APRA	Advanced Research Projects Agency
ATALM	Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums
CIPM	Certified Institutional Protection Manager
CNAA	Chilocco National Alumni Association
COAL	Central Oklahoma Archivists League (predecessor to OAA)
CRM	Certified Records Manager
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (formerly ARPA)
DAM	Digital Asset Management
DAS	Digital Archives Specialist
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
EF	Enhanced Fujita Scale (Tornado Ranking System)
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	Graduate Data Protection for Researchers
HCW	Health Care Workers
ICA	International Council on Archives
IRMT	International Records Management Trust
KM	Knowledge Management
LAM	Libraries, Archives, and Museums
LFTAIPG	Federal Law for Transparency and Access to Information (Spanish)
LOC	Library of Congress
LOCKSS	Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe
MAPS	Metropolitan Area Projects
MARC	Museum Accessioning and Registration Course

MMAR	Mixed-Methodological Action Research
MMR	Mixed-Methodological Research
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAC	National Archives Catalog
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NPR	National Public Radio
NUCMC	National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections
OAA	Oklahoma Archivists Association
OCALD	Oklahoma Council of Academic Library Directors
OCC	Oklahoma Conservation Congress
OCPA	Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
ODL	Oklahoma Department of Libraries
OHS	Oklahoma Historical Society
OKC	Oklahoma City
OLA	Oklahoma Library Association
OMA	Oklahoma Museum Association
OOHRP	Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
OSU	Oklahoma State University
OU	The University of Oklahoma
PBR	Professional Bull Riders
PNAAM	Protocols for Native American Archival Materials
PRA	Presidential Records Act
RMC	Rare and Manuscript Collections
SAA	Society of American Archivists
SSA	Society of Southwest Archivists
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UX	User Experience

Introduction: Understanding Oklahoma

Drawing on original oral history interviews with current and retiring Oklahoma archivists and a mixed methodological survey, this thesis develops an understanding of how the experience, priorities, and politics of archiving in Oklahoma have changed over recent decades. This research explores a key moment of transition within the profession, as technology, economic pressures, and workforce transitions reshape the labour of archiving. The thesis is particularly attentive to the local and grassroots context within the state of Oklahoma. I argue that the archivists' stories help bridge the gap between organisational culture and institutional knowledge. The thesis then addresses the role archivists play in active record creation for the state of Oklahoma, as well as identifying personal biases, generational connections to the land, and the navigation of technological trends and advances. As one participant states in relation to working in Oklahoma archives, 'We're in a constant position of not having enough space or resources...a general memorable experience is just regularly trying to advocate for what we have and to really be discerning in what we decided we can keep in addition to that.'¹ I also argue that within both the scholarly and professional literature on archiving and archives, Oklahoma's practising professionals' voices are lacking representation within the United States due to the legacy of budget cuts and unfilled staff positions as legislated through the ultra-conservative Republican supermajority.

¹ Bailey Hoffner, Interview by JJ Compton, 29 September 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-15, p.4.

This thesis is borne from my position as a practitioner in the archival sector within Oklahoma. Despite my longstanding work as an archivist within the state, it became readily apparent that there was little work to contextualise the geographically-situated labour of myself and my colleagues that could be found within literature produced from publishers like ALA, SAA, AAM and the Library of Congress. But like a lot of research projects, it was stimulated by a more immediate, personal provocation: several years ago, colleague Dr. Jason Harris, who you will meet later in the oral history interviews, made an offhanded comment that if you put all the archives and museums in Oklahoma together, they would probably have a lot of overlap in their collections. This comment sat with me, and over the ensuing months I wrestled with the question ‘does what I am doing matter?’. I’m sure everyone has encountered this existential crisis in their career at least once. But this doctoral research, and its contribution to the wider literature, hopes to offer an affirmative answer to this question, and to underline the ways that the labour of Oklahoma’s professional archiving staff buttresses the state at a time of upheaval. Theorist Howard Zinn persuasively argues ‘in an essentially undemocratic society, to begin to play some small part in the creation of a real democracy’ is a ‘worthy job for historians, for archivists and for us all.’² He points out that going against norms, dominant trends, and passivity help us not only become better professionals but better people. This will be discussed later in Chapter 1 on the discussion of Archives and Democracy.

Another justification for why this study of Oklahoma archivists matters comes from feminist theorist Michelle Caswell, who argues, ‘It is up to the archivist to describe

² Howard Zinn, ‘Secrecy, Archives and the Public Interest,’ *The Midwestern Archivist* II;2 (1977): pp.14-26, p.25 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41101382>>

what she thinks is important about an object, and in so doing, to provide a particular narrative about it.’³ Thus, part of why it matters is because despite the overlaps between my and Dr. Harris’s work with the materials and people of Oklahoma, our differing experiences and perspectives produce divergent analytical conclusions. This thesis advances an argument for the continued plurality of archives in this particular state, and beyond its borders. For as Angie Debo, historian of Oklahoma, wrote in her *Prairie City*, Oklahoma is just ‘a history of the United States in microcosm...for it’s not the little town [in the state] that matters, but [their] universal significance.’⁴ Documenting the people behind the scenes and making their work accessible and known only adds to the study of Oklahoma as its own microcosm or as called throughout this thesis, social subcultural examination. Finally, beyond significance and representation in the literature, Oklahoma’s political landscape is historically vibrant and troubled. From stealing the capitol location of Guthrie and moving it to Oklahoma City to Debo’s ‘damning account of Oklahoma history’ in writing *And Still the Waters Run: the Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, Oklahoma’s history is rife with shysters, thieves, robber barons, and outlaws.⁵ The most recent trouble will be addressed further in Chapter 1 under the heading Political Structures of Oklahoma and then again in Chapter 4 under the heading The Implications of Professional Upheaval for Oklahoma’s Archival Workforce.

³ Michelle Caswell, ‘“The Archive” is Not An Archive: Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies,’ *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* v.16, no.1 (2016) <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7bn4v1fk>>

⁴ Shirley A. Leckie, *Angie Debo: Pioneering Historian*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, p.89.

⁵ Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Cherokee Nation, ‘Foreword’ in Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2022, p. ix.

This is a timely study; generational shifts are in motion as archivists who entered the profession in the 1970s and 1980s are now retired or retiring; the effort to capture and understand the meanings of their experiences and contributions gains new resonance as the expertise that governs archives changes hands. While the research pre-dated COVID-19, it was made more urgent by the COVID-19 virus, which disproportionately seemed to affect older individuals.⁶ And as most people in the United States retire in their 60s or 70s, the project moved quickly so as not to lose the voices of a generation of retiring archivists to either health or locale. This is, to the best of my knowledge, the first state-level examination of archival professionals that utilises both survey data and oral histories.⁷

The research was done in a twofold methodology: quantitative survey responses sent to library, archival, and museum (LAM) organisations and qualitative interviews conducted with participants who were mostly late career, retired, and living in the state, or had moved out of Oklahoma archival work. These interviews are important because no group analysis of retiring employees in archives has been conducted, especially in the

⁶ Ariana Eunjung Cha and Dan Keating, 'Covid becomes plague of elderly, reviving debate over "acceptable loss",' *The Washington Post* 20 November 2022 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/11/28/covid-who-is-dying/>> [accessed 15 December 2022] in which the authors describe the virus as a 'plague of the elderly.'

⁷ When the project began, the SAA A*CENSUS from 2006 was the only real comprehensive data set see Victoria Irons Walsh, Elizabeth Yakel, Jeannette Allis Bastian, Nancy Zimmelman, Brenda Banks, Susan E. Davis, and Anne P. Diffendal. 'Special Section on A*CENSUS (Archival Census & Education Needs Survey in the United States).' *The American Archivist* 69, 2 (2006): pp.291–527. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40294333>> for the full report. During the time of writing the thesis, the A*CENSUS II was released and some of that has been incorporated into this project. See Makala Skinner and Ioana Hulbert, 'A*CENSUS II All Archivists Survey Report.' Ithaka S+R. Last Modified 22 August 2022 <<https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.317224>> [accessed 16 December 2022] for the complete report. However, the only Oklahoma-specific organisation listed in both surveys is the Oklahoma Conservation Congress. Thus, it does not provide an accurate account of both organisations within the state supporting archivists. By not capturing all the known archival organisations, the data is incomplete. That is why this project is important: to get a better understanding of a profession within a state that is not accurately represented in the literature.

creation of a socio-subculture like Oklahoma, where political factors are a key element in revealing the archivists' contributions to the historical record. The neutrality of the archival record and those responsible for its processing is no longer a component being taught in archival studies classes worldwide; instead, archival studies have increasingly recognised and explored the politics of the archive. This project takes the position of examining Oklahoma's political conservatism and how that affects the work done by archivists, who, due in part to legislative measures, are understaffed, underfunded, isolated, and technologically behind other states in their publicly funded LAM institutions. I bring in feminist scholars who argue that archives and affect are impacting practice. For as Cifor clearly states, 'affective value can act as a corrective force to address power inequities in archives.'⁸ I argue the work they have done has amplified the voices of others through preservation measures, networking, the creation of an archival organisation, and the 'asking forgiveness rather than permission' model for decisions made during their tenure.

Accessing Oklahoman archivists' experiences is crucial to understanding the ways that the political tides of the state have shaped its memory preservation and interpretation; this is particularly important within a state that is relatively new to the union, having gained statehood in 1907. Inspired by and in conversation with Terry Cook's *Controlling the Past: Documenting Societies and Institutions* – itself dedicated to a retiring colleague – this thesis contributes to broader efforts to examine how and why Oklahoma archivists' 'control' the past when political forces constantly aim to obfuscate

⁸ Marika Cifor, 'Affecting relations: introducing affect theory to archival discourse,' *Archival Science* 16 (2016): pp. 7-31, p.13 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9261-5>>

it through lack of staffing, funding, and peer to peer knowledge loss during workforce transitions. As such, it develops ideas put forward by archival scholars such as Jeanette Bastian, Andrew Flinn, Mpho Ngoepe, Anne J. Gilliland, Geoffrey Yeo, Luciana Duranti, Kate Eichhorn, and Scott Cline.⁹ The arguments they have put forth consist of concepts and practices on reconciling archives with the theoretical concept of the archive, community ownership of memory and heritage in conjunction with archival repositories and archivists, and moving the archive beyond the building and borders. In addition topics like what the 21st-century archivists will look like and need from archival education, archives being places of removal as well as originality and identity, records as evidential truth in a post-truth world, feminist interpretations of the field since the 1990s, and the archival virtue inherent in the profession are further addressed in publications by these scholars. Beyond these two threads of discussion, I will examine a 21st century multi-issue discussion of social justice and social responsibility of archivists by Caswell,

⁹ Jannette A. Bastian, 'Moving the margins to the middle: reconciling 'the archive' with the archives,' In Foscarini, Riorella, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver, eds. *Engaging with Records and Archives: histories and theories*, London: Facet Publishing, 2016, pp.1-21; Jannette A. Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2003; Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds., 'Introduction,' In Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds. *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, memory and identity*, London: Facet Publishing, 2020, pp. xix-xxiv; Mpho Ngoepe, 'Archives without archives: a window of opportunity to build inclusive archive in South Africa,' *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists* 52 (2019): pp.149-166 <<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/191336/180506>>; Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014; Anne J. Gilliland, 'Neutrality, social justice and the obligations of archival education and educators in the twenty-first century,' *Archival Science* 11 (2011): pp.193-209 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-011-9147-0>>; Geoffrey Yeo, 'Can we keep everything? The future of appraisal in a world of digital profusion,' in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, pp.45-64; Geoffrey Yeo, "'Nothing is the same as something else': Significant properties and notions of identity and originality,' *Archival Science*. 10:2 (June 2010): pp.85-116. <[doi:10.1007/s10502-010-9119-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-010-9119-9)> [accessed 21 January 2019]; Luciana Duranti, 'Whose truth? Records and archives as evidence in the era of post-truth and disinformation,' In Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, pp.19-32; Kate Eichhorn, 'D.I.Y. Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production Since 1990,' *Women's Studies*, 39, 6 (2010): pp.622-646 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2010.490716>>; Scott Cline, *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021.

Green and Jimerson which recently occurred in SAA's *American Archivist* Publication.¹⁰ Current theorists and practitioners who voice archival beliefs will help determine where Oklahoma archivists fit into the national picture.

The work of these archival scholars is then paired with notable historians of Oklahoma like Danney Goble, David W. Beard, Scott Ellsworth, Linda Reese, and Patricia Loughlin.¹¹ The contextual use of oral history for this thesis is provided through historians like Alessandro Portelli, Valerie Yow, Mary Chamberlain, Paul Thompson, Joanna Bornat and Hanna Diamond, who demonstrate through practice the importance, use, and interpretation of oral history as a research medium.¹² The medium of oral history

¹⁰ Michelle Caswell, 'Not Just Between Us: A Riposte to Mark Green,' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.605-607 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>; Mark A. Greene, 'A Critique of Social Justice as an Archival Imperative: What Is It We're Doing That's All That Important?' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.302-334 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490357?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents>; Mark A. Greene, 'To the Editor,' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.607-608 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>; and Randall C. Jimerson, 'Archivists and Social Responsibility: A Response to Mark Greene,' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.335-345 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>

¹¹ W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma: a history*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008; Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1982; Scott Ellsworth, *The Ground Breaking: An American City and Its Search for Justice*, New York: Dutton, 2021; Linda W. Reese and Patricia Loughlin, *Main Street Oklahoma: Stories of Twentieth-Century America*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013.

¹² Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different,' in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp.32-42; Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A guide for the humanities and social sciences*, (2nd edn.) Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005; Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, 'Genre and narrative in life stories,' In Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, eds. *Narrative and Genre*, New York: Routledge, 1998, pp.1-22; Paul Thompson, 'The Voice of the Past: Oral history,' in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp.25-42; Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat, *The voice of the past: oral history*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017; Joanna Bornat and Hanna Diamond, 'Women's History and Oral History: developments and debates,' *Women's History Review* 16, 1 (March 2007): pp.19-39. <[doi10.1080/09612020601049652](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020601049652)> [accessed 7 June 2017].

combined with the diverse representations of Oklahomans are then placed within the political climate of the Oklahoma archival professional workforce. Literature drawn from the humanities, business, and economics is also utilised to provide a more holistic lens on the workforce while at the same time act to provide an anchor for the topics of discussion which occur through the original oral histories.

The thesis is, then, driven by three questions: first, do Oklahoma archivists play a role in controlling the past being told by their institutions and organisations? Second, does this influence play out at a state level? And third, how do they continue to do so amidst a political climate that is often unfavourable to funding education, the arts, and the humanities? Set against a climate of growing challenges to the profession, and informed by the evidence that archiving practices are crucial to upholding the democratic tenet of an informed citizenry, the driving argument of this thesis is that the stories archivists tell about their work are shaped in fundamental ways by their local context. This thesis, therefore, moves the vista of the perspective on archivist memories to the local and the grassroots, allowing a greater attentiveness to the ways that state-level politics, policies, and priorities shape archiving cultures.

Oklahoma's workforce is not unique in the staffing changes, retirements, and career moves occurring today. Across the United States, many 'Baby Boomers' are entering retirement, which creates opportunities for a new generational workforce to

occupy their positions. Specifically, within the archival profession in the United States, leaders are retiring. For example, David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States, has recently announced his retirement after twelve years as the head of the National Archives.¹³ Similar trends are occurring in Oklahoma with the Oklahoma History Center's lead archivist Bill Welge who transitioned out of the archives and into the Office of American Indian Culture and Preservation as its director in 2013 and then fully retired on 31 July 2016, Kay Bost who retired as Head of Special Collections and University Archives at Oklahoma State University in 2011, and Oklahoma Department of Libraries State Librarian and Archivist Susan McVey's retirement in 2019.¹⁴ Those who study economic trends in Oklahoma argue as to whether there is a workplace shortage or not and how, if there is one, might it affect the residents and businesses which reside within its borders.¹⁵ In this contested political landscape, the stories of these retiring archivists need to be considered a crucial part of the historical record that they have helped to curate – as Michael Shallcross has argued, 'as purveyors of cultural heritage and repositories of

¹³ National Archives Public and Media Communications Staff, 'Ferriero to Retire as Archivist of the United States,' Press Release Thursday, 13 January 2022 <<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2022/nr22-17>> [accessed 28 November 2022].

¹⁴ Bill Welge, Personal LinkedIn Profile Page <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bill-welge-05a21640>> [accessed 7 June 2017]; Bill Welge, interview by JJ Compton, 23 March 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-22, p.11; Kate L Blalack, 'Leadership Log' *Southwestern Archivist* 34, 1 (February 2011): p.30; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'State Librarian Emerita,' Last Modified on 30 June 2022 <<https://oklahoma.gov/libraries/about-odl/offices-and-staff-listing/state-librarian-emerita.html>> [accessed 28 November 2022].

¹⁵ Josie Phillips, 'Protecting Oklahoma's economy requires labor force-oriented solutions,' *OK Policy Blog* 24 June 2022 <<https://okpolicy.org/protecting-oklahomas-economy-requires-labor-force-oriented-solutions/>> [accessed 15 December 2022] says that 'Oklahoma's lawmakers should enact policies that will strengthen Oklahoma's labor force participation, which has been declining for more than a decade' and 'maintaining a healthy labor force participation rate is important because our labor force financially supports our non-working population (such as children, people with disabilities, and the elderly).' Meanwhile, the state itself is reporting higher than normal workforce participation rates for the same period; Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, 'Oklahoma's Workforce Participation among Highest in State History' *OESC Newsroom* 9 June 2022 <<https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/about/newsroom/2022/june/press-release-2022-06-09.html>> [accessed 15 December 2022].

administrative and historical records, archives have long held trust as their stock-in-trade' upholding 'the provenance, authenticity and integrity of the materials.'¹⁶

This thesis draws upon the voices of retired, soon-to-retire, and ex-resident Oklahoma archivists as well as the voices of younger workers in archives, libraries with repositories, historical societies, tribal historians, and museums. As oral historian Alessandro Portelli has argued, the value of oral history lies in its creative, dynamic, and communicative nature:

The contrast of written sources is independent of the researcher's need and hypotheses; it is a stable text, which we can only interpret. The content of oral sources, on the other hand, depends largely on what the interviewer puts into it in terms of questions, dialogue, and personal relationship.¹⁷

Of course, oral history is also informed by this interviewer's positionality, identity, and subjectivity. As a practising archivist within Oklahoma, I was shaped by a dynamic of shared professional expertise throughout the project, which allowed me to examine individuals as one professional to another; this perspective is sometimes missing when ethnographers and anthropologists examine groups as external professionals looking within a specific subset of individuals. Distance was created, however, by the fact that the I work in a private religious archive, while the subjects reside in primarily publicly funded institutions. Additionally, this researcher is a transplanted Texan while many of the participants are native or generational Oklahomans, which allowed for a further distancing on my part in conducting, interpreting, and analysing the oral history

¹⁶ Steve Marks, 'Module 8 Becoming a Trusted Digital Repository', in Michael Shallcross, ed. *Trends in Archives Practice*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2015, p. viii.

¹⁷ Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different' in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.39. [Reprinted by permission from 'The Death of Luigi Trastulli' in *Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, 1991].

narratives. Finally, the focus of the generational transitions lies outside the generational identification of the researcher, who is in late Generation X, with a birthdate often identifying as a Xennial. This differs from the generational identifications of most of the participants who self-identify as being part of the ‘Baby Boomer’ or ‘Millennial’ generations. These two generational identifications are what the literature describes as experiencing the heaviest workforce transitions during the time of the project.¹⁸

The findings of this research – that a generation of Oklahoma archivists have helped shape the historical record of the state in resistance to a conservative political system – indicate that Oklahoma’s archivists can serve as a case study on workforce transition. Though there are particularities and distinctive elements, some lessons can be translated to other areas of the country and world. These lessons can be useful when the next great workforce transition occurs within the libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) field. Lessons learned through workforce transitions have particular importance in the United States, as these LAM fields often converge due to lack of funding, workforce shortages, and advances in technology. This convergence of fields is what directed the project’s shift from interviewing only archivists, to interviewing those in libraries, museums, and historical societies doing the work of archiving, sometimes without training or title. Within the state of Oklahoma, it is often a librarian with a passion for their local community who ends up starting an archival collection within a small closet or dedicated area. Or it’s a member of the community who collected and volunteering in the historical society, turning over their materials as resource for all. It can also be argued

¹⁸ Ryan W. Miller, ‘Are you a Xennial? How to tell if you’re the microgeneration between Gen X and Millennial,’ *USA Today* 20 December 2018
<<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/12/20/xennials-millennials-generation-x-microgeneration/2369230002/>> [accessed 17 December 2022].

that museums often receive archival materials as part of donations but end up shelving them until later or cataloguing them as museum objects. The grassroots organising focused on in this thesis is extremely important for connecting those LAM professionals with archival practices and policies, theory and implementation. As Terry Cook writes, ‘As archivists document modern society and its institutions, they control the past. They shape, to a major degree, what society can know about itself. They choose and preserve (or ignore and destroy) recorded evidence...’¹⁹ In order to fully understand the archival history of Oklahoma, it is necessary to grasp the professional dedication and methods used – both successes and failures – of retiring archivists’ approach to preserving Oklahoma’s past and compare it with the daily practices, personal views, and work ethic of a new generation of employees. Listening and learning from employees doing the same job at the end of their careers will create a more cohesive narrative of the often invisible workforce within public archival institutions around the state of Oklahoma.

Society often ignores the day-to-day endeavours done within the LAM fields. This is due in part to the prevalence of women who worked in institutions and repositories during the 19th and 20th centuries. The second wave of feminism, which coincided with the struggle for civil rights and labour rights, brought about new scholars examining the stories and histories of working women. A key product of this thesis then is to capture 21st century archival voices. These voices are brought to light in the oral history interviews and focus on their career experiences, not just personal ones. The different waves of feminism are examined in relation to how they interact both politically within the state of Oklahoma and in the professional lives of the archivists. Key feminist

¹⁹Terry Cook, ed., *Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions, Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011: p. 1.

scholars who specifically address the intersection of libraries, archives, and the invisible work of labour are Anita R. Schiller, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, Tuija Kautto, Pekka Henttonen, Sandra Gioia Treadway, Michelle Caswell, and Marika Cifor.²⁰ Their research and impact on this project is discussed in both the literature review and the following thematic chapters. The latter two scholars, Caswell and Cifor argue that an ‘ethics of care’ is needed and implemented by female LAM professionals today. This ‘ethics of care’ is central to the argument of this thesis that without the role of these retiring generational archivists and their meticulousness, the quality of Oklahoma’s historical record would be impaired.

Technology is constantly in a state of flux, and because of this, archivists and the technology utilised within archives are also ever-changing. I argue that the handling of technological changes, which occurred over the tenure of these professionals, is relevant to archivists today. These archivists have navigated the implementation and use of the

²⁰ Anita R. Schiller, ‘The Disadvantaged Majority: Women Employed in Libraries,’ *American Libraries*, 1, 4 (1970): pp.345-349 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25617879>>; Arlene Kaplan Daniels, ‘Invisible Work,’ *Social Problems* 34, 5 (1987): pp.403-415 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/800538>>; Tuija Kautto and Pekka Henttonen, ‘Records management as invisible work: A study of Finnish municipalities,’ *Government Information Quarterly*, 37, 4 (2020): pp.1-9 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101460>>; Sandra Gioia Treadway, ‘Plenary: Making Invisible Women Visible: Women’s History and Women in the Archives, 1970-2020,’ *MARAC 2021 Spring - Virtual Meeting* 12-16 April Given 12 April 2021 <<http://hdl.handle.net/1903/27018>> [accessed 8 December 2022]; Michelle Caswell, “‘The Archive’ Is Not an Archives: On Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies,” *Reconstruction* 16, 1 (2016) <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7bn4v1fk>> [Accessed 6 October 2023]; Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, ‘Revisiting a Feminist Ethics of Care in Archives: An Introductory Note,’ *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3, 2 (2021): pp.1-6. <<https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v3i2.162>> [accessed 17 January 2022]

personal computer, the accompanying and ever-evolving software, and iterations of many different programs. And that same generation of LAM professionals has seen the rise of digital archivists. This is the generational workforce which straddles the before and after of the personal computer, offering a unique voice on American technological life. Even more so is the LAM professional, where technological change is often discouraged or slow to happen in repositories due to staffing and funding issues. Obsolescence, migration, and sustainability are all examined through the writings of Erin Baucom, Tanya Clement, Wendy Hagenmaier, and Jennie Levine Knies.²¹ These are then paired with crucial informative national and regional websites for the profession, including blogs, by the Society of American Archivists, Society of Southwest Archivists, the National Council on Public History, and the Library of Congress' National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections to understand both accepted taught practices and theories of each.

The constraints of the project are first, the health and availability of retiring archivists. Many worked in the profession until their health no longer allowed them to do so. Also, upon retirement some individuals moved beyond the borders of Oklahoma, something technology can only sometimes overcome. Sometimes interviewees were not accessible on video conference tools and software. The work was interrupted by the

²¹ Erin Baucom, 'A Brief History of Digital Preservation,' in Jeremy Myntti and Jessalyn Zoom, eds. *Digital Preservation in Libraries: Preparing for a Sustainable Future*, Chicago: ALA Editions, 2019, pp.3-19; Tanya Clement, Wendy Hagenmaier, and Jennie Levine Knies, 'Toward a Notion of the Archive of the Future: Impressions of Practice by Librarians, Archivists, and Digital Humanities Scholars,' *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 83, 2 (April 2013): pp.112-130.

global COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected older individuals. Thus, health and availability became a greater concern following March 2020, when the lockdown was instituted in Oklahoma.

Researcher Assumptions

I assumed responsibility for conducting both the quantitative and qualitative data collection but did so in part with networked communities like library, archive, and museum professional organisations from both within the state of Oklahoma, regionally, and nationally. Initial contact was primarily made via email. I, as the researcher, believed this would be the most efficient method and garner the largest number of potential participants with some connection to Oklahoma. The assumption was also made that most archival professionals, whichever stage of their career, would be familiar with the technology of email and be able to access the Google Form survey. As seen through the literature of the profession, I could assume that archivists interact with technology on a routine basis; more details on archivist's interactions and use of technology can be found in chapters one and five respectively.

A second assumption was made that public archival, museum, historical societies, and Indigenous repositories would vary in collections and scope from the private religious archive in which I work creating further distance between myself and those from whom I collected oral histories. A mutual respect for the work undertaken, the similarities of the completing of daily tasks, and the terminology used within the profession would allow an insider perspective while the vastly different materials, formats, software, systems, funding sources, and motives behind the repositories would

create the outsider perspective needed to complete this project. This would be similar to the work of Charlotte Linde, a sociolinguistic outsider, who embedded herself in a three-year longitudinal study to examine insurance agencies and the stories that were told within and from without the organisation.²² While I did not embed myself in an external community the work done by Linde does parallel other areas which will be mentioned later in this section. The insider knowledge of being a practising archivist in the state of Oklahoma was a constant tension-filled endeavour to balance. On the one hand, I am within the Oklahoma archival community at large, but on the other, I am examining a different space, one in which I have not worked or accessed. Thus, the insider/outsider research perspective became integral to the work of this thesis. The importance of capturing the histories and voices of archival professionals and their experiences while at the same time identifying and examining my own place in the project allowed for the voices of those being interviewed to be amplified and made visible in a new and exciting way.

Two main biases that were identified by myself are first, working within the state of Oklahoma and second, understanding the changing societal forces behind both education and LAM professionals with insider knowledge. Oklahoma is currently and historically a politically and fiscally conservative state, which prompted me to acknowledge I may not always align with the politics or views expressed by those in positions of power. However, acknowledging these differing views allowed movement beyond the majority views into the average or minority perspectives of Oklahoma's history and economic conditions. By acknowledging these predispositions on my part, it

²² Charlotte Linde, *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory*. Oxford: OUP, 2009

is my hope that any discrepancies in these matters would not be the result of hidden motives. Instead, the motives of undertaking this thesis are to better advocate for the LAM field, as well as to create respect for the work completed on a daily basis by those working within the constraints placed upon them.

Structure

This project bridges the two disciplines of history and library and archival sciences; thus, the chapter structure navigates both disciplines. This adds to the originality of the argument since it is a crossover in both disciplines and styles of writing, adding to both fields. Chapter 1 begins with a multidisciplinary review of the scholarly literature as the ideas have progressed historically. This chapter focuses on five primary areas: archives and their necessary role in a democratic society; Oklahoma and what makes an Oklahoma archivist; oral history as a bridge to capturing archivists' stories and experiences; the often invisible workforce of women, especially those in the middle class; and how a traditionally fiscally and politically conservative state like Oklahoma can affect workforce transitions in LAM areas. Chapter 2 delves further into why oral history is a vital medium for knowledge transmission as it explains the historical use of oral narratives as well as a holistic rationale for a mixed methodological approach. It also examines why Oklahoma validates it as a necessary form of data collection in cultures with diverse populations. Chapter 3 contains the findings of the qualitative survey. Chapter 4 focuses on the voices of twenty-five archivists within Oklahoma and their answers to a predetermined set of questions. This formulaic layout of questions produced lengthier qualitative interview findings. The thematic analysis continued in Chapter 5

identifying the key findings of the mixed methodological approach through additional analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of both the quantitative and qualitative findings in the five areas of archives and democracy, being an Oklahoma archivist, oral history, invisible workforces, and Oklahoma's impact on the archival workforce. The interpretation and thematic synthesis of the five themes are crucial in determining how to better organise and advocate for the profession within Oklahoma.

Conclusion

Archivists are retiring in the state of Oklahoma and their voices and experiences are needed to fully understand the role they have played in capturing, creating, and preserving the historical record of the state. No study of archivists as their own socio-cultural group within this distinctive political and geographic locale exists in the literature. Probing different academic disciplines, discussions and examinations of archivists and placing the Oklahoma archivist within them allows the multidisciplinary nature of archival work to be considered. The thesis seeks to develop a better understanding of a particular generation of archivists' labour and to demonstrate the importance of their role; it looks at the value of these voices at a moment of professional change within the sector. Contributing to and extending the literature concerning archiving, Oklahoma, and the shifts engendered by generational change within the labour force, this research furthers our understanding of this vital and generative workforce.

Chapter 1

Methodology: Theory and Practice

Introduction

How we approach doing the work of history is just as important as reading and writing about it because it determines our positionality in the discipline. In his 1950 presidential address to the American Historical Association, Samuel Eliot Morison said: ‘Historical methodology, as I see it, is a product of common sense applied to circumstances.’²³ Common sense and positionality are equally important in the applied method used for this thesis, oral history. As Portelli has argued, oral history can be a profoundly enriching technique, diversifying our view of the past, adding nuance and complexity, and highlighting the human and social implications of ostensibly economic or cultural changes. Within this thesis, oral history interviews done in a specific geographical location underline my argument that taking a grassroots perspective – in this thesis, Oklahoma – can deepen our understanding of how change happens and is shaped by particular local contexts, imperatives, and pressures. Here I explore in greater depth the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies utilised as the approaches underpinning this research. By listening to the stories and viewpoints of archival

²³ Samuel Eliot Morison, ‘Faith of a Historian,’ Presidential address read at the annual dinner of the American Historical Association in Chicago on December 29, 1950. *American Historical Review* 56, 2 (January 1951): pp.261-75 found on AHA website <<https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/samuel-eliot-morison>> [accessed 15 April 2023]

professionals, the circumstances of their employment and experiences, we can understand their role within the American democratic system. As participant Stephens says,

I think there's value in saving some of our history... And I had started collecting some historical things at my desk and kind of informally started an archive. Started getting hooked up with the Department of Libraries and the Oklahoma Museum Association and learning more about how to care for collections and just kind of self-trained myself.²⁴

I argue here that archival professionals are a vital resource for Oklahoma in keeping the state's historical record and Oklahoman's construction of their own past. A mixed methodological approach of quantitative survey data and qualitative oral history interviews allows the work of archivists to be both formed by the raw data and informed by the stories told at a specific transition point in the workforce.

Overview of Methodology and Key Terminology

This thesis adopts a mixed methodological approach. First, oral history questions were developed, in part seeking to address absences and omissions in the literature. Chapter 2 identifies the gaps in the literature relating to Oklahoma-specific archivists and their role in the creation of institutional memory and organisation culture, as well as the political factors archivists often encounter working within Oklahoma's archives. Then, more general questions were put together, which served as the basis for the quantitative Google Form survey sent out to both state and regional LAM organisations. This general survey is like the A'CENSUS survey sent out to professionals nationally, with the expectation that all organisations whose LAM professionals engage in archival work will be represented in their data collection. Forty-three responded to this project's quantitative

²⁴ Amy Stephens, Interview by JJ Compton, 24 October 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, Transcript, pp.1-17. p.3.

section, resulting in a statistically significant sample size to the Oklahoma Archivists Association membership, which, as of 13 December 2022, totalled 103 active members.²⁵ This differs greatly from the A'CENSUS II data, which reported in 2022 one Oklahoma-specific organisation, in which only two survey participants identified as being a member.²⁶ The data collection began after both the quantitative and qualitative questions were approved by Swansea University's Ethics Review process. Second, some quantitative survey participants opted into participation in the oral history interviews on the general survey form, but more responses were needed to have a representative sample from within the state. I then contacted some colleagues outside of the survey who I knew through professional organisations to ask if they would be interested in participating. A representative sample of twenty-five was decided upon by myself and was recommended by my advisors, as this made up approximately half the number of quantitative participants and comprised a statistically significant sample size compared to the Oklahoma Archivists Association membership total at the time.

Central to the work of archivists in this study are the ideas of institutional memory and organisational culture and how archivists contribute to or feel they contribute to these

²⁵ Max Prud'homme, Email Correspondence 13 December 2022. The author emailed the newly elected Oklahoma Archivist Association President titled OAA Total Membership to which he replied 'I retrieve 103 members.' Historical data pulled from the OAA Board reports tracks the increase in membership since 2017 when OAA began, correlating to the duration of the project and number of subjects determined to be statistically significant. The data shows that in 2017, there were 31; in 2018, there were 23; in 2019, there were 38; in 2020, there were 26; in 2021, there were incomplete data in the file; and in 2022, there were 121 members. The jump in membership during the last two years, 2022-2023, may be due to OAA membership drive push, leadership, or just the number of professionals state-wide learning of the organisation. Whatever the cause, it appears that the work of this thesis could not be at a better time for examining the changing LAM profession in Oklahoma.

²⁶ Skinner and Hulbert, A'CENSUS II, 2022. The specific organisation is the Oklahoma Conservation Congress, and the membership went from 14 in 2006 to 2 in 2022 reports. This was not an organisation specifically named on the quantitative survey. However, a generic question was posed about archival membership in the following way: 'Other (please specify in the next question).' For more about these results, see Chapters 3 and 4.

on a personal and professional level. As mentioned in the previous section, Charlotte Linde's longitudinal study of a life insurance company's employees and the stories they repeatedly told themselves as a group and as individuals parallels the stories archivists tell themselves.²⁷ The ideas of repeated stories in both group and individual telling become central to the institutional and cultural memory identification examined in this thesis. These stories are then juxtaposed with Antonio Gómez's focus on 'archives as fully part of the history of written culture.'²⁸ The ideas of written and unwritten history and institutional and cultural memory are examined through the interviews, narratives, and stories of Oklahoma archivists.

Also, due to the merging in the literature of library, archival, and museum fields, these are now grouped together into the abbreviated LAM.²⁹ This is important because the abbreviated combining of the three fields is a common occurrence throughout the thesis and demonstrates the shrinking nature of all three professions and the convergence

²⁷ Ibid, p.95.

²⁸ Antonio Castillo Gómez, 'The New Culture of Archives in Early Modern Spain,' *European History Quarterly* 46, 3 (2016): p.546.

²⁹ Diane M. Zorich, Günter Waibel and Ricky Erway, 'Beyond the Silos of the LAMs Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums,' *OCLC Research Report* September 2008 Dublin, Ohio p.1-59 <<https://doi.org/10.25333/x187-3w53>> uses the LAM abbreviation throughout; a 2016 whitepaper on a conference exchange program utilising professions from these fields says: 'The 2016 Collective Wisdom: Library, Archives and Museum (LAM) Conference Exchange program brought together 18 librarians, archivists and museum professionals to form a cohort charged with exploring cross-sector practices and culture with an eye toward increasing interdisciplinary collaborations and continuing education.' Stephanie Allen, Sofía Becerra-Licha, Kenn Bicknell, Jacqueline E. Chapman, Genna Duplisea, M. Alison Eisendrath, Joe Filapek, Jan Levinson Hebbard, James Himpfill, Jeffrey Inscho, Susan M. Irwin, Elizabeth Joffrion, Stephanie Baltzer Kom, Melissa Levine, Christina E. Newton, Dr. Mega Subramaniam, Gina Watkinson, and Darla Wegener, *Collective Wisdom: An Exploration of Library, Archives and Museum Cultures*. Dublin, Ohio: 2017. <<https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/2017/collective-wisdom-white-paper.pdf>>; And from the foreword of Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard, and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds. *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, one of the contributors says, 'this book tackles one of the most debated issues in the recent history of collections institutions: convergence. To what extent are libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) converging in the digital age?' Joyce Ray, p. vii.

of the work they do, adding to the indispensability of this project as a snapshot in time of the work of Oklahoma archivists.

Within this thesis, historic preservation and historic conservation will be used interchangeably. Each term is traditionally defined by ‘preservation usually refers to the overall management and care of collections, while conservation is the treatment of individual items or collections of items.’³⁰ However, both are activities completed by archival professionals thus the interchangeable language. Coupled with institutional stories in preservation and conservation, the historic landscape of Oklahoma lends itself to the incorporation of institutional memory as a cornerstone of the profession. Those retainers of institutional memory then become knowledge creators, managers, and disseminators of history.

In examining Oklahoma as its own culture apart from the rest of the United States, despite having some general characteristics with the Southern states and the Midwestern states, this thesis also shows that archivists have their own subculture within the greater Oklahoma community.³¹ The idea of subcultures has long been debated in the disciplines of anthropology and ethnography alike. The definition this thesis will focus on is the following one:

Subcultures are generally groups that are perceived to deviate from the normative standards of the dominant culture, as this is variously defined according to age, sexuality, and taste in economic, racial, and gendered terms. Subcultures are often positioned socially and analytically as disenfranchised, subordinate, subaltern, or subterranean. Subcultures, and academics who study them, often distinguish themselves as being oppositional, alternative, and countercultural, as being defined against others, i.e., "squares" or "the mainstream." They also differentiate

³⁰ Michele V. Cloonan, ‘The Boundaries of Preservation and Conservation Research,’ *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 46, 2 (2011): pp.220-29, p. 221 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23053599>>

³¹ Richard Mize, ‘Hey, y’all, be glad Oklahoma is in the South,’ *The Oklahoman* 20 November 2004 <<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/2004/11/20/hey-yall-be-glad-oklahoma-is-in-the-south/61965421007/>> [accessed 20 December 2022]

within themselves and in so doing create hierarchies of participation, knowledge, and taste.³²

While archives have also been seen in the literature as places of power and archivists have been framed as controllers of the past, within those repositories that have governing bodies and boards, archivists are a subordinate workforce.³³ These boards and governing bodies often create knowledge hierarchies, all while the democratic desire for informed citizenry remains central to the existence of the archive and its employees. The above definition of subculture will also incorporate an idea first presented in the 1970s from the discipline of sociology, which claims that subcultures have a ‘prevalence of specific lingo or jargon not shared with the larger society.’³⁴ Archivists, like so many other workforce groups, have their own languages, jargon, and terminology not readily understood by those outside the archival profession. The terminology is so vast and prevalent within the profession that the Society of American Archivists created an online dictionary for archival professionals to utilise in their daily work, claiming it is the ‘foremost reference on the archival lexicon. Entries draw primarily from the professional literature in the United States and Canada.’³⁵ These two definitions of how subculture functions and communications allow for archivists to be established and then examined as their own socio-subcultural group within the larger state of Oklahoma.

³² Amy Herzog, Joanna Mitchell, and Lisa Soccio, ‘Interrogating Subcultures,’ *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies* Issue 2 1999

<https://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue2/introduction.htm> [accessed 20 December 2022]

³³ Terry Cook, ed. *Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions, Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011 which is the work that led to the development of this thesis project, learning the role Oklahoma plays within and without the archivist world described here.

³⁴ Hans Sebald, ‘Subculture: Problems of Definition and Measurement,’ *International Review of Modern Sociology* 5, 1 (1975): pp.82–89. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41420548>>

³⁵ Society of American Archivists, ‘Dictionary of Archives Terminology,’ *Society of American Archivists Website* <<https://dictionary.archivists.org/>> [accessed 20 December 2022]

Examining other Disciplines with Oral History

Twentieth century France generated historians, psychologists, sociologists, and art historians whose scrutiny of repositories examined the interplay of archives with things like narrative and memory. However, the knowledge production of the people behind the preservation is only beginning to be prevalent in twenty-first century publications specifically within the archival and history fields.³⁶ Furthermore, in November of 2018, the Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment was created by the Society of American Archivists (SAA); its purpose included ‘providing up-to-date and reliable basic facts and figures about archives and archivists,’ a first national step on the examination of the archival profession.³⁷ Hopefully by breaking down this national initiative into a state-level examination, the work produced by this thesis can be used as a case study for other state archivists to examine their own identity and how their place in a culture of assessment can fit into the national identity of archivists, an identity traditionally told only by national organisations like SAA. Archivists as a professional body need to

³⁶ For example, the art world began to scrutinise archives as documented in Ian Farr, ed. *Memory: Documents of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012, when it says of early 21st century researchers, ‘Discovered by the art world in the early years of this century, [Miroslav] Tichy’s images [of 1960s through the 1980s] became iconic of a fin-de-siècle tendency in art to turn not only towards archives and histories, the relics of modernities passed, but to explore, in themselves, the phenomena of ‘haunting’ and the activation of memory,’ p.12, and science began to look at the process of archiving itself in the work Lorraine Datson, ed. *Science in the Archives: Pasts, Presents, Futures*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, when she says, ‘The archive is not and cannot be unchanging. But its usable past must be spliced and respliced with a mutable present in order to guarantee a usable future. Just because continuity is the essence of the scientific archive, to overlook the investment in making the resources of the past, present, and future commensurable, especially at moments of rupture-whether caused by new discoveries, new theories, new instruments, or new media – is to miss the main point of Third Nature: to annihilate time,’ p.11. Thus, fields external to libraries, archives, and history are beginning to examine their own work in light of archival documents and practices; Ian Farr, ed., ‘Introduction: Not Quite How I Remember It,’ *Memory: Documents of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012, p.20.

³⁷ ‘Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment,’ *Society of American Archivists*, <<https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Research-Data-Assessment>> [accessed 3 January 2019]

acquire ‘a knowledge of the larger context of its collective struggles and become capable of a wider transformative role in society.’³⁸ These regional and state-level grassroots organisations need to take their place among the archivist’s national identity narratives.

Oral history is a useful tool for understanding the archival history of Oklahoma. By looking at historical, cultural, and popular definitions of what it means to be an Oklahoman, as well as the financial situation facing the state in recent years, a socio-subcultural group will be established for the participants. The grassroots organising that occurs within this social group is discussed in the oral history narratives of participants to demonstrate the fiscal difficulties. And finally, workforce transitions across America, and specifically Oklahoma, will inform the urgency of capturing oral history interviews at this juncture in time. By examining the specific geographic area of Oklahoma in a nation that labels it often as a flyover state, along with the larger American cultural workforce transition, a gap will be filled in both cultural and institutional entities in the state. Participant’s oral history accounts are then paired with the practices and procedures of newly hired professionals within the same field, thus creating a more cohesive narrative of what it means to have been and to be an Oklahoma archivist to have a profession which can qualitatively assess itself and place itself with the national workforce landscape.

³⁸ Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular Memory: Theory, politics, method,’ p.47. [Extracted with permission from R. Johnson, et al (eds.), *Making Histories: Studies in History-writing and Politics*, London: Hutchinson, 1982, p. 206-220]

Feminist Theory and Archives

Feminist theory is another useful field in examining archivists as a collective group. This is due to that fact that only recently have humanities scholars begun to acknowledge the value and necessity of archival studies as a discipline. Caswell points this out when she states these scholars ‘have been blind to the intellectual contributions and labor of a field that has been construed as predominately female, professional (this is, not academic), and service-oriented, and as such, unworthy of engagement.’³⁹ She points out the longstanding and statistically backed fact that archives and LAM works are predominately female. She further argues that professions with predominately female workers, paralleling archives with the fields of nursing and education, the archivist field has ‘been relegated to the realm of practice, their work deskilled, their labor devalued, their expertise unacknowledged.’⁴⁰ This is another justification for the work on this thesis, to bring another segment of the population which may have been ignored or underwritten due to their gender.

Caswell along with her colleague Cifor go on to expound on why a feminist theory lens is important in viewing archival work. They argue for the empathy and ethics of care which archivists can provide through their work, saying ‘from the approach of a feminist ethics of care, archivists are seen as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual affective responsibility.’⁴¹ They point out this distinction is to counteract the masculinized tradition of archival

³⁹ Caswell, “‘The Archive’ is Not an Archive.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, ‘From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives,’ *Archivaria* 81 (May 2016), pp.23-43, p.24
<<https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13557>>

theory by shifting it from a predominately right placement. But this interpretation should not be viewed as caring because of the female gender, instead it should be because of the radicalized view of empathy the theory entails. And this is where oral history becomes paramount to the examination of archival colleagues in Oklahoma, because ‘radical empathy requires closeness between researcher and subject, and that the researcher be fully attuned to the complexities of the research context.’⁴² Radical empathy allows the researcher to be shaped through the process of oral history, being ‘shaped by another’s experiences, without blurring the lines between the self and the other.’⁴³ Thus the ethics of care along with the insider/outsider conundrum discussed later in this chapter help orient my placement in the work not only of archiving but of using the method of oral history to do so. Thus, the feminist ethics of care theory allows for acquisition of experiences through radical empathy while at the same time maintaining researcher self-identity through the process of oral history collection.

Cifor just a year earlier argued for the process of affect to be included in discussions of social justice within the archival realm. While this thesis doesn’t specifically address social justice, it does incorporate two of the three ideas of affect which Cifor argues for in archival use. First, it includes work on the grassroots of organising of archivists in order to facilitate ways to work against Oklahoma’s political norms of power, in a traditionally politically and economically conservative state. Second, the grassroots organising allows for networked conversations and methods of use in archives, in order that ways of arranging and describing collections occur in different institutions. For as Cifor concludes, ‘affect theory also offers theoretical tools for

⁴² Ibid, p.31.

⁴³ Ibid.

engaging in the present to improve the ways we perform, to deepen our analyses and understandings, and to contest and reinterpret archival functions and concerns, including appraisal, witnessing and access and use...'⁴⁴ Grassroots organizing allows these kinds of theories and practices to be discussed on a regular basis, especially when so many archival repositories and LAM institutions across Oklahoma operate in a Lone Arranger model.

More recently, Caswell has set out an emergent argument around the importance of feminist standpoint appraisal. She describes it this way:

In valuing the unique insights gleaned by people on the margins, feminist standpoint appraisal refuses the notion that archivists from oppressed communities must overcome their positionalities to meet institutional goals and professional demands for neutrality, but rather, values and leverages the insights gained from outsider status, viewing the attendant insights as assets, rather than detriments, to the archival endeavor. Furthermore, feminist standpoint appraisal calls on archivists who inhabit dominant identities to acknowledge their *oppressor* standpoints and actively work to dismantle them.⁴⁵

Again, Caswell is oriented in the social justice branch of archival theory, but her definitions can be widely applied across those who believe social justice is called for and those who argue for human justice, a discussion in the next paragraph. But circling back to feminist standpoint appraisal, the insider/outsider researcher conundrum becomes a value-added tool when coupled with Caswell's theory. When the researcher becomes aware of their own identity place and then leverages the assets of being an outsider, it empowers rather than neutralises both their own voice and the voice(s) of those being told through the documents housed in archives or recorded through oral history. Furthermore,

⁴⁴ Cifor, 'Affecting Relations,' p.27.

⁴⁵ Michelle Caswell, 'Dusting for Fingerprints: Introducing Feminist Standpoint Appraisal,' *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3;1 (2019): pp.1-36, p.7
<<https://journals.litwinbooks.com/index.php/jclis/article/view/113/67>>

these archivists acknowledging that archives are not neutral and their communities as overlooked or oppressed then stand against the fiscally and politically conservative power in Oklahoma.

Feminist theory is often coupled with social justice work of archivists, as seen above in the writings of Caswell and Cifor. However, Mark Green suggests that beyond social justice exists an archival effort, as each person or practitioner has their own ethical standards their own agency, and in seeking a joining of social justice as archivists, would this place injustice on another or privilege one body about another. He argues instead for doing the work of archiving first which is to:

Pursue, acquire, and make available the records that will, among other things, allow social justice crusaders to show that injustice has occurred. Without the work of the archivists it is impossible to present proof. If we believe in the goal of something called social justice, we can be proud our profession ensures the relevant documentation survives. If we don't believe in social justice so-called, we can still be proud that our archives preserve memory and meaning for all facets of society.⁴⁶

In doing the work of archiving, he argues this prepares for restorative justice, preserving memory, and meaning making for archivists themselves. Caswell argues against this immediately in a letter to the editor that she believes 'social justice is a human imperative and not just an archival one...we have a primary ethical responsibility as humans to work towards a more justice society.'⁴⁷ She goes on to argue against points that he made, particularly calling out his lack of a definition of social justice. Greene responds again with another letter to the editor in which he concludes there now is a 'need for a wide

⁴⁶ Mark A. Greene, 'A Critique of Social Justice as an Archival Imperative: What Is It We're Doing That's All That Important?' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.302-334, p.238 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490357?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents>

⁴⁷ Michelle Caswell, 'Not Just Between Us: A Riposte to Mark Green,' *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.605-607, p.605 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>

conversation about social justice and archival practice and theory.⁴⁸ For the work of this these, I will take the side of Jimerson, who argues in response to both Caswell and Greene, that ‘this is not a debate with only two sides, not an argument limited to two authors.’⁴⁹ This thesis includes both sides of the debate, with oral history questions having been articulated to generate Oklahoma archivist’s perspectives on practices within the archive and personally. In order to pull in another theory which encompasses both, I rely on Cline’s use of ‘Archival Virtue’ to bridge Caswell and Greene’s view on humanity, social justice, and archival work which is discussed in the next section. Thus, feminist theory occupies a central place in the discussion of Oklahoma archival processes and policies.

Archives & Democracy

One of America’s founding democratic principles is the ability to create informed citizens. For as founding father Thomas Jefferson put it: ‘knowledge is power.’⁵⁰ Knowing is a key component of becoming an American citizen as well, which is why immigrants to the United States must be able to demonstrate as part of the naturalisation process ‘a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government, ...a loyalty to

⁴⁸ Mark A. Greene, ‘To the Editor,’ *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.607-608, p.608 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>

⁴⁹ Randall C. Jimerson, ‘Archivists and Social Responsibility: A Response to Mark Greene,’ *The American Archivist* 76;2 (Fall/Winter 2013): pp.335-345, p.344 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490375?seq=1>>

⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson Foundation, ‘Knowledge is Power (Quotation),’ *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia* <<https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/knowledge-power-quotations/>> [accessed 7 December 2022] Jefferson used it four times in various correspondence despite ‘is often attributed to Francis Bacon, from his *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597).’

the principles of the U.S. Constitution; and be willing to take the Oath of Allegiance.’⁵¹ Thus, knowledge becomes integral to an informed people. In comparison, not all high schools require civics or government classes to inform younger citizens.⁵² This creates a gap in information literacy, a key component of being informed citizens, especially of and about the country in which these students were born and attend school. Or, as a scholar wrestling with the validity of post-Civil War historic monuments writes:

Because simply knowing our history cannot redeem us, cannot, as they say in Selma, get us to the “beyond.” Knowledge alone cannot make the nation more just or equitable, nor does it create or change policy. Knowledge alone cannot undo what’s been done in white America’s name. What a clear-eyed sense of American history can do, however, is show us how to look forward and backward at the same time, to see the past marks the present like the waterline left after a flood...we might remember the country more fully, and in so doing, join in the work of reconstructing it.⁵³

Thus, knowing is only a small part of being an informed citizen. Education needs to provide a clearer sense of history for its current and future generations. Archivists help to inform and contextualise the events of the past in light of the future.

Contextualised history, contributed to by the work of archivists and interpretations by historians, coupled with a knowledge of the past in relation to the present for the future, is what will make truly informed citizens. Scott Cline argues for the *common good* as part of archival virtue, a moral imperative in the work of archivists when he adapts it to archival theory, in which he asks archivists

⁵¹ United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, ‘Become a U.S. Citizen Through Naturalization,’ *USCIS* <<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/explore-my-options/become-a-us-citizen-through-naturalization>> [accessed 7 December 2022]

⁵² Debra Viadero, Sasha Jones, and Laura Baker, ‘Data: Most States Require History, But Not Civics,’ *Education Week* 23 October 2018 <<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/data-most-states-require-history-but-not-civics>> [accessed 10 December 2022]

⁵³ Connor Towne O’Neill, *Down Along with the Devil’s Bones: A Reckoning with Monuments, Memory, and the Legacy of White Supremacy*, Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2020, p.251.

to commit collectively to a vision for a just and equitable society, to embrace difference and change as normal, to construct relationships that obligate us to *the other*, to broker dialogue and civil discourse and to make hospitality an archival value.⁵⁴

Informed citizens can then work on creating a more equitable and just society through the writing of policy based on historical context as helped by the archival virtue held up by archivists in their daily work. All Americans, from children to immigrants, must be taught the basics of what democracy means, both as a political ideal and as a historical precedent for the United States. Archivists from other areas of the world, in this case, Africa, point out that ‘those who live in Western liberal democracies tend to take it for granted that freedom of expression and a free press are essential requirements for good government and a healthy democracy.’⁵⁵ American archivists and those working within libraries and museums, historic preservation, and history classrooms all play a part in doing the work of maintaining the democratic society ideal of the informed citizenry through the moral imperative of archival virtue.

Beyond contextualisation and democracy, themselves often problematic within the profession, this thesis aims to characterise the profession in the complex social creation that is human history. For as Eastwood argues, ‘when archivists try to characterize the nature of archives, they usually try to characterize the qualities or properties and attributes which all archives, no matter the situation of their creation, are

⁵⁴ Scott Cline, *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021, p.9.

⁵⁵ Kimberly Barata, Piers Cain, Dawn Routledge, and Justus Wamukoya, ‘Information for Accountability Workshops: Their Role in Promoting Access to Information’ in Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, eds. *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 2002 pp.67-87, p.68,

endowed.⁵⁶ While his discussion revolves around the goals and aims for private archives verses public ones, characterisation of any aggregate dealing with complex humans is difficult. This has not stopped anyone from trying, and this thesis is another attempt to wrestle with the idea of place and time as a schema of examination. However, it is ultimately a snapshot in time of one person looking at Oklahoma colleagues, trying to wrangle with why and how archivists do archival work.

Archivists have long recognised the need to help educate others in their profession and society at large about their work. The idea of archives as part of a society's cultural heritage did not really come to fruition until the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Archives before the eighteenth century were formal and official, believed to help create order for society and those in power.⁵⁸ But a turn occurred in the late eighteenth century, with views of authority and power in archives aligned with the American Revolution's democratic importance of informed citizenry. The latter half of the nineteenth century in Europe's view of archives thus cemented the 'modern European historiography on positivist feet.'⁵⁹ The twentieth century in the United States saw archival professionals 'with identities separate from academic historians' who 'began to develop their own networks and communication venues' as an indication of the beginning of archivists as their socio-

⁵⁶ Terry Eastwood, 'A Contested Realm: The Nature of Archives and Archival Science,' In and Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood, eds. *Currents of Archival Thinking*, 2nd edn. New York: Bloomsbury, 2017 pp.3-23, p.4.

⁵⁷ Elise Garritzen and Derek Kane O'Leary, 'Nineteenth-Century Archives,' in Suzanne M. Stauffer, ed., *Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions through the Ages*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, pp.181-194, p.182

⁵⁸ Francis X. Blouin, Jr., and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p.17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.29.

subculture in society doing the work of American democracy.⁶⁰ In early twenty-first century America, a 2002 collaboration of archivists who have worked in both archives and records management, traditional and unconventional, wrote a book to ‘promote to a wider audience the significance of the role records play in constituting society.’⁶¹ The need to educate on the nature and work of the profession is now paramount to the continuation of it as a cultural heritage necessity in American democracy.

Explanation, Secrecy, Memory, and Trust are the four tenets of what make up the informed citizenry of democratic society, according to Cox and Wallace.⁶² Being educated and informed, with information not hidden or obfuscated, allows memory to enter into spaces and places when records are destroyed, all in the hopes of creating trust with the public. One archivist, in the midst of a legal battle, tells of his role in having to testify in court about the proper care, handling, and archival processes done or not done in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s personal papers. Despite the contentious nature of the institutions and archival repositories involved, if we as archivists ‘can derive lessons about the nature of archival materials and the importance of their proper care, the case will have served a larger, more important purpose.’⁶³ Thus the role of archival community is not only to do the work within their own repositories, but to help make the work done within repositories known and valued, advocated for and adhered to, in order

⁶⁰ Karen F. Gracy, ‘Twentieth-Century Archives,’ in Suzanne M. Stauffer, ed., *Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions through the Ages*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, pp.221-234, p.224.

⁶¹ Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, ‘Introduction’ in Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, eds. *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*, Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 2002: pp.1-180, p.1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ James M. O’Toole, ‘Archives on Trial: The Strange Case of the Martin Luther King, Jr.’, in Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, eds. *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*, Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 2002, pp.21-35, p.34.

to allow the stories within the papers, like that of the Martin Luther King, Jr., collection, to be examined, interpreted, and ultimately revealed to the public at large.

Secrecy and document destruction are the enemies of a continued, open democratic government. In the digital age, the call to have all information online and digitised is a conundrum for many repositories and those who work in them. A professional in the library, archives, and museum field resorted to venting her frustration on Twitter on 22 November 2019, even before the COVID-19 crisis heightened the outcry, saying ‘Your periodic reminder that archives need substantial people-power, time and money to make things as accessible as we (archivists) would really like them to be. All the access. For all the people. But it’s not.easy.or.free.’⁶⁴ Beyond the anecdotal tweet is the small percentage digitised by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) of their 13.5 billion paper records: 205,039,338 have been digitised, or 1.52%.⁶⁵ At this rate of digitising, the ingest of new materials will far outweigh the paper-based ones for generations, despite the ratio of digital files to paper-based ones having changed significantly in the Internet era. Even more challenging is the general public’s demands for full-text, transcribed, and translated document availability on the touch of a screen. Beyond the amount of incoming material in repositories worldwide there exists damage done to repositories through natural disasters, closings through lack of funding, and in the case of the Russia-Ukraine war, irreparable damage. While the war in the Ukraine sparked an overwhelming worldwide support to digitise, these disasters both natural and

⁶⁴ Kate Madison (@K8_Madison 22 November 2019) ‘Your periodic reminder that archives need substantial people-power, time and money to make things as accessible as we (archivists) would really like them to be. All the access. For all the people. But it’s not.easy.or.free.’ (tweet) URL removed as of 2022. [accessed 23 November 2019]

⁶⁵ National Archives and Records Administration, ‘National Archives by the Numbers,’ *Archives.gov* posted 30 September 2022 <<https://www.archives.gov/about/info/national-archives-by-the-numbers>> [accessed 20 December 2022]

human made do not bode well for repositories, despite a global workforce committed to providing access to archival materials.⁶⁶ Secrecy, whether due to cover-up, mishandling, or mishap, only diminishes public trust when it comes to archives and the people working in them.

The role of memory will be examined later in this chapter in relation to oral history, as well as a discussion of using memory in a mixed methodological approach that allows for a more holistic understanding of Oklahoma's archival community. This brings us to the fourth category laid out by Cox and Wallace, trust, which, as shown above, goes hand in hand with secrecy. When secrecy abounds in any organisation, trust is hard to come by from both the people inside and outside the organisation. In the United States, archivists adhere to the Society of American Archivists Code of Ethics which are 'principles of the profession' and 'provide guidance to archivists and address and increase awareness of ethical concerns among archivists, their colleagues, and the rest of

⁶⁶ Pranshu Verma, 'Meet the 1,300 librarians racing to back up Ukraine's digital archives,' *The Washington Post* 8 April 2022 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/04/08/ukraine-digital-history/>> [accessed 8 April 2022]; National Archives and Records Administration, 'Seattle Facility Approved for Closure,' *Archives.gov* 27 January 2020 <<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2020/mr20-37>> [accessed 21 December 2022] was the press release for the closure but Eric Lacitis reports of Biden's halting of the sale 14 months later Eric Lacitis 'Biden administration halts sale of National Archives in Seattle,' *The Seattle Times* 8 April 2021 <<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/biden-administration-halts-sale-of-national-archives-at-seattle/>> [accessed 21 December 2022]; Nora McGreevy, 'Why the Cape Town Fire Is a Devastating Loss for South African Cultural Heritage,' *Smithsonian Magazine* 20 April 2021 <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/cultural-heritage-historic-library-destroyed-south-africa-blaze-180977539/>> [accessed 21 December 2022] and while some collections were eventually found, another source reported 'Restoring the archives, which contain unpublished primary resources, is proving to be even more time-consuming. Unlike published collections, the archival material does not have barcodes and numbers, so traceability is a challenge,' Daniel Steyn, 'South Africa: Restoring UCT's Burnt Archives Will Take Years,' *All Africa* 18 July 2022 <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202207150013.html>> [accessed 21 December 2022] And because of the threat of fire to repositories seminars have started being held like the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA)'s annual meeting and training day aptly named 'Fire in the Archives' see <<https://aranewprofessionals.wordpress.com/2015/10/13/eventswatch-fire-in-the-archives/>> for more on the speakers and discussions covered; Jane D. Monsoon, *Getting Started with Digital Collections: Scaling to Fit Your Organization*, Chicago: ALA Editions, 2017, p.vii. She argues that 'even for the largest cultural heritage institutions, this expectation can be difficult to meet...' and this was published before COVID-19 strengthened the cry for digital information.

society’ in the areas of Professional Relationships, Judgment, Authenticity, Security and Protection, Access and Use, Privacy, and Trust.⁶⁷ This last point mentioned in the code of ethics is what the work of the profession is centred around. One archivist explains it this way ‘[the] practical realities of our work often impose limits on our autonomy. The codes we look to for guidance are connected to issues of power and prestige that have little to do with making ethical decisions. It is a tangled situation at best.’⁶⁸ Despite the complexities of being an archivist in a structure birthed out of colonialism and power hierarchies, the work of the archivist in the United States is crucial to an informed citizenry and maintaining a free and democratic society.

Similarly, museum professionals, grouped as part of the LAM industry through this thesis, argue that local museums are ‘museums of influence, deserving critical and public attention because they may ultimately tell scholars more about contemporary life that all the branches of the Smithsonian put together’ and that ‘no matter how quirky, or dusty, or unprofessional they might seem [they] offer glimpses at the contradictions and dilemmas evident in any effort to present or represent culture.’⁶⁹ The work of museum professionals, especially those on a local, often smaller, scale, are vital to the telling of complexities of the social groups in which they are located. This placement of museums allows the narratives of the citizens within the group to be publicised. The American Alliance of Museums’ (AAM) Code of Ethics states it this way: ‘they are organized as

⁶⁷ Society of American Archivists, ‘SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,’ *Society of American Archivists Website* last updated August 2020 <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics#code_of_ethics> [accessed 21 December 2022]

⁶⁸ Glenn Dingwall, ‘Trusting Archivists: The Role of Archival Ethics Codes in Establishing Public Faith,’ *The American Archivist* 67, 1 (2004): pp.11-30, p.12 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40294244>>

⁶⁹ Amy K. Levin, ‘Why Local Museums Matter,’ in Amy K. Levin and Joshua G. Adair, eds., *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, 2nd edn. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, pp.3-21, p.19.

public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve.⁷⁰ Thus, their privileged place in a democratic society and the trust granted to them are also vital to maintaining local communities' histories and stories. For archivists, this is why the first sentence on the SAA Code of Ethics speaks to the motives of the workers in this entangled profession. 'Archivists should not take advantage of their privileged access to and control of records and collections.'⁷¹ The creation of public trust combined with the reality of privileged access point again to why taking oral histories from retiring archivists in LAM fields is so needed and relevant to today's generation of archival professionals – hearing how they approached these ideas and learned to balance them in order to perform the daily work of democracy both within and external to their careers in Oklahoma repositories.

Memory Construction and Archivists

The long held belief of the archive as the record keeper of society and its connection to any institution can be found in the work of theologian John E. Sharp, who writes to introduce readers to the Archives of the Mennonite Church articulating they 'exist in order to preserve and maintain the memory of the people and institutions they serve...to provide perspective and a context for understanding our own time and place.'⁷² Antonio Gómez goes on to define what archives are when he writes, 'Archives are fully

⁷⁰ American Alliance of Museums, 'Code of Ethics for Museums,' *AAM website* last amended 2000 <<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums/>> [accessed 27 December 2022]

⁷¹ Society of American Archivists, 'SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,' *Society of American Archivists Website* last updated August 2020 <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics#code_of_ethics> [accessed 21 December 2022]

⁷² John E. Sharp, 'Who's Minding Your Institutional Memory?' *Journal of Religious & Theological Information*, 2000, 3(1): pp.22-23.

part of the history of written culture... [They] include all the testimonies, practices, representations and agents involved in the different stages of the writing process, namely the production, reception and preservation of written documents.⁷³ He argues the significance of written and documented words in making up archives, much like the work of Cox and Wallace, as well as the role records play in the creation of a democratic society. Jeannette Bastian explores how archivists ‘facilitate the construction of memory’ in a Caribbean Community through the work they do in the archives with their ‘role being paramount’ in the repository and in the community.⁷⁴ By comparing Linde’s work in the insurance company, Gómez’ definition of what makes up an archive, and the work of Bastian within the Caribbean community, the establishment of an archive as both a place of unheard narrative and the repository as a place to define and contextualise information cumulatively enables an institution’s place to be established in both space and time.

Logically the next question that arises is if the archive is of such value to society, how does this correlate to the value of the people working within said archives? How do their positions move beyond the established space and time of place set down in the traditional historical record? These questions can be examined in the archival work of anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot whose work on archives, power, and silences began to reshape the conversations of practitioners.⁷⁵ Combining the ideas of Trouillot

⁷³ Gómez, *European History Quarterly*, p.546.

⁷⁴ Jeannette Allis Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*, Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2003, p.6. She further argues that archivists do this through the ‘accession, appraisal, preservation, housing and maintenance’ of the records.

⁷⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. In his introduction, he says, ‘This is a book about history and power. It deals with the many ways in which the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contributions of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production. The forces I expose are less visible

with that of philosopher Jacques Derrida, who is known for his deconstruction within the archive and its use in the pursuit of justice provides additional paradigms to examine archivists and their positionality.⁷⁶ Beyond these deconstructionist theorists talking about ‘the archive’, newer works haven been written that ‘emphasize the active role of actually existing archival repositories and institutions’ as coexisting in both the deconstructed space and places of construction of memory for often powerless cultures within the prevailing dominant cultural voice.⁷⁷ This is why examining the people working within them, and the networking, partnering, and collaborating they do externally becomes so crucial to examine. Ultimately this points to a profession which values the historical record in its entirety and from all points of view but also the physical space for this coming together – for research, to be heard and to contextualise history for future generations.

Studying archival practitioners is essential because the purpose and nature of an archive is evolving. Valerie Johnson posits that ‘the role of archivist itself needs clarification, by archivists themselves.’⁷⁸ To begin to study the archival profession in the United States, it is important to know what differentiates the practices of today from

than gunfire, class property, or political crusades. I want to argue that they are no less powerful,’ p.xix. It has become a seminal work on understanding who tells the history of any culture.

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Eric Prenowitz, translator. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, in which he distinguishes between the archive and the archives, and the preservation of memory associated with both, writing, ‘There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive,’ p.19.

⁷⁷ Jason Lustig, *A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p.3. Lustig argues his book ‘offers a cohesive history that charts the functions archives have played in Jewish life, their relation to the wider history of archives, and the place of archives in structuring power dynamics and cultural hegemonies, by arguing that archives can be sites of power for the powerless while remaining sites of cultural domination.’ I propose this can be done by combining oral history with the people who are doing the work.

⁷⁸ Valerie Johnson, ‘Solutions to the Silence,’ *The Silence of the Archive*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017: p.146.

those used by the practitioners of the past. A common textbook for archival programs in the United States says,

It is fair to say that a large proportion of the Federal, State, municipal, corporate, and commercial records centers in this country evolved from the Army and Navy record centers of World War II and that many of those responsible for the present-day records centers either have experience in the early centers or were trained by others who did have such experience.⁷⁹

Thus, many of the first American archival professionals began their careers post-World War II, after gaining experiences within archives during the war time years. These post-war practitioners were writing the policy statements and collection development materials for their institutions. They were laying the cornerstones and foundations, principles and methods, down for the next generation of archival practitioners. That same text identifies the primary role of American archivists as those professionals who ‘seek to preserve without essential change the documentary materials entrusted to them. Archivists also take all necessary actions to make materials fully available for appropriate use in the present and the future.’⁸⁰ And while archival theory continues to develop and evolve, one priority of keepers of the historical record remains, in educating future professionals. In 2019, the *Encyclopedia of Archival Writers* was published; within its 553 pages documenting leading archival writers around the world, only two mentions of Oklahomans can be found, neither of whom resided in the state, opting to relocate to areas of the United States more conducive to the work, study, and publication of archival

⁷⁹ Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, eds., *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice*, Washington DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1984, p.48.

⁸⁰ Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, eds., *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice*, Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1984, p.xiii.

theory and methodology.⁸¹ Thus, Oklahoma has not been seen as a major contributor to the archival discussions in the larger landscape of archival scholars and practitioners.

Scholars argue the LAM professions are changing due to technology, but the profession and its place in culture are much more relevant and needed in today's post-truth world.⁸² Theimer rationalises that instead of fighting against technology, practitioners need to recognise when the technological theories make sense and be aware when the landscape of the profession is shifting and changing. He says, 'The value for us in this kind of analysis is the recognition that these trends and shifts are something we need to capitalise on and be a part of rather than trying to fight against.'⁸³ Archivists are uniquely situated to tell their stories of experiencing the changing and shifting nature of technological innovations, as they had to learn to harness it and ride its volatile iterations. A previous generation needs to be brought into conversation with both a current and a

⁸¹ Luciana Duranti and Patricia C. Franks, *Encyclopedia of Archival Writers, 1515-2015*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. Thomas Elton Brown (1946-) earned a 'PhD in 1974 in American History from Oklahoma State University' and 'He also served as a consultant to the states of Mississippi and Oklahoma on aspects of their own fledgling machine-readable records programs.' p.90; Charles M. Dollar (1934-) 'In 1966, Dollar joined the History faculty at Oklahoma State University, where he continued his computer-based historical research.' He was appointed 'director of the newly established Machine-Readable Archives Division at the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) in the United States' in 1974. p.174

⁸² Kate Theimer, 'It's the end of the archival profession as we know it, and I feel fine,' in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, p.5, argues based on technologists Richard and Daniel Susskind that archivists' 'mission is to assist in getting information out there, as professionals we should be supportive of this 'bypassing the gatekeepers' trend and looking for ways to harness it ourselves (as indeed I think the profession has been for some time).'; Duranti, p.19, describes archivists as upholders of integrity arguing 'The principle of integrity, common to all knowledge disciplines, demands of professionals a reasonable guarantee of the accuracy, reliability and authenticity of the sources for which they are responsible.' yet pairs it with a blog post dated December 21 titled 'Fact Denial and the Record Under Threat' by George Despres, CRM, Program Director for University Records Management, on the *Brandeis Records Manager Blog*, in which he argues 'The rise of anti-intellectualism in our culture also undermines our professional values.' <<http://blogs.brandeis.edu/records/2016/12/21/fact-denial-and-the-record-under-threat/>> [accessed 7 January 2019]. Realising integrity and its past centrality to our profession yet at the same time realising its slipping away in contemporary culture may not be something the previous generation can help us figure out, but perhaps the dichotomies which existed as technology has evolved within their own experiences, can help us better wrestle with their dual existence in both theory and practice, hopefully allowing integrity to prevail.

⁸³ Theimer, p.9.

future one. The way to begin those conversations is through oral history, or as it has been labelled in recent literature, ‘communicative memory’.⁸⁴ The hope in doing this research is to bridge the gap in current practice and current theory through the lens of oral history by being ‘pulled into the narrative’ through interviews with a previous workforce generation and their practices, beliefs, and identity.⁸⁵ By bridging archival workforce transitions, a more holistic approach to archival professional examination is created, which allows ‘communicative memory’ to be captured, to better listen, and to help identify the silences within archivists’ work products through the landscapes they have navigated as told by their own work experiences.

One of the leaders in oral history interviewing theory and practice is Alessandro Portelli. His work on documenting a Nazi massacre in Rome and the methods he employed is considered a seminal work in the oral history field. He writes of the interviewing process,

Oral history is basically the process of creating relationships: between narrators and narratees, between events in the past and dialogic narratives in the present. The historian must work on both the factual and the narrative planes, the referent and the signifier, the past and the present, and, most of all, on the space between all of them.⁸⁶

Using Portelli’s definition on the process of oral history as ‘creating relationships’, the respect and understanding of other professionals participating in this research is obtained, even when there are differences of opinion. As discussed in the methodology section of

⁸⁴ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, *New German Critique*, p.127, state, ‘Through the practice of oral history, we have gained a more precise insight into the peculiar qualities of this everyday form of collective memory, which, with [another scholar] L. Niethammer, we will call communicative memory.’

⁸⁵ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different,’ in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.41. [Reprinted by permission from *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: From and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, 1991]

⁸⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.15.

this thesis, many Oklahoma archivists self-identified as a lone-arranger, or sole archivists working within a larger organisation. The lone arranger is often the interview subject, and thus the established and evolving relationship of the archivist interviewer to the interviewee is foundational to this thesis. When examined through external lenses, archives are becoming more and more central to all disciplines, and the decisions these professionals have made in the past become integral to an understanding of the whole discipline, especially through data migration decisions or collection development policies, decisions that impact future choices for an organisation. Anne J. Gilliland writes,

The perpetual challenge for archives has been to respond in thoughtful and constructive ways to new developments and to address those yet to come. Such responses require of archivists and archives today a glocal orientation and a careful balancing of continuity with innovation, of responsibility with responsibilities, and of reflexivity with principled rigor.⁸⁷

Oklahoma's archival professionals have ridden the technologically changing wave and survived. They can teach emerging professionals the process and navigation skills necessary to be relevant in changing circumstances. Even if they do not fully understand the challenges of today, these workers have faced other challenges throughout their tenure. They can add to a conceptualisation framework embracing 'glocalization' by providing concrete examples of methods, both good and bad, and the outcomes which were produced.⁸⁸ Since the participants were educated with past texts to have a thoughtful

⁸⁷ Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014, p.5.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.4; a term coined by sociologist Roland Robertson and used by Gilliland to describe the merging of a global view with a community-based response; she writes, 'In other words, while national, sector, and institutional interests and perspectives often set the agenda in the past, today the focus on simultaneously addressing local and global needs and perspectives, as well as on understanding the effects of interaction between the two, is growing. Archives should be concerned about glocalization for several pressing

and principled manner, documenting history as it happened, a narrative accompaniment will allow a more complete historical picture of the archival profession and its place in Oklahoma.

Oral history or narrative storytelling is the desired methodology for archivists and LAM professionals to examine themselves. The literature is rich with examples of oral history being utilised within archives to fill gaps between sources and memory of donors, of oral history being key to good archival and library practice, despite its reliance on memory, and how using oral history ‘offer[s] a plethora of new insights into differing and intersecting dialogues of memory.’⁸⁹ The debate about memory and identity from both within and outside oral history circles continues even though most professionals have realised oral history is not going away.

Technology has not only transformed archives, but also the work of doing oral history itself. A common text used by oral historians provides the first three paradigm shifts which have directed the oral history profession; it concludes that as of the mid-2000s, ‘we are in the middle of a fourth, dizzying digital revolution in oral history, and its

reasons. Indigenous, local, and colonial recordkeeping and memory systems and practices that developed out of particular national and cultural traditions and worldviews are simultaneously grappling with their tangled and often still traumatic colonial legacy, and interfacing and negotiating with other traditions and worldviews in whole new digital ways.’

⁸⁹ James E. Fogerty, ‘Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives,’ *The American Archivist* 46, 2 (1983): p.150 in which he states ‘The blending of archival research with oral history may thus be crucial to complete understanding of information in the papers and is the only way to add information that the papers do not contain.’; Ellen D. Swain, ‘Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the 21st Century,’ *The American Archivist* (2003) 66, no 1: p.140, in which she reviews how fifty years of scholarship has informed archival practice, ultimately stating ‘Oral history continues to be an important research methodology and tapes and transcripts need to be effectively integrated into academic library collections. Archivists and librarians must assume an active role in oral history discourse, collaborate with each other and colleagues in other fields, and be attuned to current scholarship needs if archives and special collections departments are to be viable, utilized research sources in the future.’ And while this article pertains primarily to practice, it still argues for the relevance and usefulness of oral history within library and archival settings; Sean Field, ‘Turning up the Volume: Dialogues about Memory Create Oral Histories,’ *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 2 (2008): p.177, <[DOI: 10.1080/02582470802416393](https://doi.org/10.1080/02582470802416393)>

outcomes are impossible to predict...new digital technologies are transforming the ways in which we record, preserve, catalogue, interpret, share and present oral histories.’⁹⁰

Thus, utilising a heavily debated and paradigmatically shifting technique to record Oklahoma archival narratives and incorporate them into this larger body of work on Oklahoma archivists, this research will further validate the use of oral history as practice in the creation of memory and identity for both the archival and oral history professions. Portelli tells us why oral history is such a good option: ‘Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.’⁹¹ Future archivists need to be able to examine these shifting and evolving individual and group identities to better understand the person from whom they have inherited their professional standards, practices, and beliefs in order to continue the cycle of growth, examination, and memory for their respective institutions. For as one oral historian sums up, within the process of recording, taking down, and writing of oral history, ‘the scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes. History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic.’⁹²

Oral history as narrative provides a medium in which to democratise archivists as a necessary profession further while at the same time leaving behind a legacy differing from the official historical record.

One oral history practitioner went even further in examining these lasting recordings housed within archives and interpret them with distance. Ruth Percy argues

⁹⁰ Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. ‘Critical Developments: Introduction,’ *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn., New York: Routledge, 2006, p.8.

⁹¹ Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p.36.

⁹² Paul Thompson, ‘The Voice of the Past: Oral history,’ in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.29. [Extracted with permission from P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988, 2nd edn.]

that these recordings can be used ‘to write history of two different periods, the one being asked about the one in which the interviews were conducted, with the benefit of hindsight and greater awareness of bias that distance can bring.’⁹³ Another goal of this project is to get on record the practices of archivists so they can be examined now, but also so they can be compared in the future by other LAM professionals to see if practices and methods of preservation have changed within the state of Oklahoma and the larger profession. But is also necessary to remember Percy’s reflection on the unique value of oral history, which highlights ‘the importance of locating narrator, interviewer, and interview within their particular historical contexts.’⁹⁴ Recordings were not available for comparison in this project so I used OLA’s Battelle Report as a quantitative comparison model, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Oral History in Archives

Oral history allows for the often-overlooked narratives of history to find a place in the unwritten, undocumented, or unanalysed historical record in order to tell history not ‘from below, but history (or sociology) from within.’⁹⁵ In the *Silence of the Archive*, Anne J. Gilliland writes,

The absence of records from public view, the absence of certain details in records that are available, or the absence of records altogether, are what drive not only frustrations and disappointments with the archive but also archival fantasies. In recent years Big Data initiatives, not to mention Hollywood, the video game

⁹³ Ruth Percy, ‘Women’s words from the archives’ in *Beyond Women’s Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* edited by Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Franca Iacovetta, pp. 313-320, p.318.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, eds., *Narrative and Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.16. The editors clearly state that ‘few scholars now are unaware of their role in shaping the sources and framing the study’ of their research, and arguing for the ‘voice of the ‘other’ is itself raw and unadulterated.’ History ‘from within’ is especially relevant to this research as the author is also a practising archivist, knowing the professional context often brought up by the interview subjects.

industry and countless other popular media, have reinforced and even glamorized the public image of the archive as the ultimate repository of facts and the hope of future generations for uncovering ‘what actually happened’. The reality is, however, that for all sorts of reasons the record may never have existed - its creation being as imagined as its contents. And even if it does exist, it may be silent on the salient facts, or it may obfuscate, mislead or flat out lie.⁹⁶

As popular imaginings of archives and libraries continue to pervade American culture, archivists must address the hard realities of record creation and curation. Oral history, as told from an archivist’s point of view, is a way for gaps in the record to be filled, for the blank record to have researchable documents, and for the context to become discoverable, if only to reveal the facts once thought immutable were, in fact, a limited representation of history. Oral history allows archivists to explore why the silence exists for certain aspects of the historical record, dismantling popular culture myths and big data beliefs of everything being available, searchable, and at the tips of everyone’s fingers at the touch of a screen.

While archivists have traditionally been employed to preserve and make the historical record available, they do not necessarily consistently document themselves well, both in relation to their part in the record creation and the curation process. Preoccupied with preserving the record for others, theorising about the profession's future, writing standards and best practices, or innovating with new technologies, practitioners’ own professional stories are lost. When searching national archives and library sites for oral histories of their own archivists, I found few.⁹⁷ Archivists have often

⁹⁶ David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archives*, Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017, p.xv.

⁹⁷ When searching the UK National Archives (discovery.nationalarchives.uk.gov) only two hits were retrievable, a radio interview with ‘Gard, R.M. County Archivist of Northumberland Occupation/Subject Work in archives’ from 1987 and a 2013 oral history with Steward, Robert (c1976-1990) related ‘to his experiences as an archivist in Berwick Upon Tweed, Doncaster, Leeds and The Highlands (c1976-1990), recorded as part of the ‘Voices of Stannington Sanatorium’ Project. Searching the Library of Congress

dedicated their careers to making sure the papers and narratives of their donors are available, sometimes limiting their own voice in the process. One example of the loss of memory and knowledge to an institution is found in the death of Richard Stewart, the black historian and museum proprietor of the Black History Museum on the island of Pocahontas, Virginia, who passed away in 2023. His death was sudden and unexpected, leaving the museum and its collection in jeopardy. Lisa Winn Bryan, the local community outreach director for Preservation Virginia, said, 'Losing someone like [Stewart] who takes those stories and that history with them is a treasure truly lost.'⁹⁸ Both history and the memory of those who have collected and maintained it are being jeopardised as people retire and pass away, which is why this project is relevant at a time when a great workforce shift is occurring.

A notable exception to this is the podcast *Archives in Context*, which began airing in January 2019 and really began to grow and thrive during the COVID-19 lockdown, possibly due to the availability of professionals willing to be guests.⁹⁹ Whether or not the archivist's stories are captured for posterity in their own repositories or retained as guest speakers in avenues of new media like podcasting, archivists and other LAM professionals may still restrict their own stories because, according to some, personality

(loc.gov) yielded many oral history references conducted by archivists but none of archivists. Searching the US National Archives and Records Administration, who did not establish an oral history division until 2013, the same search yielded a blog post about a deceased archivist <<https://www.archives.gov/about/history/archivists/peterson.html>> and a transcribed 1974 oral history interview with archivist Lester J. Cappon about his and other archivists time at NARA <https://www.archives.gov/files/about/history/images/cappon_lester_1974.pdf> [All sites accessed 26 January 2019 with the keywords 'oral history' and 'archivist']

⁹⁸ Gregory S. Schneider, 'Richard Stewart kept history alive. His death leaves it in jeopardy,' *The Washington Post* 29 April 2023 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/04/29/black-history-pocahontas-island-petersburg/>> [accessed 1 May 2023]

⁹⁹ Society of American Archivists, 'Introducing Archives in Context,' *SAA Archives in Context* blog, posted 28 January 2019 <<https://archivesincontext.archivists.org/2019/01/28/introducing-archives-in-context/>> [accessed 3 January 2023]

types can be a limit in the availability of the interview subject. As Yow says, ‘Probably, most interviewing projects are selective in that the shy or inarticulate individual – or the person valuing privacy – does not come forward.’¹⁰⁰ This could be true for the new media like podcasting or Zoom interviewing. For example, the *Archives in Context* podcast has a ‘Be A Guest’ link, which recruits participants in the following way: ‘Want to be a guest on the show? *Archives in Context* is looking for content generators, thought leaders, and idea builders to talk archives with us,’ upon which archivists volunteer their contact information and comment on their topic or idea.¹⁰¹ Volunteer selection through electronic media limits the pool of respondents who opt-in because many are unaware of the avenue or may naturally shy away from it.

The constraints of active participation and/or personality were considered in-depth in the creation and execution of this thesis. I, like SAA’s podcast, relied on the archivist’s self-selection to participate in the oral history interview follow-up. Archivists who have a complex relationship with the public trust, often limited by the dictates of a governing board or legislative body, may value privacy or have legal restrictions on what they can and cannot discuss more so than the average interview subject. Simon Fowler argues that users of archival materials can have their experiences heightened by supplementing the research endeavours with ‘oral history testament or, where appropriate, reference to witness seminars,’ both of which could create better context in a researcher’s topic.¹⁰² In theorising, the archivist has a need to find an identity as part of a

¹⁰⁰ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A guide for the humanities and social sciences* (2nd edn.) Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005, p.19

¹⁰¹ Society of American Archivists, ‘Contact,’ *SAA Archives in Context* blog, posted 2019 <<https://archivesincontext.archivists.org/contact/>> [accessed 3 January 2023]

¹⁰² David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archives*, Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017, p.57.

profession group is ‘not just “meaning frames” in their own right, but also constitute moral interventions in the social life whose conditions of existence they seek to clarify.’¹⁰³ In an academic sphere which examines archivists from an external viewpoint and a society that does not fully understand or creates myths surrounding the nature and work of the practitioners, archivists need to clarify their reason for existence in academia, and even more so in the American public democratic society. This is why this thesis and the work by the *Archives in Context* podcast are so needed. As witness bearers to the creation of archival records and the decisions which went into acquiring and processing a collection, archivists are well-placed to explore the dictates of their profession, of creating and maintaining Oklahoma’s historical record, and its connection to the development of an informed citizenry.

The late Canadian archivist and archival studies scholar Terry Cook ‘urged archivists to claim their place within the archive,’ writing that ‘despite the impressive external theorising on the “archive” in recent historical writing, what is still missing is the voice of the archivist’.¹⁰⁴ He believed, adding a different perspective, that of the archivist who comes into contact with the documents and living history, with the donors and the researchers, and those who have an intimate knowledge of their own organisation and institution, the profession will find its voice in the midst of other disciplinary analysis. By using the oral history of retiring archivists and supplementing the knowledge they created while they were employed, a more holistic approach to the nature of the archive, its

¹⁰³ Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies*. New York: Basic Books, 1976, p.8.

¹⁰⁴ Terry Cook, ‘The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: historians, archivists, and the changing archival landscape,’ *The American Archivist* 74, 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): pp.600-32 quoted by Jeanette A. Bastian, ‘Moving the margins to the middle: reconciling ‘the archive’ with the archives,’ *Engaging with Records and Archives: histories and theories*, London: Facet Publishing, 2016, p.14.

purposes and creation, can be documented for both future professionals and researchers alike, thus allowing practising and former practising archivists to find their voice and their place in the work of the archive.

Only by knowing the people doing the work behind the data and documents will the methods, motives, and data be able to be contextualised in a more thorough understanding of Oklahoma's full and complete history. Approaching archival institutes with a multi-modal examination is a further forward step because of the rapidly changing nature of archives and archival institutions. Lorraine Datson questions the nature of the future and safety of archival repositories and those persons utilising them, especially when technology keeps the profession in a state of constant fluidity.¹⁰⁵ She is specifically referring to the lack of archival use from scientific disciplines due to the speed of research generated in labs and the ever-changing scientific practices. However, the archival profession itself has been in a constant state of flux and adaptability for decades as new technologies have emerged and archivists' continued removal of material through deaccessioning or migration of formats while simultaneously acquiring new materials occur.

The current educational emphasis on STEM fields also precludes archival work from being valued as much as work done by scientific researchers, despite the need for the work to proliferate in an information-rich democratic society. Gilliland states, 'The subject of technology and archives still makes some working archivists nervous ... the accelerating pace of change, the increasing number of areas and activities in which archivists could or should be engaged, and the constant learning curve involved

¹⁰⁵ Lorraine Datson, ed., *Science in the Archives: Pasts, Presents, Futures*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, p.2.

contribute to this understandable nervousness.’¹⁰⁶ The rapidly changing technologies which generate mountains of data and metadata often overwhelm and backlog current practising archivists. The backlog continues to grow as positions are unfilled or underpaid. Dire situations occur when data is lost due to a combination of underfunding across the sector, inability to stay up to date with technology, and undervaluing of organisational history.

The advent of digital technologies utilised in the LAM sector since 1994 is covered briefly by Erin Baucom, who concludes that professionals must push the necessity of collaboration in digital preservation endeavours in order to ensure ‘that the digital objects which record our cultural and intellectual heritage are saved for future generations.’¹⁰⁷ The field of archives is ever-changing, encompassing digital humanities, metadata and linked data structures, collaboration with information technology departments and corporations, with colleagues and fellow practitioners, and most of all, the desire to save relevant historical information, the data and documents for future generations, no matter the format. The ever-changing nature of the profession is why capturing the stories holistically of Oklahoma’s archivists as a snapshot in time of what has been done is important for the future of Oklahoma’s LAM professionals, in turn adding value to the state’s historical record.

Archivists have acknowledged this information influx and knowledge gap creation, arguing for oral history to bridge such gaps and inundation. As early as 1982,

¹⁰⁶ Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014, p.viii.

¹⁰⁷ Erin Baucom, ‘A Brief History of Digital Preservation,’ in Jeremy Myntti and Jessalyn Zoom, eds., *Digital Preservation in Libraries: Preparing for a Sustainable Future*, Chicago: ALA Editions, 2019, pp.3-19, p.27.

Minnesota archivist James E. Fogerty presented at the Society of American Archivists' conference on oral history being used as a tool for enhancing collections even while addressing the fallacies and the issues of oral history as a historical research method.¹⁰⁸ Thus, oral history has been a tool utilised within archives for at least forty-five years. However, this tool has rarely been used to examine archivists in a systematic manner. Gilliland also argues that a holistic approach to archival history is often difficult to come by as 'generations of pioneers have now passed on or retired'.¹⁰⁹ By allowing the voices and perspectives of those retiring and end-of-career archivists to emerge, future professionals can gain a working knowledge of the past while moving into the future.

The state of Oklahoma and its publicly funded employees have been sought out as a case study in using oral histories to contextualise larger archival practices. According to the Oral History Association,

Oral history is distinguished from other forms of interviews by its content and extent. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events.¹¹⁰

I believe the fullness found through reflection is the common-sense practice of historical methodology referred to by the AHA President at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, a community is created through 'shared histories', which 'often provide settings in which ontological security is sustained in the relatively unproblematic way, at least for specific

¹⁰⁸ James E. Fogerty, 'Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives,' *The American Archivist* 46, 2 (Spring 1983): pp.148-157.

¹⁰⁹ Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, p.x.

¹¹⁰ 'Principles and Best Practices,' *Oral History Association Website*
<<http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>> [accessed 5 February 2018].

phrases of an individual's life.'¹¹¹ By allowing archivists to give an in-depth account of their past experiences working within organisations supporting the state of Oklahoma, a more complete picture of what Oklahoma currently maintains in regard to its official historical record is revealed. Reflecting on both the struggles and successes during their employment, the narratives recorded of past archivists allows current and future Oklahoma LAM professionals to better understand what they desire for Oklahoma's historical record to be. The part archivists play through telling their own stories is especially relevant, as Oklahoma is traditionally a fiscally conservative state. Public historical sites reliance upon politically sponsored funding plays a crucial role which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Oklahoma is also a fertile ground for using oral narratives as a device for memory capture, as it houses thirty-eight federally recognised tribes, many of whom rely on oral traditions passed down through generations as their historical record.¹¹² Great care has been taken in contemporary archival circles to be aware and partner with tribal entities through processes like the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM) which were endorsed by the Society of American Archivists. Additionally, Simon Fraser University's Open Conference on 'Sorting Libraries Out: Decolonizing Classification and Indigenizing Description' in 2019 with the Keynote addresses by Deanna Reder (Cree-Métis) and Treena Chambers (Métis) provided experiences on doing the work of decolonization in cataloguing practices. These voices from within Native American

¹¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991, p.126.

¹¹² State of Oklahoma, 'Tribal Jurisdictions in Oklahoma,' *Oklahoma.gov* <<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/map-tribal-jurisdictions.pdf>> [accessed 23 January 2023]' see also <<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndok/indian-country>> [accessed 15 April 2023]

communities are integral to the metadata linked data changes being reflective of the identities of Indigenous Peoples within the power structures of technology, allowing their voices to be heard, and of the literature discussing partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

¹¹³ Oral historian Margaret Field says: ‘In the US and Canada, it is standard operating procedure when working with indigenous languages to request consent from tribal governments (in addition to individual speakers and storytellers) before beginning fieldwork.’¹¹⁴ Oklahoma archivists can and have learned from these contemporary movements, creating community partnerships, amplifying voices of the other, and working within the dictates of the tribal governments in conjunction with archival protocols. Those working in the field of archival digital repatriation suggest the following:

Working with these tribal partners generates new (to IU) best practices for vetting and handling culturally sensitive information. Any materials considered sensitive in nature by Native communities will be handled as each community wishes; as archivists, we may submit our suggestions for consideration, but ultimately, the decisions rest with tribal nations themselves because they know their culture best.¹¹⁵

Oklahoma’s archivists have a unique place in America’s archival landscape, which allows them to work through partnerships and collaborative efforts to implement best practices and recommendations which defer to Indigenous cultural legacies, traditions,

¹¹³ Society of American Archivists, ‘Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,’ SAA Website Adopted/Endorsed August 2018 <<https://www2.archivists.org/standards/protocols-for-native-american-archival-materials>> [accessed 19 January 2021]; Deanna Reder (Cree-Métis) and Treena Chambers (Métis), ‘Sorting Libraries Out: Decolonizing Classification and Indigenizing Description,’ *Simon Fraser University Open Systems Conference*, Held 12-13 March 2019 in Vancouver, B.C. <<https://ocs.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/dcid/dcid2019/paper/view/65/49>> [accessed 23 January 2019]

¹¹⁴ Margaret Field, ‘American Indian Oral Literature, Cultural Identity and Language Revitalisation: Some Considerations for Researchers,’ in Mark Turin, Claire Wheeler and Eleanor Wilkinson, eds., *Oral Literature in the Digital Age: Archiving Orality and Connecting with Communities*, United States: Open Publishing, 2013, pp.91-101, p.95 <<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0032>>

¹¹⁵ Krystiana L. Krupa, and Kelsey T. Grimm, ‘Digital repatriation as a decolonizing practice in the archaeological archive, [Special issue on Unsettling the Archives],’ *Across the Disciplines*, 8 November 2021 18(1/2), pp. 47-58, p.53. <<https://doi.org/0.37514/ATD-J.2021.18.1-2.05>>

and norms. The Indigenous method of teaching through story-telling should not be culturally appropriated but rather amplified by the archivist in collaboration. How late career and retired archival professionals have approached Oklahoma's Indigenous peoples, either having been sought out or not approached the various communities to which they belong or partner with, are lessons new practitioners can benefit from, especially if they reside outside the community. This is what this project does; it captures the words of archival professionals and learns how they have or have not made space as neighbours residing in the geographical locale of Oklahoma. As archivists we need to continue to learn how to best amplify the voices of Indigenous culture and community within our state through respectful and fluid conversations and relationships from all vested parties to create a more complete historical record for Oklahoma's future generations.

Many generational definitions exist, from the name of certain age ranges, i.e. 'Baby Boomers' are all individuals born during the post-World War II 'baby boom' which lasted for approximately twenty years, to the generalised birth year ranges assigned to such named classes of individuals. Each generational name may include one birth year or exclude it. Intergenerational research shows that these naming conventions, while good for examining large groups of people born during certain dates, do not hold true for all instances. As early as 1952, Mannheim was examining the relevance of groups versus generations in the field of sociology: 'it is possible in general to draw a distinction between generations as mere collective facts on the one hand, and concrete social groups on the other.'¹¹⁶ Moving into the late 1970s, another sociologist studied

¹¹⁶ Karl Mannheim, 'The sociological problem of generations,' *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* 306 (1952): p.165

four generations of work orientations, specifically looking at the idea of generational differences being fact or fiction. He concluded, ‘the data summarized in this report indicate that the notion of “generation gaps” is not revealed either in central life interests or in the specific work attachments of different age groups of American workers.’¹¹⁷ Purhonen, in a 2016 article refers to both Mannheim and Pierre Bourdieu’s work arguing that the latter should be used because of ‘his more general approach to the genesis of social groupings, classification struggles and the difficult relationships of representation.’¹¹⁸ And in his 2019 book, *The Generation Myth*, Michael Urick explains that when interacting with popular discourse, ‘articulating a strictly biological age-based approach ... is the simplest and most common understanding of generation.’¹¹⁹ Academics have gone beyond the biological understanding to groupings which examine collective consciousness, genealogy, life stage, age-based, identity, contribution and even generation as an ambiguous, irrelevant concept; however, Urick says, ‘a strictly age-based conceptualization defined by birth year is common.’¹²⁰ Thus, generational naming, while convenient for analysis purposes, should not be the ultimate determinant in examining Oklahoma’s archivists.

For the purposes of this work, a more generalised approach is taken in selecting the generational distinctions assigned by American society, relying on the National Public Radio (NPR) report on American naming conventions. This was chosen because

¹¹⁷ Thomas C. Taveggia and Bruce Ross, ‘Generational Differences in Work Orientations: Fact or Fiction?’ *The Pacific Sociological Review* 21, 3 (1978): p.345. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1388851>> [accessed 17 May 2023]

¹¹⁸ Semi Purhonen, ‘Generations on paper: Bourdieu and the critique of “generationalism”,’ *Social Science Information*, 55,1 (2016): from abstract <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018415608967>> [accessed 17 May 2023]

¹¹⁹ Michael J. Urick, *The Generation Myth: How to Improve Intergenerational Relationships in the Workplace*, New York: Business Expert Press, 2019, p.26.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, pp.26-30.

NPR is a more widely recognised national source and because the NPR authors' definitions of both nicknames and year ranges cite studies as to where the nickname originated in both culture and literature, providing context as to why each generation acquired said nickname. This helps bridge the research done in the 1950s, the 1970s, and the twenty-first century to determine if said cultural naming conventions are truly fact or fiction. In America, these popular generational naming conventions have become a part of America's coded vocabulary when discussing generational groupings. As stated later in Chapter 2's section on workforce transitions, the NPR article generational groups will be utilised to distinguish between participants. Since Oklahoma is part of the larger American culture, these generational definitions will hold true from state to state should another study within a different region want to replicate or investigate its own issues with workforce transitions. However, since the grouping of archivists by the author is more important to the data and importance of this thesis, the generational naming conventions will be secondary to the place of LAM professionals in their own socio-subcultural group, as established in Chapter 1. This will rely on Urick's contribution method of grouping, which qualifies generations as being 'understood as groups of individuals who make some distinguishable impact on society.'¹²¹ Placing each archivist within their generational age range will also add to the body of knowledge on generational differences and characteristics, even as archivists prove to be the outliers in their responses to technological adaptation and implementation in their contributions to Oklahoma's historical record.

¹²¹ Urick, *The Generation Myth*, p.28.

Addressing the Insider/Outsider Researcher Conundrum

Chamberlain and Thompson's history 'from within' is especially relevant to this research project as I am also a mid-career practising archivist and recognise the professional context and insider terminology brought up by the interview subjects. In a history of academic librarianship in the United States, two practitioners discuss the idea of 'librarian-historian' as insiders. They write of the qualitative difference their views bring in saying,

...the librarian-historian tends to employ a vocabulary and tell a story premised on professional values and practices not uniformly understood or readily appreciated by a wide readership. The extent to which this assessment is accurate is also the extent to which library historical literature retains characteristics of insularity.¹²²

The insider nature of language and the familiarity of subject matter, I believe, are correctly identified as insular, but this is why the creation of a socio-subcultural group of Oklahoma archivists is essential in the work done throughout the project. Instead of historians looking at archives through an external lens, archivists within the community are identified and represented, adding a new layer to the professional literature. Identification of internal participants, while done externally and anonymously from an internal perspective, ultimately adds to the understanding of archivists beyond the fields of libraries, museums, and historians, where they can now claim their place in the insider communities firmly rooted in social scientific research.

Within the oral history field, the theory of intersubjectivity 'refers to the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer or, in other words, the

¹²² Mark L. McCallon and John Mark Tucker, 'From the Bequest of John Harvard to the Dream of Alexandria: Historiography of the Academic Library in the United States, 1638-2015,' in *The Academic Library in the United States: Historical Perspectives*, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2022, p.16.

interpersonal dynamics of the interview situation and the process by which participants cooperate to create a shared narrative.’¹²³ For the purposes of this project, the intersubjective relationship is built upon the idea of a practitioner interviewing other practitioners. This notion of an insider researcher working within a community to which they also belong has been done in various disciplines external to oral history and archives, especially the social sciences. As a speech language therapist, Stansfield reflected upon the use of oral history work done by an insider within the speech language therapist professional circles. He pointed out that trust could be built from being an insider, but conversely, ‘there is a danger that shared knowledge may leave areas of interest unspoken or unexplored. Equally, an insider may assume knowledge of a shared culture which is different from the actual experience of the narrator.’¹²⁴ He decided to have his participants edit their transcripts, which I did not, but did give the participants an opportunity to have their names redacted from materials or to opt out of their materials being donated to an archive at a future date. Surprisingly, all opted in, perhaps because the idea of creating a repository of oral history for archivists by archivists was appealing to them as professionals.

Other fields have undertaken this insider/outsider researcher debate. Two psychologists doing research on LGBTQ+ communities examined their position in the qualitative study they conducted. One self-identified as a bisexual woman and the other as a heterosexual woman, thus one insider and one outside the community which they were examining. Ultimately, they concluded that while both positions have positive

¹²³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 2nd edn., New York: Routledge, 2016, p.54.

¹²⁴ Jois Stansfield, ‘Reflections on Being an Oral History Insider: Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity and Speech Therapy,’ *Oral History* 48, 2 (2020): p.93 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48615295>> [accessed 1 May 2023]

elements and negative elements, ‘that to see oneself as purely an insider or an outsider is to over-simplify the complexities of researchers’ relationships with their participants. Boundaries between researcher and participants are often more nuanced than they may first seem.’¹²⁵ By understanding the positionality I had as an archivist insider, I was able to not oversimplify the nature of the archival professional or our personal relationships, instead balancing the complexity this project created for us both. Understanding I was within the Oklahoma archival community and also remained outside, being a born Texan and working at a private institution, helped me recognise my own biases and position in the project. Also, the fact my supervisory team was in the United Kingdom, as well as Oklahoma, helped to broaden my perspective in capturing, analysing, and writing the oral history of Oklahoma’s archivists.

Jieyu Liu, a non-Western sociologist, has theorised the need for a balanced and local perspective when examining non-Western subjects. Liu examined Chinese women through oral history collection and analysis, concluding that knowledge and understanding of ‘specific social-cultural practices impacted upon my collection of life narratives and suggested that balancing Western ideas with local specificity is crucially important in such cross-cultural research.’¹²⁶ Globalisation can be provided through technology and travel; however, this non-Western perspective is needed to be able to better compare data, perspectives, and experiences. Even though Oklahoma, as part of the U.S., is part of the Western world, it still occupies a unique place in American culture,

¹²⁵ Nikki Hayfield and Caroline Huxley, ‘Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with lesbian and bisexual women,’ *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12, 2 (2015): p.105 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.918224>> [accessed 1 May 2023]

¹²⁶ Jieyu Liu, ‘Researching Chinese Women’s Lives: “Insider” Research and Life History Interviewing,’ *Oral History* 34, 1 (2006): pp.51-52 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179843>> [accessed 1 May 2023]

which can be examined by an insider/outsider researcher. Understanding the socio-subculture of Oklahoma beyond classifying it as part of the Midwest or South, where it is typically grouped, helps bring greater value to the interview subjects while at the same time adding to the body of insider knowledge on the state's perception beyond outsider media and pop culture representations.

Another field wrestling with the insider/outsider perspective is disability studies. A participatory research project reported in 2022 that having autistic persons as co-producers adds scientific and ethical considerations, for 'autistic people should be able to contribute to research that could in some way affect their lives' instead of just being examined by those outside the community, such as therapists and medical professionals.¹²⁷ Having autistic participants interviewed by autistic people added value to the subjects being studied while at the same time creating greater comfort and understanding between interviewer and interviewee. In fact, the project reported overwhelmingly positive results, with one participant saying a 'key reason why participants felt so comfortable was because the research was "by us for us".'¹²⁸ The personalised space was one of the key themes of the project, the other three being the fact that recounting oral history can be exhausting for participants, the idea of being heard and acknowledged, and the idea of research as advocacy. These last two points are especially relevant to this project as archivists, at least in the state of Oklahoma, are rarely heard or acknowledged for the work they perform. I hope that this project will someday be used as

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Pellicano, Wenn Lawson, Gabrielle Hall, Joanne Mahony, Rozanna Lilley, Melanie Heyworth, Hayley Clapham, and Michael Yudell, "I Knew She'd Get It, and Get Me": Participants' Perspectives of a Participatory Autism Research Project,' *Autism Adulthood* 1;4, no.2 (June 2022): p.121 <doi: [10.1089/aut.2021.0039](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0039)> [accessed 1 May 2022]

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.124.

an advocacy tool for the political leadership to understand that funding and staffing in Oklahoma LAM institutions and repositories must be a priority.

The insider/outsider conundrum is one that continued throughout all areas of data collection, with the understanding of my own positionality in the research, as well as the subjective nature of oral history interviewing, formed and informed this thesis. Looking at oral history through the writing of Abrams, Chamberlain, and Thompson helped me determine my own place within both the larger oral history community and within this project. Reading Stansfield's advocacy for being a speech therapist and researching other speech therapists oriented the nature of my own research. Hayfield and Huxley's research conducted both inside and outside the community revealed the complexities of my own positionality. Liu's discussion of a non-Western perspective tangentially parallels that of being from a state often misconstrued both geographically and in popular culture representations. The 2022 autistic community's co-participation as both interviewee and interviewer helped me understand my own place alongside those of my fellow Oklahoma archivists, being both within the LAM community who are wanting to be heard and acknowledged, and the reality of required networking outside the community, instead creating an avenue for advocacy within the legislative and funding arenas.

Quantitative Methodology

Quantitative research involves data collection reducing people 'to numerical values in order to carry out statistical analysis.'¹²⁹ Research participant gathering was

¹²⁹ Omar Gelo, Diana Braakmann, and Gerhard Benetka, 'Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Beyond the Debate,' *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 42 (2008): pp.266–290, p.268
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-008-9078-3>>

initially sought by sending out a Google Form link to members of different library, archival, and museum (LAM) organisations, seeking feedback on what organisations each individual chose to belong to determine their pattern of self-identification in the convergences of the LAM sector, i.e. does the person identify more as librarian, archivist, or museum (LAM) professional.¹³⁰ Google Forms was chosen as the medium due to its ease of use for both myself and the respondents in the creation and completion of the survey. Since the main idea behind this study is to get inside the heads of archivists and the decisions of creating and maintaining their collections, a simpler, more cost-effective tool like Google Forms was utilised as a preliminary contact tool for potential interviewees.

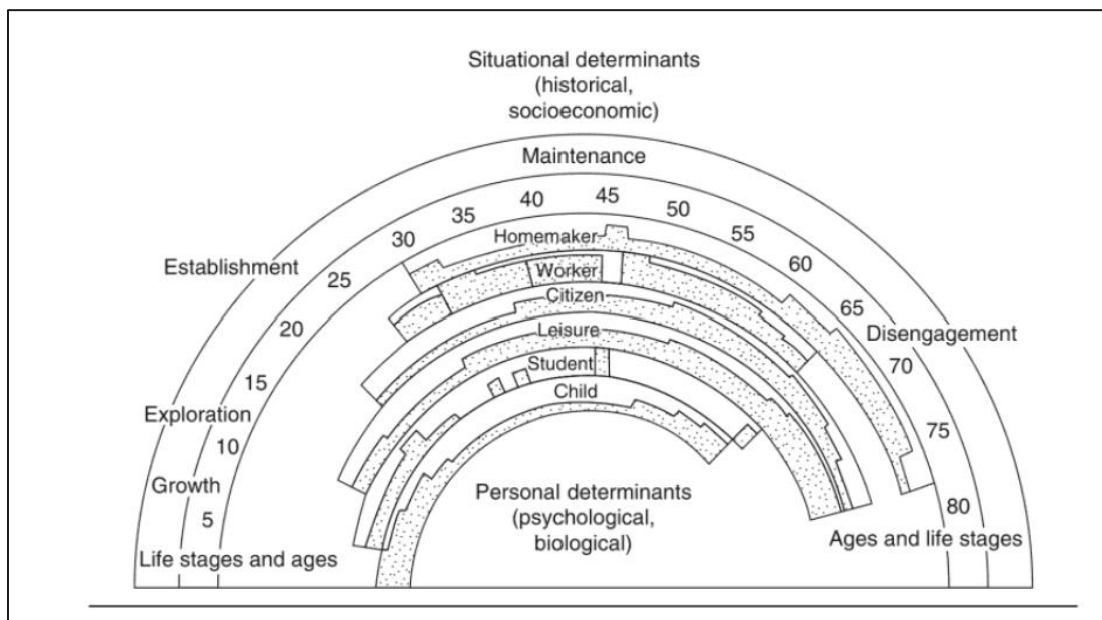
Each of the questions utilised within the Google form survey was based up the initial literature review completed in Spring/Summer of 2017. The definitions of material archive by Gomez and the internal stories of Linde played an important role both in the helping survey participants understand the nature of their work and their own place within it.¹³¹ Name was optional, mainly given as a point of contact for if the participant was interested in sitting down for an oral history interview later. Birth year was required because at that point in the project, the idea of generational groups hadn't been discounted as less important than training and continual career growth. The idea of length of time in the archival or LAM profession, compared with the length of time within

¹³⁰ The survey was not limited to just 'archivists' because as we have seen historically and as other researchers have pointed out 'By the end of the nineteenth century, libraries, archives, and museums had begun to evolve distinct identities and methods; yet libraries continued to amass art collections, while museums continued to build library and archival collections. In other words, the hybrid nature of cultural institutions in the nineteenth century never went away,' Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard and Michèle V. Cloonan, eds. *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*, 'Introduction,' New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, p.xx.

¹³¹ For a complete listing of the questions asked in the Google form, see Appendix A.

Oklahoma in the archival or LAM profession, was also asked in order to gain the career length of person as being Early Career, Mid-Career, Late Career or Retired. These career distinctions correlated to the Life Career Rainbow Model: Six Career Roles in Schematic Life Space, where Early Career coincides with Exploration, Mid-Career with Establishment, and Late Career with Disengagement (see Figure 1.1).¹³²

Figure 1.1 Life Career Rainbow Model: Six Career Roles in Schematic Life Space



I added retirement as well, since originally the focus of the project was solely on Late Career and Retired Professionals. These life stages and ages also mirrored the generational age groupings, even though this groups were determined to not be relevant in later research.

The connection to Oklahoma is an extremely important part of the project, both in

¹³² Paul J. Hartung, 'The Life Span, Life Space Theory of Careers,' in Steven D. Brown and Robert W. Lent, eds., *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work*, 2nd edn., New York: John Wiley, 2013, pp. 83-114, p.92.

the quantitative and qualitative sections. This is because Oklahoma's socio-subculture is the basis of this thesis, the foundation on which every other part is completed and understood. This was intentional to place a politically conservative government alongside grassroots activists and extremely diverse peoples into one geographical locale, much like the make up of the state itself. For as Abrams discusses in oral history's theory of self, 'it is the tension between the power of culture and the power of individual agency' which must be negotiated and resolved throughout the work of this thesis.¹³³ Understanding Oklahoma's unique culture past and present, and archivists place within the preservation and telling of that history throughout their career is what makes this thesis an original contribution to the work of archivists around the world.

Since the focus is on archivist and LAM professional as practitioner, the asking of qualifications and degrees helps set the basis for skill attainment and knowledge within the Oklahoma archival community. The participants were also asked to identify their primary role within their institutions. This was done as well in hopes that the difference between practicing archivist and historian could be identified, even as Terry Cook called for a closer merging of the field in 2011.¹³⁴ This merging and call for better cooperation, with the reality of cut budgets and converging roles is crucial in understanding the needs and voices of Oklahoma's professionals, many of whom have faced these challenges multiple times throughout their career. Four researchers published an article on contingent workers which parallels much of the furloughs and cut budgets Oklahoma archivists face throughout their careers. Their research focuses on New England and

¹³³ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.48.

¹³⁴ Terry Cook, 'The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape,' *The American Archivist* 74;2 (Fall/Winter2011): pp.600–632, p.606
<<https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.74.2.xm04573740262424>>

CES-II participants, participants ‘who feared that contingent employment is a short-term solution that endangers the long-term sustainability of archives.’¹³⁵ Their research was published in 2024, many years after the completion of the quantitative data collection on this thesis. Thus, the Google Form survey was created by examining the archival and business literature prior to 2017 to get a baseline for Oklahoma’s archival professionals. Had their work been published around the time of data collection, contingent employment would have played a larger role in the data collection other than just a simple yes or no have you experience furlough, layoff, etc, asked in the questionnaire. Because true to their research, retiring archivists in Oklahoma believed in the awe and nobility of their profession. But, to quote the 2024 study, ‘workers cannot pay their rent or feed their families with prestige and fulfilment, and labor issues should not be dismissed merely because archivists view themselves as a noble profession.’¹³⁶ Even further arguments have been made about the stability of the archival field for emerging professionals. Todd-Diaz and Poole point out temporary project-based hires are one cause of ‘younger archivists [being] just as likely to consider leaving the archival field as their older colleagues.’¹³⁷ I argue that grassroots organising and the ethics of archival virtue discussed by Cline are necessary to counter the realities of burnout and workplace displacement in a fiscally conservative culture which undervalues the often-female workforce of archivists and LAM employees.

¹³⁵ Stephanie Bredbenner, Alison Fulmer, Rose Oliveira-Abbey, and Meghan R. Rinn, “‘The Career Does Not Love You Back’: Impacts of Contingent Employment on Workers, Cultural Heritage Institutions, and the Archival Profession,” *The American Archivist* 87:1 (2024): pp.131-154, p.133 <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=yul_staff>

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ashley Todd-Diaz, Alex H. Poole, “‘I can’t work part-time for the rest of my life’: Students, Early Career Professionals, and the Uncertain Prospects of an Archival Career,” *The American Archivist* 87:2 (31 December 2024): pp.405-437, p.413 < doi: <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-87.2.405>> Other factors include retirement, burnout, pay and opportunities career advancement.

The initial survey was sent to the Ethics Review Committee in December 2017 and approved for release with revisions in March 2018. It was decided that email would be the best method of delivery for conducting the research despite results ‘likely to be biased in the direction of the characteristics of internet users, namely professionals earning high incomes and living in affluent areas.’¹³⁸ Archivists do fit into the professional mode and live in areas with internet connectivity, even though the affluence of the profession might be debatable. After approval was given, organisations such as the Society of Southwest Archivists, the Oklahoma Archives Association, and the Oklahoma Museum Association were contacted with the approved cover email, which in turn then sent out the survey link to their membership lists.¹³⁹ The survey closed after a three-month period in May of 2018.

With my advisor’s approval, I agreed to re-release the same survey for an additional three months in the hopes of gathering more respondents. The survey was re-released for an additional three-month collection period, and additional groups of state and regional organisations were solicited for email distribution, including the Mountain Plains Museum Association and the Oklahoma Library Association, with the survey finally closing on Friday, 3 August 2018. The initial results were gathered and analysed over the months of August-November 2018. In addition, the quantitative data also provided some qualitative responses in the open-ended question responses, which again will be covered thematically later in this thesis.

At this point, it could be argued that the survey itself wasn’t truly quantitative but contained many qualitative answers as given by participants. Discovered in hindsight,

¹³⁸ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.121.

¹³⁹ For a complete list of organisations see Appendix B, Section 2 Archival Community.

through the opened ended nature of the responses of participants, I decided to do the thematic analysis as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Had I realised the opened ended responses would contain so much, I would have changed it to a non-opened ended multiple-choice format. In all honesty, as an archival professional who has been asked for data in many surveys and formats, I did not expect the subjects to expound as much as they did in the opened ended area. Should others choose to conduct this type of research, I would suggest setting stricter parameters on the survey questions to help narrow the qualitative nature of responses.

Qualitative Methodology

According to the field of psychology, qualitative differs from quantitative in that it ‘consider[s] reality as [a] socially and psychologically constructed’¹⁴⁰ lens with which to view subjects. Since psychology is a discipline which routinely examines human subjects, the methods and definitions used in the field become relevant to the work of this thesis despite its foundation in historical studies. Another relevant field to examine for methods and definitions is sociology, where sociologists also routinely use qualitative methodology as part of their data collection methods. Jane Hood argues that ‘perhaps the safest generalization one can make about “qualitative research” is that all of it involves data that are best analysed as words and categories rather as numbers.’¹⁴¹ Aspers and Corte further prove Hood’s argument by saying that qualitative is ‘more prone to

¹⁴⁰ Gelo, ‘Quantitative and Qualitative Research,’ p.268.

¹⁴¹ Jane C. Hood, ‘Teaching against the Text: The Case of Qualitative Methods,’ *Teaching Sociology* 34, 3 (2006): p.215. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20058488>>

subjective analysis, leading to biased results.¹⁴² Aspers and Corte began their research in an examination of what constitutes and characterises qualitative research, and after surveying the field and how others have utilised it in their projects, concluded with the following definition: ‘We define qualitative research as an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied.’¹⁴³ The very nature of this thesis is to get inside the heads of Oklahoma’s archivists in order to better understand the part they play in Oklahoma’s culture. Thus, Asper and Corte’s definition is foundational to the work in this thesis.

The ideas of Asper and Corte on the closeness on the part of the researcher became a turning point in implementing the methodological investigation I utilised, as discussed earlier in this chapter on the conundrum of being an insider/outsider researcher. Additionally, the field of sociolinguistics provided an avenue to examine these collected oral histories using the work of Charlotte Linde’s three-year examination of an insurance company, which detailed how the stories her participants told within their work setting are integral to institutional memory.¹⁴⁴ Even the field of education is promoting interviews as a qualitative data collection method for researchers. A text from the field of education, which overlaps into the social sciences as well, describes the use of interviews as a collection method by saying, ‘[its] is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of lived experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their involvement with society and their gained practical

¹⁴² Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte, ‘What is Qualitative in Qualitative Research?’ *Qualitative Sociology* 42 (2019) pp.139-160, p.146 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7>>

¹⁴³ Ibid, p.155

¹⁴⁴ Linde, *Working the Past*.

knowledge.¹⁴⁵ When interviews are done with thought, clarity, and respect, the output can achieve the goals of the research project while maintaining the ethical considerations of the social science field.

For this project, qualitative oral histories are then ‘fundamentally concerned with assuring that the dignity of human participants is respected rather than violated in the search for knowledge, scientific progress, and career advancement.’¹⁴⁶ Conclusions pulled from the fields of sociology, psychology, education, and the general social sciences led to the examination of Oklahoma archivist’s need for contiguity on behalf of the researcher to be able to employ the qualitative data the oral history interview would provide in telling the story to create the ‘improved understanding’ as defined by Aspers and Corte. Coupled with the stories Linde believes are so integral to institutional memory in allowing for the making sense of memory and which Seidman believes is basic to all human history, a snapshot in time of the grassroots nature of Oklahoma’s archivists emerges.

Studying a field and also being a practitioner within said field is a tension filled endeavour. However, after the turn in oral history research theory in the latter part of the twentieth century from objectivity to intersubjectivity, the oral history planning, interviewing and transcribing can truly be a collaborative and transformative process for the researcher. To begin with, many of the interviewees self-selected into being part of the oral history participant group. Many may have known me or known of me through archival organisations which I participate in around the state and region. Thus, begs the

¹⁴⁵ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*, (3rd edn.) New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2006, p.8.

¹⁴⁶ Douglas A. Wassaner and Nicole Mamotte, ‘Ethical issues and Ethics reviews in social science research,’ *The Oxford Journal of International Psychology Ethics* (2012), p. 279

idea that maybe I am too close to the project, for as Yow argues, ‘there is also a possibility that the interviewer can be too much invested in the topic, too closely identifying with a person or cause.’¹⁴⁷ This is where the discussion of positionality in the next section becomes instrumental in understanding how and why the insider/outsider research is justifiable in its use.

Because of the above conclusions, a second application was sent to the Ethics Committee to begin contacting participants who had expressed interest in an oral history interview follow-up on their initial survey responses. The application was approved in January of 2019. Participants were then emailed to determine their availability and interest in scheduling a follow-up sit down in person oral history interview. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, we decided a pool of twenty-five interview subjects, or around half of the quantitative responses, would be a statistically significant data set of respondents. Of those participants, sixteen responded ‘yes’, by the 31 January 2019 deadline, to state they would be interested in contributing to an approximately hour-long oral history interview. These sixteen participants made up the initial group of oral history interviewees, but an additional nine were solicited through other means by myself (i.e. networking, professional contacts, serendipitous conversations at conferences, etc.) in order to try to recruit to the predetermined number of twenty-five. Portelli describes the use of oral history, in terms of relationships between interviewer and interviewee, ‘depends largely on what the interviewer puts into it in terms of questions, dialogue, and

¹⁴⁷ Valerie Yow, “‘Do I like Them Too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa,” *The Oral History Review* 24;1 (Summer 1997) pp.55-79, p.76
<<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3675397>>

personal relationship.’¹⁴⁸ The networking done throughout this thesis – both before, during, and hopefully after its completion – is a cornerstone of what makes oral history so valuable as a collection methodology within the grassroots archival community of Oklahoma. Due to the relationships and networking done on my part, the stated initial goal of twenty-five oral history individual interviews to be captured was met. The completion of the data analysis and synthesis will be thoroughly presented and discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

In the course of talking with participants via email and in person, some participants suggested that it would be helpful to have group interview sessions, to sit down with four to five individuals at a time to get a wider view of the archival landscape in Oklahoma than could be garnered from strictly individual respondents. This is not unheard of in the literature.¹⁴⁹ It suggests that ‘women are less able to talk about themselves using the familiar measures of success – material or work related – rather, women’s sense of self is more like established in relation to other people.’¹⁵⁰ Oklahomans most in support of group interviews were predominately female, correlating to the literature. The combination of individual and group responses could produce a more qualitative overview, the group dialogue allowing participants to help each other recall

¹⁴⁸ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different,’ in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn., New York: Routledge, 2006, p.39. [Reprinted by permission from *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: From and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, 1991]

¹⁴⁹ Jeffrey K. Olick, ‘Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,’ *Sociological Theory* 17, 3 (1999): p.336. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/370189>> writes, ‘Nevertheless, even if we restrict the term collective memory to explicitly commemorative activities and productions – a popular analytical strategy – the problem remains and remains unarticulated-of choosing between individualistic or collectivistic procedures. This is because two radically different concepts of culture are involved here, one that sees culture as a subjective category of meanings contained in people’s minds versus one that sees culture as patterns of publicly available symbols objectified in society. Each of these culture concepts entails different methodological strategies and produces different kinds of knowledge.’

¹⁵⁰ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.44.

memories and experiences through a shared conversation. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which interrupted data collection of the individual oral history interviews, this idea never came to fruition. In addition, the literature recommends the researcher in group interview projects needs to be ‘highly skilled in conducting such interviews.’¹⁵¹ While my strength in these areas has grown stronger through this thesis, I feel I would need more training in conducting group interviews versus the individual ones already recorded. If research continues beyond this thesis, this is an area that should be examined as a viable alternative or follow-up to what has been presented here, with additional training on the part of the researcher being instrumental in the future success of the project.

The oral history interviews were conducted at a location determined by the participant, many taking place in conference rooms or private areas within libraries and archives all around the state of Oklahoma. A list of interview questions was not provided to the participants beforehand but was given to them to peruse at the time of the interview while I set up the needed gear to perform this interview.¹⁵² This allowed for minimal preparation in answering questions, but also allowed the participant to gather their thoughts before being recorded. The participants did have a general idea of the information which would be discussed based on a follow-up email soliciting participation in the study in which it stated: ‘As a fellow librarian and archivist, I am interested in understanding what happens during times of transition in workers and how that impacts our state’s history, memory and culture.’¹⁵³ The providing of questions ahead of time did

¹⁵¹ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.126.

¹⁵² See Appendix D for the provided list of discussion questions/topics

¹⁵³ See Appendix E for the follow-up email

not occur except for the last five oral history interviews which ended up being recorded over the phone in a vehicle during the lockdown stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The car was utilised for its soundproofing and confidentiality from other family members. These phone interviews had originally been scheduled for in-person oral history interviews before the lockdown occurred, but in a quick pivot, the participants agreed to be recorded over the phone. This meant the questions were emailed to the interviewees twenty-four hours in advance of the scheduled phone conversation to allow them to prepare for the call. As it turns out, all the participants were eager to still be a part of the project despite the quick shift in circumstances.

The list of questions provided in Appendix D were comprised from a literature review performed in 2017-2018. As stated previously, the majority of respondents opted in to participate in the oral history interviews from the quantitative survey. However, not all were, which prompted the asking of the first question, to get a general baseline on all participants. The question and answer focussed interview format was chosen for its ability to keep participants anchored in their career experiences, a part of the autobiographical life model, but one in a defined area. Focussed interviews were chosen rather than broader life story approaches since the focus of the project revolved around the career of archivists and LAM workers within Oklahoma. However, many participants told elements of life story throughout their interviews. I believe this is due to comfort, for as Abrams says, 'A formal question-and-answer format might mutate into a more informal dialogue or conversational mode as the participants become more comfortable with one another.'¹⁵⁴ Thus the end result was kind of a merging of these two techniques, with those

¹⁵⁴ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.27.

who felt most comfortable during the oral history interview often veering into more autobiographical history. I believed in the strength of the focussed approach before sitting down with participants, but their additions of autobiographical elements added value to the data I was hoping to capture originally. Abrams writes that ‘modern narrative theory pays attention to the wider framework in which a text or narrative is produced.’¹⁵⁵ By paying attention during transcription to times when interviewees deviated from the questions and answers and veered into autobiographical elements, a more engaging narrative was completed in telling archivists stories. Therefore, focussed interviews were a driver of the oral history narrative, but due to the interaction with participants and co-creators, the flexibility of adding autobiographical elements into the narratives resulted in strong oral history data capture, both on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee, producing transcriptions and text driven by both methods.

In wrestling with the archive profession in Oklahoma, as mentioned in Chapter 1, I really wanted to understand how it evolved over time and how Oklahoma’s professionals maintain ties to each other and the field regionally, nationally, and internationally. Thus questions 7, 8 and 10 were based on literature within the field, while 11 was more of a gleaning of how current archivists are with events happening in others locations within the profession. The strength of this method did allow an analysis of how and what archivists are doing for professional development, i.e. reading current literature, theories, or current events. However, a limitation was many of the first respondents didn’t know the theory, and I began to explain the archival ideas after asking the question to later participants. I think if this was to be done again, I would try to provide written

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.113.

definitions for participants along with the questions.

Once the interviews were completed, the recordings were then taken off the recorder and placed into the NVivo transcription software which did a preliminary transcription. I then listened to each recording, editing as necessary since the NVivo software only claims a 90% accuracy rate in their transcription service.¹⁵⁶ The transcription software automatically removed natural language, like ‘uhs’ and ‘ums’. I determined that since these natural language transcriptions would be loaded in the NVivo software for analysis, having the natural language removed would allow for a deeper meaning to come out of the interviewing process so as not to distract from the main concepts being transmitted orally. Some of this natural language was added back to the transcription to account for pauses or moments of thought to be clearer. I also opted to leave in times of repetitive words, as well as the insertion of brackets for emotions conveyed in person but not necessarily picked up clearly on the microphone. These emotions included laughter and crying, which occurred in almost every interview.

Due to the scripted nature of the questions, I decided to do a more thematic analysis of the transcripts instead of putting the data back into the NVivo system and coding it. This was done using an analysis of each question separately from each other question, the findings of which will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis. This decision was twofold; first, the NVivo had just completed an upgrade to the software while I was completing data collection, and second, the advisor who was most familiar with the NVivo software took a job with a different university and the new advisor assigned, like myself, was not as familiar with it. Therefore, a more traditional keyword

¹⁵⁶ ‘NVivo Transcription,’ from *NVivo* Website <<https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products/transcription>> [accessed 31 January 2019]

analysis was done, and questions were grouped into thematic divisions. The keyword analysis then pulled together the thematic elements discussed in the literature review of Chapter 1 with the narratives of the Oklahoma archivists in order to gain a better understanding of what it means to be an Oklahoma archivist confronted with workforce transitions and economic challenges. Their stories demonstrate how the capture of the state's history is both formed and informed by the work of Oklahoma's archivists.

The storage of the data collected should also be mentioned, as the increase in phishing schemes and hacking in society has become more frequent over the past decade. The data was stored on a personal computer behind both a username login screen and a two-factor authentication system for cloud-based storage beyond the login, requiring a code for a successful login to be sent to my phone. I felt it necessary to do so since the captured oral histories and transcripts, as well as the release forms, were stored in a more fragile digital environment, one which became even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁷ This data protection was done at the beginning of the project in 2017 but became even more relevant after the pandemic began. I successfully completed Swansea University's Data Protection Briefing (GDPR), a spring 2022 required course for any post-graduate researcher collecting and storing data.¹⁵⁸ The course was a further reminder of the fragile nature of data and why protecting the words of the interviewees requires more intent, purpose, and adherence to security standards than just the stored journal articles and book notes used during the research portion of this thesis.

¹⁵⁷ Bernardi Pranggono and Arabo Abdullahi, 'COVID-19 pandemic cybersecurity issues,' *Internet Technology Letters*. 2021; 4:e247 p.1-6). <<https://doi.org/10.1002/itl2.247>> [accessed 17 December 2022] Their letter argues that three types of attacks became more prevalent in society during the pandemic 'Cyber-attacks during the pandemic can be categorized into three categories: scams and phishing, malware, and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS)' which increased because of employees working from home (WFH) on personal devices.

¹⁵⁸ 'University Statutory & Essential Training', *Swansea University*, Email correspondence, 13 April 2022.

Rationale: Why A Mixed Method Analysis

Instead of focusing on just one data collection method, I chose to utilise two, both quantitative as noted above through survey and data analysis, and qualitative as noted through oral history interviewing and data analysis. The 21st century has brought about a shift in combining these two methods, perhaps due to the copious amounts of data generated by technologies instead of just utilising one or the other form. Authors Johnson and Onwuegbuzie argue that as a third paradigm, mixed methodology's time has come; it will not 'replace either of these approaches but rather draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies.'¹⁵⁹

Gwyther, Possamai-Inesedy, and Rahman maintain the advantages of using one versus the other in terms of funding and data analysis.¹⁶⁰ However, I would like to argue that by using a mixed-method exploration form of study, that is 'the inclusion of a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase in an overall research study' where 'research is aimed at getting information about a topic that very little is known about,' in this case Oklahoma's archivists, is preferred in order to get to 'a sense of shared identity [which is] reinforced

¹⁵⁹ R. Burke Johnson and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, 'Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come,' *Educational Researcher* 33, 7 (2004): pp.14-26, pp.14-15. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3700093>>

¹⁶⁰ Gabrielle Gwyther and Alpha Possamai-Inesedy, 'Methodologies à la carte: an examination of emerging qualitative methodologies in social research,' *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12:2 (2009): pp.99-115, p.106 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570902727680>>. This article discusses how in qualitative research, 'social scientists are less successful in attracting support from national competitive grant schemes as well as from business and industry than their science and technology counterparts.' Md Shidur Rahman, 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review,' *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6, 1 (2017): pp.102-112, p.106 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102>> This article goes on to show that in using quantitative methodology the use of 'sampling' and 'data analysis is less time consuming' due to the software and programs now available to aid researchers in their work.

through the process of information exchange.’¹⁶¹ This will allow for a holistic approach across different schools of thought, one that goes beyond positivists, constructivists, and interpretivists, and yet incorporates elements of them all.

Rather, this holistic approach is undertaken in the paradigm of post-positivism, where ‘value and bias are present in all observations but effort [has been] made to limit their impact.’¹⁶² These are covered more in-depth in the Researcher Assumptions heading in the chapter titled Understanding Oklahoma: Introduction, where a discussion of confirmation bias occurs. Also, the role I play as an insider/outsider researcher was covered earlier in this chapter. Thus, the identification of bias, objectivity, and positionality on the part of the researcher allows the mixed methodology exploration to be present in the post-positivist realm but does not have to be constrained by many of the criticisms held within the positivist paradigm.

In addition to bridging different schools of thinking and moving beyond them into a different paradigm, mixed methodological research has a more thorough way of filling in gaps in the data. Ivankova and Wingo provide a good answer as to why one might do research using mixed methods: ‘Using mixed methods allows researchers to address complex research questions, find answers to both exploratory and confirmatory questions within a single study, and reveal a fuller picture of a problem in practice.’¹⁶³ Since the archival and museum profession has not been one that has examined itself well, a mixed

¹⁶¹ Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, ‘Mixed Methods Research,’ p.20; Ralph Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research: Qualitative, Quantitative and Combined Methods*, Los Angeles: Sage, 2020, p.7; Martyn Denscombe, ‘Communities of Practice,’ *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 2,3 (2008), p.276 <> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1558689808316807>>

¹⁶² Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.12.

¹⁶³ Nataliya Ivankova and Nancy Wingo, ‘Applying Mixed Methods in Action Research: Methodological Potentials and Advantages,’ *American Behavioral Scientist* 62, 7 (June 2018): p.980. <<https://doi:10.1177/0002764218772673>> The authors combine the writings of Greene, Teddlie & Tashakkori to form a cohesive definition.

methodological study will allow for a more complete picture of the realities and problems of the profession, at least on the scale of one state, Oklahoma.

Monrad argues for mixed methods in identity research saying, ‘different rationales may underlie the use of mixed methods. In the study of identification, three such rationales in particular deserve mention: validation and generalization, causal inferences and a double perspective.’¹⁶⁴ Because much of this thesis is to examine how archivists self-identify in order to place them in a larger historical context and narrative, mixed-method data collection allows all three of Monrad’s rationales to be obtained in the work of this thesis. Validation comes in the form of professional and career recognition through self, the researcher and ultimately, those who read this work. Causal inferences are revealed both through the archivist’s personal experiences combined with the larger economic picture of Oklahoma. These inferences and validation are seen then through the double perspective of both the interviewer and the interviewee, as well as through the data and the story of participants. Understanding how Oklahoma archivists self-identify requires the use of a mixed methodological third paradigm to truly understand the workforce as people beyond numbers and their place in Oklahoma’s historical record.

The use of MMR, or mixed-methodological research, is disregarded by other scholars because ‘exactly how qualitative and quantitative methods may best be integrated is not always clear.’¹⁶⁵ The research suggests integration but with no definitive

¹⁶⁴ Merete Monrad, ‘On a Scale of One to Five, Who Are You? Mixed Methods in Identity Research,’ *Acta Sociologica* 56, 4 (2013): pp.347-360, p.356. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569484>>

¹⁶⁵ Saša Baškarada and Andy Koronios, ‘A philosophical discussion of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in social science,’ [Philosophy of social science] *Qualitative Research Journal*, 18,1 (2018), pp.2-21, p.4. <<https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-17-00042>>

way of doing so. Instead, with all its complexity and assumptions, or perhaps despite them, this research endeavours to add to the field in mixed methodological construction by identifying the inherent biases of an embedded practitioner within the field of research through the existence of being completed in the post-positivist exploration label. In addition, I don't use the combination of the quantitative and qualitative methods in the 'unqualified adoption of natural science as a role model for social science.'¹⁶⁶ Natural science research and social science research are not the same, even though the approaches to both are similar. Baškarada and Koronios go on to conclude that if the social sciences adopt wholeheartedly natural science methods, a paradox exists where 'tacit denial of human agency and the capacity for critical self-reflection [occurs], the very denial of our humanity and arguably our special status in the universe. Social sciences can and ought to do more.'¹⁶⁷ I use one of the listed advantages of conducting mixed-methodological research; by combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the thesis can provide 'more comprehensive information about the issue being researched.'¹⁶⁸ Critical self-reflection, keeping in mind the human agency we are all afforded, identifying the researcher's place within the project, and analytic self-reflection of the profession results in a holistic examination of the archival profession within the establishment of the socio-subculture of Oklahoma. Mixed methods through qualitative oral history narratives and quantitative data collection and analysis provide better social science research and a more thorough history of Oklahoma's archival landscape where little is known.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p.15

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.14.

Should additional research be undertaken by this author or similar work be done in other geographic areas, I would recommend looking at the MMAR method.¹⁶⁹ This methodological approach not only uses the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, but also combines Action Research to produce a change in the future, or as Hall puts it, ‘a form of applied research that aims to bring about social change.’¹⁷⁰ However, since one researcher is undertaking this work alone, the simple mixed methodology is the preference utilised, as adding in Action Research usually means a collaborative work component being completed with colleagues. This body of work does attempt to incorporate history beyond temporal restraints to include the goal of what Giddens calls historicity, or studying history in a way ‘in which that consciousness is organised actively to promote social change.’¹⁷¹ Instead, this thesis should be seen more as a case study examination of the archival and museum profession, determining what commonalities and generalities are derived from both qualitative and quantitative data collection, including advocacy recommendations for the future in order to promote change. It may contain an element of action research but is extremely limited to reflections on what needs to happen next in Oklahoma to allow for archival professionals within the state to be validated and successful in their chosen profession in light of the current political, workforce, and economic factors.

Qualitative Data

The rationale for using oral history as the qualitative data-gathering element of the mixed methodological study is covered in Chapter 2. However, oral history and its use in

¹⁶⁹ Ivankova, p.980.

¹⁷⁰ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.6

¹⁷¹ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*, Berkeley: UC Press, 1979, pp.199-200.

identity literature is further examined here, especially as it reveals a more complete picture of Oklahoma's archival workforce. Many scholars have demonstrated the importance of oral history in academic work, from Derrida, who looked at the psychology of the archive as related to individuals, to Michel-Rolph Trouillot who bridged silences within the archival collection through oral history collection, as well as Portelli, who demonstrated the importance of capturing all narratives associated with historical events.¹⁷² A 2022 study utilised oral history to capture the 2018 Oklahoma teacher walkout. This study mapped a varied emotional landscape, in which 'teachers expressed a wide range of emotions, including sadness, anger, frustration, and ultimately, hope, as they looked to the future.'¹⁷³ Because this thesis is specifically interested in generational workforce transitions and how they relate to institutional memory and organisational culture, as defined in Charlotte Linde's *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory*, the use of oral history interviews became the preferred data collection method in order to 'tap into a continuous outpouring of words that provide matrices defining both community and individual identity.'¹⁷⁴ Linde emphasises the importance of narrative saying

Narrative works to establish identity, that is, to answer the question, 'Who are We?' Narrative is also the link between the way an institution represents its past, and the ways its members use, alter, or contest that past, in order to understand the

¹⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Eric Prenowitz, translator, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995; Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

¹⁷³ Rhonda Harlow and Lucy E. Bailey, 'The Need for Action: Oral histories of the 2018 Oklahoma teacher walkout,' in Thalia M. Mulvihill and Raji Swaminathan, eds., *Oral History and Qualitative Methodologies: Educational Research for Social Justice*, New York, Routledge, 2022, pp.71-91, p.84.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Cándida Smith, 'Analytic Strategies for Postmodern Interviewing,' in *Postmodern Interviewing* Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, eds., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003, p.2.

<<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412985437>> [accessed 4 October 2017]

institution as a whole as well as their own place within or apart from that institution.¹⁷⁵

The idea of seeing an archivist as a whole person with a wide range of emotions, both within and external to the organisation, is key to understanding why archivists continue careers in underfunded institutions, often with little job security. Further, being able to understand the identity of the archivists helps us to understand the motivations and decisions of the institutions within which they work.

The idea of seeing the ‘whole person’ has been brought to light in archival literature through the work of feminist scholars, social justice activists, deconstructionists who point out archives as entities of colonialism and power, and gender studies scholars. Scholars like Anais, Angelo, Kamphuis, and Burton, who address the archive through the lens of feminism, argue ‘if we want to do justice to women’s work and those who lost the political struggles of the past, we have an obligation to read the archive in creative ways...to [use] sources ranging from oral history interviews to television speeches and “subjective” formats, such as novels and personal recollections.’¹⁷⁶ The scholarship of social justice oral historians within Oklahoma helps expose the emotions behind the work, as the public education teachers experienced similar frustrations with Oklahoma’s political processes. The oral historians reported, ‘several discussed their rage and frustration from encountering nonresponsive legislators before and during the Walkout.’¹⁷⁷ Oral history allows the person to be humanised through emotional expression during the interviewing process. Whether a public-school teacher in 2018 or

¹⁷⁵ Linde, *Working the Past*, p.4.

¹⁷⁶ Jane Freeland and Christina von Hodenberg, ‘Archiving, exhibiting, and curating the history of feminisms in the global twentieth century: an introduction,’ *Women's History Review* (2023): pp.1-6, p.3 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2023.2208401>> [accessed 7 June 2023]

¹⁷⁷ Harlow and Bailey, ‘The Need for Action’, p.84

an archival employee in 2019, using oral history allows the examination of one voice and one experience, even as collective groups bring more weight to an issue through grassroots organising.

A 2022 study by BIPOC researchers examined the place of qualitative research using oral history within the academy versus qualitative stories collected in their own socio-subcultural groups. Jackson, Watson, White, and Gallo explain their methodology in this way: ‘As we allowed ourselves to challenge the traditional academic ways of defining qualitative research, we also began to co-create our approach to research *in community*.’¹⁷⁸ The creation of Oklahoma archivists as their own socio-subcultural group parallels their work done within their own racially diverse community using Indigenous data collection methods. Jackson, Watson, White, and Gallo’s Indigenous data collection method is a viable solution to utilise within Oklahoma’s large Indigenous communities to better understand the state we all reside in. Examining the archivists who work within the power structures of their employment, as well as the cultural and political factors of the state of Oklahoma, by using ‘subjective’ formats like oral history - which this project does - allows us to hear the voices of those conducting the labour and to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the field of work. This will, in turn, allow for better advocacy and educational opportunities to reduce confusion about their role in society and the necessary work they perform.

Presenting and Sharing the Stories

¹⁷⁸ Iesha Jackson, Doris L. Watson, Claytee D. White, and Marcia Gallo, ‘Research as (re)vision: laying claim to oral history as a just-us research methodology,’ *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* (2022) 45:4, pp.330-342, p.331, <<https://doi:10.1080/1743727X.2022.2076827>> italics are emphasised in the original article.

Each of the oral history interviews in this thesis was conducted using a set of IRB/Ethics Review approved questions, except for one, a current event which came out after the completion of the IRB process. Oral permission was granted by the Ethics Review/IRB to include the current event. Answering it or not was left up to each interview subject. The data collection method for the oral history interviews utilised the semi-structured process, which ‘include[s] predetermined questions as in structured interviews but permit[s] the interviewer to ask follow-up questions on some topics for which additional information is considered necessary.’¹⁷⁹ The list of questions is included in Appendix D. These questions cover a wide variety of topics, including work and school history, opinions about how Oklahoma compares to other states and regions in how it funds and does historical preservation, personal knowledge of archival terms and concepts, their knowledge of current events, and reflections back upon a career in public history through archival work. Sections in the oral histories were marked by following the same question order presented to each participant. This guided me in the thematic analysis, even if the participants told stories or went off topic; it allowed for an oral mark to be found by the researcher in the recording and transcription process. One example of this is when an interviewee decided to reflect on a memorable career experience even before I asked the question. If the response fell under an earlier question number, it would be analysed according to the subject matter, not its place in the original question order. Grouping the analysis into the four main thematic areas stated in this chapter’s introduction allowed for a more complete picture in time of Oklahoma’s archival workforce.

¹⁷⁹ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.77.

The interview questions were not provided ahead of time but given to each interview subject at the time of the interview during the equipment setup process.¹⁸⁰ This perusal time allowed participants to familiarise themselves with the topics being discussed during the oral history interview, but not so much time for them to prepare canned answers ahead of the interview. Limiting the access to questions ahead of time is a hybrid model allowing the free flow of narrative through the life story collection model, ‘during [which] the interview is not used a pre-established questionnaire; the witness is allow[ed] to speak freely and is stimulated and guided by specific questions only when needed.’¹⁸¹ In addition, this technique uses elements from the preservationist point of view, the primary aim being ‘motivated by an interest in protecting and conserving the past than in promoting a transformative political agenda.’¹⁸² While this project began in the preservationist model, it has evolved through the process to incorporate a desire for change, at least in how workflow transitions are handled by institutions and how funding occurs for state entities housing archival components. Because of this evolution, each question is grouped thematically in order to gain a general consensus or more complete picture of the four areas identified in the introduction – connections to Oklahoma, entry into the profession and career life, repercussions of conservative politics and funding, and the ever-changing professional archival landscape.

Conclusion

¹⁸⁰ Except in the case of the four COVID-19 lockdown phone interviews, in which case they were emailed 24 hours ahead of time. The Obama Presidential Library question was not provided to the first interview subjects since it was an addendum to the IRB questions and had not happened yet.

¹⁸¹ Giulia Nataloni, ‘Oral History Archives: collection and preservation of life stories,’ *Almatourism*, 3 (August 2011), pp.43-46, p.43 <[doi:10.6092/issn.2036-5195/2277](https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-5195/2277)> [accessed 2 December 2019].

¹⁸² Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson, *Researching Social Change: Qualitative Approaches*, London: SAGE, 2009, p.35-36.

As this chapter has demonstrated, a study of the socio-subculture of Oklahoma's archivists is established through the mixed methodological approach of combined oral history as narrative along with survey data collection to produce a more holistic representation of what constitutes an Oklahoma archivist. The insider/outsider conundrum was examined in research conducted by speech language therapists, LGBTQ+ communities, non-Western perspectives, and autistic communities. This helped orient me to my place in the project as an insider doing research within a community to which I also belong. Data collection began with a quantitative electronic survey distributed by various archival and historical societies and professional museum organisations, both at the state and regional levels. This garnered a pool of respondents who indicated they would be willing to be interviewed through the oral history methodological form of person-to-person interviews. These interviews were conducted by an insider, a researcher knowledgeable of the archival landscape in Oklahoma. Release forms were sent to participants, and interview questions were provided at the time of the interview. These oral history interviews were conducted at various locales around the state of Oklahoma in 2019 and early 2020. The COVID-19 lockdown, which in Oklahoma began in March 2020, then caused a pivot to telephone interviews. Once completed, the oral history recordings were then put into the NVivo research management system for initial transcription. Once transcribed, the data was downloaded and edited as I listened to hours of oral history interviews. I put back in natural language breaks and emotions like laughter and crying and edited words that were inaccurately translated, many of which were mistranslated due to a thick Oklahoma accent or being of Indigenous origin. This allowed the computer-generated accuracy of 90% to be improved

upon and reflective of local words, dialects, and accents spoken within the state. The mixed methods approach allows the heard and the written results to combine for the creation of a complete and more holistic picture of the archival profession in Oklahoma, where its history is now told by the people who have done the work.

Chapter 2

The Many Perspectives of Oklahoma LAMs

Introduction

History can be discomfoting. Furthermore, examining the historical record through the lens of those society did not deem the victors or residing in places of power may contribute to this feeling of discomfort. Thus, examination must occur for a more complete understanding of events. The people doing the work of expressing complex narratives through turbulent and uncomfortable timelines allow readers to empathise, provide a better societal understanding of problematic events, and tell a more balanced view of the current society and its future through the holistic, complete lens of the past. Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., in discussing the 2022 opening of the Cherokee Freedmen exhibit at the Cherokee National History Museum in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, explained the reason for the exhibit as ‘the latest in our ongoing effort to not just adhere to legal requirements of equality, but to really embrace the spirit of equality and to explore this part of Cherokee history that, frankly, has been diminished and not talked about for generations.’¹ The discomfort of identifying and addressing diminished history is a first step in beginning to reconcile an uncomfortable and troublesome historical record.

¹ Harmeet Kaur, ‘The Cherokee Nation reckons with its history of slavery in a new exhibit,’ *CNN website* 7 September 2022 <<https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/06/us/chokeee-nation-museum-freedmen-exhibit-cec/index.html>> [accessed 28 January 2023]

In trying to reconcile hard historical realities, oftentimes, voices have been repressed from the archival record and decisions made on what to keep strongly aligned with the cultural majority of the time. As Alexandra Walsham has suggested,

Archives are the factories and laboratories of the historian...the loci of our apprenticeship as scholars and the warehouses from which we acquire the materials to build the history we write. Until recently, however, scholars of the early modern period (as of other eras) rarely paused to consider how and why these repositories came into being, despite the fact that these processes have fundamentally shaped and coloured our knowledge of the past. Too often we mine the documentary sources they house without scrutinizing the decisions about selection, arrangement, preservation and retention taken by those responsible for the care of their contents over successive generations.²

The pause and consideration for those who have done the work within the repositories creates a greater understanding of the story's entirety and the why behind the decisions made. In bringing to the centre the stories of those responsible for the care of their contents across this moment of generational transition, this thesis argues for an approach to archival histories that is attentive to grassroots organising and local politics.

Great scholars and writers have a way of making history come alive to their readers, presenting facts and arguments not postulated or heard before through their research, argument, and presentation of material. They research within primary source material, listen to the experiences of groups of people through oral histories, and examine viewpoints from all sides. Often, these scholars are not alone on these journeys to discovery but are instead guided along the way by individuals in the LAM fields. Undergraduate students are often told in research methodology classes that the librarian or archivist should be utilised, and often befriended, to gain their knowledge in helping students with their research topics. This befriending of the information professional has

² Alexandra Walsham, 'The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe,' *Past & Present*, 230, Issue suppl_11, November 2016, pp.9-48, p.9, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtw033>>

proven true time and again along many scholars' research journeys. Still, it was not until I was a graduate assistant in an archival setting that I began to really understand the power structure between the LAM professional, researcher, information, and knowledge. Access and control of information is often through a gatekeeper, librarian, archivist, tribal elder, or family record keeper, that one person who knows where to look and what to examine. The one person then becomes a kind of *de facto* institutional memory of the organisation, which is why capturing their knowledge and experience can only enhance the historical record of Oklahoma.

Many practising archivists, librarians, local historians, and museum curators within the state of Oklahoma encounter or work within challenging contexts. These challenges include budget cuts and cost-saving measures, trauma and trauma-informed archival work, and navigating a calling within a career. Reductions affect professional's abilities to evacuate or stabilise documents and materials amidst or after natural disasters. Documenting acts of terrorism like the 1995 Oklahoma Murrah Building Bombing requires more emotional and traumatic labour in the day-to-day activity of the LAM professional. In 1975, after having worked at the National Archives and Records Administration for thirty years, Herman Kahn addressed the Society of American Archivists on the importance of the profession in American culture and his beginnings in archival work. Looking back over his career, he discussed his training as a historian while he worked as an archivist. One of the most profound things he said was, 'Despite the fact that this republic had existed for one hundred and fifty years without archivists and had not collapsed, most of us came within a short time to believe that ours was a vitally

important calling.’³ Fifty years later, this sense of calling and purpose in a democratic society is a vital factor for Oklahoma and the United States, archivists and LAM professionals. Examining the power structures, grassroots organising, and personal motivations of the people doing the work will answer why they continue in a difficult and ever-changing field.

This thesis focuses on the experiences and opinions of a sample of the individuals working within the publicly funded archival repositories of Oklahoma. Considering the personal motivations within the political context of the state develops a more robust understanding of why collections like the Murrah Bombing exist, which will be discussed in depth in later chapters. I suggest these motivations can play a role in preventing the fall back into right-wing extremism, which led to the event happening in the first place. It anchors the work done by archivists as keepers of information and their dedication to providing context for an informed citizenry, a key tenet of American democratic society. Art historian Aby Warburg and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs shifted the collective memory dialogue from biological to cultural in the late twentieth century.⁴ Warburg and Halbwachs entry into the literature shows two additional approaches to answer the discussion of motivational factors for the archival professions – cultural preservation and institutional memory. Cultural preservation should not be viewed through the ‘assumptions of formalism [which] not only cause uncomfortable contradictions and leaps of logic, but also prevent us from realizing the full implications of contemporary cultural theory in historic preservation’ but instead should be viewed as future forward,

³ Herman Kahn, Frank B. Evans, and Andrea Hinding, ‘Documenting American Cultures through Three Generations: Change and Continuity,’ *The American Archivist* 38, 2 (April 1975): pp.147-151, p.149.

⁴ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,’ *New German Critique*, 65 (1995): pp.125-133, p.125 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>>

including commitments to technological innovations and ‘explor[ing] techniques that will retain the physical and spiritual quality of heritage places, as well as the completeness of the stories that such places tell. These heritage stories offer a stabilising element in an era of change and uncertainty.’⁵ When society and culture become unable to talk across the political divides, past stories help demonstrate how and why doing so is necessary. Melinda Burrell’s thesis work, which collected and analysed fifteen participants from each major political party, found that ‘there is little in the literature specifically about how people perceive context as affecting whether and how they want to talk across the divide.’⁶ Context is an area that needs more examination. However, when stories are collected of archivists by archivists, a bridge is created over the ever-changing work done by those in the historic preservation fields, which includes libraries, archives, museums, and tribal entities. A roadmap is created for future professionals who endeavour to carry on the work and can be examined when guidance is needed in the shifting landscapes of technology, politics, and workforce challenges.

Oklahoma archivists aim to preserve the culture by capturing the state’s activities for both current and future generations of researchers to access, study, and examine. Sometimes purposely, sometimes inadvertently, the archivists or librarians become entities of institutional memory themselves. A generational workforce transition, what

⁵ Kenrick Ian Grandison, ‘Challenging Formalism: The Implications of Contemporary Cultural Theory for Historic Preservation,’ *Landscape Journal* 18, 1 (1999): pp.30-40, p.38 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43323477>>; David G. Woodcock, ‘Preservation Philosophy and Approaches: The Next Fifty,’ *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 51, 1 (2020): pp.13-24, p.21. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26920640>>.

⁶ Melinda Burrell, *Why Would I Want to Talk to Them? An Exploration of Perceptions of Talking Across Political Divides*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nova Southeastern University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020) p.173 <<https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/2/YfZTG?s=TV86gHr4X8JPP0%2B35oKTAUTDZa8%3D>> [accessed 20 January 2024]

one author calls a ‘critical paradigm shift...in the American workplace’, is occurring that encapsulates these entities of institutional memory within the LAM sector.⁷ Baby Boomers, a generational term loosely defined as those born between 1943 and 1964, are leaving the state for better pay or taking retirement and being replaced by younger workers.⁸ As with other fields, such as teaching, questions have arisen about recruitment, qualifications, and retention of these new workers. Within library, archival, and museum institutions, there is an electrified charge to remove the requirement for a master’s degree in library science to work in the field. With Oklahoma already lowering the teacher requirements and those within the profession calling for a bachelor’s level degree versus a master’s degree, it appears the future of the information professionals, including archival workers in the state, is being questioned.

In addition to the lowering of professional qualifications of a terminal master’s level degree to a bachelor’s degree, a reduction in the workforce has occurred. About 60 percent of the greying American workforce ‘with a “career job” retire and move to a “bridge job”, a short-term and/or part-time position.’⁹ This greying of the American workforce is something all disciplines have known was on the horizon, as articles in journals began appearing as early as the mid-1990s, which stated of both the public and private sectors, ‘there is no denying a dramatic trend toward an older workforce’ is

⁷ Magdalene Chan, ‘Aging in the American Workforce,’ *NYPL blog* posted 20 December 2016 <<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/12/20/aging-american-workforce>> [accessed 4 February 2019]

⁸ Janelle Stecklein, ‘State law loosening requirements for teachers comes under fire,’ *Enid News & Eagle* 7 December 2022 <https://www.enidnews.com/news/state-law-loosening-requirements-for-teachers-comes-under-fire/article_86627798-7287-11ed-bad5-6b5918eeddaa.html> [accessed 7 December 2022] which says ‘In response to Oklahoma’s continued teacher shortage, lawmakers passed a measure that no longer requires educators to have a college degree in order to teach permanently in public schools.’

⁹ Teri Morisi, ‘Why More People Ages 55+ are Working,’ *US Department of Labor Blog* posted 18 November 2016 <<https://blog.dol.gov/2016/11/18/why-more-people-ages-55-are-working>> [accessed 18 February 2019].

happening.¹⁰ Managers were told time and again that the older workforce's motivations and job satisfaction differ vastly from younger workers. Generationally, the Baby Boomers have been tied to this greying as a large portion of America's workforce is reaching retirement age. One reason this generation stays in their jobs longer is because of financial concerns; this concern alone 'could push the average retirement age even higher, as older employees report their expected retirement age is 67, compared to 63 today.'¹¹ Part of the work of this thesis is to determine if Oklahoma archivists, museum professionals, and the like are shifting into bridge job positions or staying in the workforce longer than they had originally anticipated.

A study out of the Netherlands suggests that financial factors contribute to the advanced retirement age. Still, there are other things to consider besides money, such as determinants tied to socioeconomic status, workplace environment, and psycho-social factors.¹² If economic situations and social factors allow for the retirement of LAM professionals in Oklahoma, the institutions for which they work will be affected. On an even broader scale, if professionals are not replaced, the culture they are working to preserve will not happen, affecting Oklahoma's historical record. As Anne J. Gilliland writes on the importance of the archivist in any institution,

The best archivists, however, can 'get inside the head' of their own archives, feeling their 'pulses', empathetically noting their silences, and contemplating the reasons for these and how to draw attention to them.

¹⁰ Suzanne Crampton, and John Hodge, 'Transition – Ready or Not: The Aging of America's Work Force,' *Public Personnel Management* 25, 2 (1996): p.243. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009102609602500210>>

¹¹ Robert L. Clark, Steven Nyce, Beth Ritter and John Shoven, 'Employer Concerns and Responses to an Aging Workforce,' *The Journal of Retirement* Spring 6, 4 (2019): p.85 <<https://doi.org/10.3905/jor.2019.1.049>>

¹² Ellen Dingemans, Kène Henkens, Hanna van Solinge, 'Access to Bridge Employment: Who Finds and Who Does Not Find Work After Retirement?,' *The Gerontologist* 56, 4, (August 2016): pp.630-640, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu182>> [accessed 7 December 2022] The authors specifically point out that 'Preretirement work disengagement not only predicts relatively early retirement intentions, but has a negative association to bridge employment as well.'

Although we are increasingly looking to a future of automated archival processing of records, every archivist knows the depth of knowledge that is to be gained by laying out an entire series or collection and manually processing it.¹³

Retired and transient archivists, librarians, local historians and museum curators have the knowledge to get inside the documents and to understand their unique socio-subculture as they work with the archival materials. Their knowledge cannot be easily replicated even in an online digital environment. The archivist knows the ins and outs of an institution's culture and organisation's history, and in absorbing information on documents from donors through narrative and practice, they become a part of the institutional memory itself. Information collected over time allows them to contextualise often unknown stories and beliefs interwoven into the organisation's day-to-day operations. Archivists realise the bias and shaping of imagination, which oral biography lends itself to because they are part of traditional Western culture.¹⁴ American archivists long familiar with oral history interviews and interviewing bring an insider bias, but also a complementary narrative to the genre itself.

The memories of collecting, processing, documenting, and making available materials, while contained in collection development policies and finding aids, are also housed inside the heads of archivists. Their minds contain details which often are ephemeral in the creation of finding aids and inventories, and if these details are captured in a print environment, the translation and digitisation to an online medium could possibly degrade the information further. Other scholars have pointed out,

¹³ David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archives*, Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017, p. xvi.

¹⁴ Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, 'Genre and narrative in life stories,' in Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, eds. *Narrative and Genre*. New York: Routledge, 1998, p.15.

The time is ripe for the same critical scrutiny to be applied to archival collections, whose historical significance derives not just from hosting single documents but from establishing complex systems of meaningful relations among those documents. Studying the selection, arrangement and classification of archives helps us understand the uses (or non-uses) of documents at the time they were produced and in the immediate future. Just as historians of the book and new philologists have placed an emphasis on the creative, transformative effects of textual circulation, so archives can be shown to have been sites not just of knowledge preservation, but knowledge production.¹⁵

Archivists and LAM professionals are knowledge producers as well as knowledge managers and must be examined to expose their own place in the greater historical record.

Oklahoma: An Overview

Understanding Oklahoma is about trying to understand many different people with many different stories from many different perspectives. Author Merleyn Ruth Bell put it this way in her book *Oklahoma Cannon* when asked to examine her place of birth:

“Where are you from?” If only I had a nickel for every time I’ve been asked that question. It’s innocent enough, though when people ask, they’re often trying to get at *what* I am more than *where* I’m from...Either way, the answer is Oklahoma.’¹⁶

Historically, others have pointed out the pitfalls and challenges of trying to define the place of Oklahoma and being an Oklahoman. In 1936, Oklahoma historian Muriel Wright argued that in defining Oklahoma as a state and locale, the nationalities that reside within

¹⁵ One such example is the scrutinising of the journal *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* from within. Filippo de Vivo, Andrea Guidi and Alessandro Silvestri, ‘Archival Transformations in Early Modern European History,’ *European History Quarterly*, 2016, 46(3): p.422, show how ‘French historians associated with the journal *Annales* [who] became increasingly aware of the fluidity and interchange between history and sociology, memory and the archive.’

¹⁶ Merleyn Ruth Bell, ‘Oklahoma Canon’ in Sara N. Beam, Emily Dial-Driver, Rilla Askew and Juliet Evusa, eds. *Voices from the Heartland*, Volume II, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019, p.3.

said state must also be recognized; in 2016, two authors credited her work as having ‘recognized that it is our cultural diversity that characterizes Oklahoma as a state and that preservation is an integral element of maintaining that identity.’¹⁷ A decade earlier, in a 2006 essay collection of women from Oklahoma, indigenous author Rilla Askew addresses stereotyping and the guessing of homeland origins of Oklahomans from people they encounter, writing, ‘Before 1995, Oklahoma kept its invisibility well: we were an indefinable vowel-state located somewhere in the middle of the country, a place recalled, if at all, mainly through the catchy show tune of the same name.’¹⁸ And while Rodgers and Hammerstein have given vocal renown to the state through the musical named after the locale, many outsiders recognise Oklahoma as the place of America’s worst act of domestic terrorism, the Murrah Federal Building Bombing of 1995 by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

Askew goes on to state, ‘For many weeks after the bombing, the Oklahoma character – or that portion of it available to the camera’s eye, witnessed on television screens in living rooms and airports and sports bars around the country – was claimed by the whole of the United States.’¹⁹ Iconic photos of firemen rescuing babies were put repeatedly on magazine covers and television broadcasts. ‘The media sensed [an iconic American story]; they tried to put a face to it, an identity, a name. They called us America’s Heartland, and I think most Americans – and most Oklahomans – believed

¹⁷ Cynthia Savage, ‘Cultural Diversity and Historic Preservation in Oklahoma,’ article, Autumn 2016; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, <<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc2017402/m1/1/>> [accessed 19 March 2023], *The Gateway to Oklahoma History*, <<https://gateway.okhistory.org>> crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

¹⁸ Rilla Askew, ‘Most American,’ *Voices from the Heartland*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, p.3; (originally appeared in *Nimrod* 50.1 (Fall/Winter 2006): 102-11).

¹⁹ Askew, p.4-5.

it.²⁰ Twenty years later, this strength of spirit and grit has taken on a new name—the Oklahoma Standard. The definition copyrighted by the Oklahoma City National

Memorial in conjunction with the State Chamber of Oklahoma says:

April 19, 1995, altered the face of Oklahoma – and the nation – forever. But rather than bow to fear as the attackers intended, the community banded together. Cars became ambulances. Strangers became neighbors. People donated the shoes off their feet. Visiting rescue workers and journalists called this spirit of generosity the *Oklahoma Standard*.²¹

In the wake of a horrific event the historical record was being created. The cultural memory was evolving and changing.

One historian who writes primarily on historical memory of the American South argues that,

...architects of historical memory display a keen appreciation of public space and understand that it is imbued with social meaning, and especially collective memory. By insinuating their memory into public space, groups exert the cultural authority, express the collective solidarity, and achieve a measure of the permanence that they often crave. To infuse objects and places with commemorative significance is to combat the transitory nature of memories and underscore the connectedness of the past and present. Historical memory thus becomes inextricably bound together with both public space and culture.²²

The public space of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is now on the register of National Parks and is managed by the National Park Service, a department of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The event and the memory associated with such tragedy has been nationalised and the site continues to be a highly-visited attraction.

Those who researched the Memorial's beginnings came to a realisation through their research process, 'I learned that the stories of acts of kindness, the selfless work of rescue

²⁰ Ibid, p.5.

²¹ 'Oklahoma Standard,' *Oklahoma City National Memorial*, <<https://oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/oklahoma-standard/>> [accessed 5 December 2017]

²² W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p.6.

and recovery, and the pride in the Oklahoma Standard were not an evasion of the realities of the event but an important part of the people's reaction to it.'²³ A report by the National Park service says, 'The World seems to shrinks [sic] in times of tragedy. Processing events like the Oklahoma City bombing or the Boston Marathon Bombings together creates a sense of unity and civic duty.'²⁴ Thus, out of tragedy began memory and the collection of materials and objects, the collection of stories and history, so that the sharing of these would allow for healing and hope, not only for Oklahomans, but for others such as the 9/11 families and survivors of school shootings.

The significance of object collection at the Bombing Memorial fence, objects which can be shared with others, is not an insignificant duty. One scholar says that 'objects have meaning because of their continuity. That continuity is a social decision, relating to power and access to resources over time.'²⁵ The continuity of things placed on a fence is something unexpected but it continues even to this day as many who run the OKC Memorial Marathon adhere running bibs to the fence after completing the race. By creating a museum dedicated to remembering the OKC Bombing in the hopes that a similar act of domestic terrorism can never happen again, we Oklahomans are adhering to the societal structuration, analysing 'time-space co-ordination...studying the contextual features of locales', overlapping both the study of geography and history, time and space, from a true social science perspective.²⁶ Archivists work to create culture, contextualise

²³ Edward T. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.235.

²⁴ 'Oklahoma Update,' National Park Service Newsletter, <https://www.nps.gov/okci/learn/news/upload/OK_update_fall2013print.pdf> [accessed 8 December 2018].

²⁵ E. Haven Hawley, 'Reflections on the Meanings of Objects,' in Melissa A. Hubbard, Robert H. Jackson, and Arnold Hirshon, eds. *Forging the Future of Special Collections*, Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2016, p.8.

²⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Los Angeles: UC Press, 1984, p.286.

it, and understand it better in order to prevent and better educate future generations, much like the mission of the Murrah Bombing Memorial site.

But Oklahoma is so much more than the Oklahoma City Murrah Building Bombing. In a history book written for a non-scholarly audience, two authorities on Oklahoma's history describe their endeavour to capture the story of Oklahoma like so: 'All [Oklahomans] are the beneficiaries of a long and difficult history that has forged an identity that helps explain why Oklahomans are who and what they are.'²⁷ This acknowledgement from the preface of *Oklahoman's* complex historical record is paramount to understanding Oklahoma's complex stories, identities, and peoples. Oklahoma is a state that is relatively new to the Union of the United States, obtaining statehood in 1907 as the forty-sixth state of the now fifty.²⁸ Before statehood, Oklahoma began as Indian Territory, which was established after the Indian Removal Act of 1830 passed under the leadership of President Andrew Jackson, relocating nearly 50,000 Native Americans from the Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Chickasaw tribes.²⁹ It is a state with elements of historical racism; one example of this is Governor William H. 'Bill' Murray, who served from 1931-1935 and wrote a book perpetuating eugenics practices.³⁰ Another example is the fact that Oklahoma is home to one of the worst race massacres of the early twentieth century, the destruction of Tulsa's

²⁷ W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma: A History* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008, p.xi.

²⁸ 'Oklahoma Statehood, November 16, 1907,' National Archives, Center for Legislative Archives, <<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/oklahoma> [accessed 8 December 2018].

²⁹Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State 'Indian Treaties and the Removal Act of 1830' (Last Updated 8 April 2018) <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/indian-treaties>> [accessed 31 January 2019]

³⁰ The book is titled *The Negro's Place in the Call of Race* and was self-published by Murray out of Tishomingo, Oklahoma in 1948. He cites Dr. Paul Topinard's beliefs on p.22 and Dr. Hunt's Brain Weights on p.23 among many derogatory comments and inflammatory remarks to not only African Americans but also against Jewish peoples, Communists, and the Russian people.

Greenwood District.³¹ It is a state that has weathered everything from Dust Bowls to EF5 tornadoes.³² During the Dust Bowl and American Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, singer Woody Guthrie began to sing about ‘dustbowl refugees’, sparking awareness of unfair labour practices of migrants in California, many of whom had relocated from Oklahoma.³³ Oklahoma’s past is best summed up by Sara Beam who says, ‘This land can kill you. With tornadoes, fire, earthquakes, floods and droughts.’³⁴

In the larger American landscape, Oklahoma is often seen as just an oil and gas state, where the oil booms and busts have affected the state legislature’s budget many times over the decades. In the federal government’s quick facts of Oklahoma in 2021, it is reported that ‘Oklahoma was the nation’s fifth-largest producer of marketed natural gas and the sixth-largest producer of crude oil.’³⁵ Nationally, the oil backing of the local Penn Square Bank and its collapse had major ramifications on how Oklahoma was seen. Former U.S. Attorney Bill Price recalls that when the bank collapsed ‘the whole brand of Oklahoma was hurt. We became viewed in the national scene as a land of con men and shysters.’³⁶ Beyond the image of Oklahoma in the national eye, the Penn Square Bank’s

³¹ Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1982.

³² Holly Bailey, *The Mercy of the Sky: The Story of a Tornado*, New York: Penguin Books, 2016 is an excellent account of the events surrounding the May 20, 2013 EF5 tornado which hit Moore, OK, just south of Oklahoma City, and its aftermath.

³³ Daniel Wolff, *Grown Up Anger: The Connected Mysteries of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and the Calumet Massacre of 1913*, New York: Harper Collins, 2017. The author further explains that when the ‘Depression kicked in, migrants out of the Southwest began arriving in California at a rate of twelve hundred to fifteen hundred a day. By the end of the thirties there were some 1.3 million, about a quarter of the state’s population.’ These migrants were referred to as ‘Okies...who were being driven from home by political and economic forces,’ p.73, p.79.

³⁴ Sara N. Beam, ‘Novice at Belle Point,’ in Sara N. Beam, Emily Dial-Driver, Rilla Askew and Juliet Evusa, eds., *Voices from the Heartland*, Volume II. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019, p.18.

³⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, ‘Oklahoma State Energy Profile,’ U.S. Energy Information Administration <<https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=OK>> [accessed 4 February 2023]

³⁶ Back in Time, ‘Breaking the Bank,’ online video recording PBS Season 5, Episode 4 Aired 4 May 2016 <<https://www.pbs.org/video/back-time-breaking-bank/>> [accessed 31 January 2023]

‘failure resulted in the revision of Oklahoma’s banking laws and tighter regulatory control on the nation’s banks through the passage of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act of 1989 and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act of 1991.’³⁷ Others nationally think of Oklahoma in terms of a state known for horrors like the Dust Bowl, the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, the Osage murders for oil and land rights now made famous in the book *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and the Murrah Building Bombing. Still others view Oklahoma in the contrasting light of a state known for fun, with annual events such as the Okie Noodling Tournament and the PBR Rodeo, as well as seasonal events like the town of Chickasha’s Festival of Light, which runs from the middle of November until the end of December.³⁸ It is also known for unusual roadside attractions, many hailing from the days of Route 66 before the passage of the Interstate Highway System Act.³⁹ The Act, called the ‘biggest public

³⁷ Lynne Pierson Doti, ‘Penn Square Bank,’ *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=PE009>> [accessed 4 February 2023]

³⁸ Ed Godfrey, ‘Okies have gained international ‘fame’ in the wake of a 2001 documentary,’ *NewsOK.com* (6 July 2008) <<https://newsok.com/article/3266160/okies-have-gained-international-fame-in-the-wake-of-2001-documentary>> [accessed 31 January 2019] in which the article argues the notoriety of the film has ‘branded Oklahoma as *the* noodling state’ in which fish are caught using only their hands; ‘Professional Bull Riders’ <<https://www.pbr.com/>> [accessed 31 January 2019] There is always a stop on the circuit at Oklahoma City which can be found under the events tab; Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation, ‘Chickasha Festival of Light’ *Travel Oklahoma* <<https://www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.15643/event.32765>> [accessed 9 December 2022]; the website describes the event as being ‘Recognized as one of the top holiday light shows in the nation, the 30th annual Chickasha Festival of Light features over 3.5 million twinkling lights in Shannon Springs Park.’

³⁹ Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation, ‘Drive Route 66,’ *Travel Oklahoma* <https://www.travelok.com/Route_66> [accessed 9 December 2022] where Oklahoma contains ‘the nation’s longest driveable stretch of Route 66’; United States Department of Interior, ‘History and Significance of Route 66,’ National Park Service <<https://ncptt.nps.gov/rt66/history-and-significance-of-us-route-66/>> [accessed 9 December 2022] While roads are not typically considered innovative, Route 66 was the ‘nation’s first all-weather highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles.’ It was tied to the automotive industry through Dinah Shore’s singing of ‘see the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ5tKh0aBDc>> as well as picked up in popular culture television episodes of *I Love Lucy* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0609224/?ref=tt_ep_pr> and according to the Dept. of Interior ‘Perhaps more than any other American highway, Route 66 symbolized the new optimism that pervaded the nation’s postwar economic recovery.’

works project in the nation's history', bypassed the Route in favour of a larger, more complex interstate highway system.⁴⁰ For as Rilla Askew writes of her state

Paradox and dichotomy dominate Oklahoma's character, and this is part of what accounts for our mystery, for why we cannot be classified, categorized...Our story is a study in self-contradiction: unity and division, widespread socialism and reactionary politics, Christian faith and outlaw culture, neighborly helpfulness and murderous greed. If one tries to capture who we are simplistically, from a single cohesive viewpoint, looking only at what is best in us, the effort is doomed to failure.⁴¹

With a history as diverse and varied as Oklahoma's history, the state's men and women, the keepers of oral tradition and written tradition, the tribal governments and the state government, the churches and the community organisations, are all trying to figure out the best way to collect, preserve, and make available resources to their constituents.

These professionals exist in a continually underfunded and volunteer-supported occupation, all while partnering with national entities. It is no wonder so many Oklahomans are dedicated to their profession, because if not for them, preservation and knowledge management would fall even further behind.

Beyond Oklahoma, thinker and practitioner Scott Cline points out that 'archivists are deployed to preserve the historical record, they exhibit a body of knowledge and a toolkit of skills unique to the work, and they think in ways peculiar to the field,' but also exist beyond being defined in this manner.⁴² Instead, he argued that there are 'certain virtues common to all archivists (and likely, all information professionals) at the core of forming what I call *archival being*.'⁴³ 'Archival being' as defined by Cline, includes the

⁴⁰ National Archives and Records Administration, 'National Interstate and Defense Highways Act (1956),' *National Archives* <<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/national-interstate-and-defense-highways-act>> [accessed 9 December 2022]

⁴¹ Askew, p.7.

⁴² Scott Cline, *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021, p.20.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.21.

virtues of authenticity, archival faith, radical self-understanding, intention, and integrity, which plays into an ‘archival self-consciousness that is turned toward *the other* – whether colleagues, users, our institutions, or broader communities.’⁴⁴ And like Oklahoma as defined by Rilla Askew, Oklahoma archives are also places of paradox and dichotomy, existing to contribute to the historical record and preserve and make available documents from the past, but also to partner with communities whose voices are often not heard within archival collections, to collect from gaps within the historical record, to point others to underutilised or overlooked resources and stories living with the walls of the archive, and to do so while reporting to boards and bodies whose objectives may be vastly different than their own. Archivists within Oklahoma possess the virtues expressly stated by Cline’s theorising and Askew’s literary critique and incorporate the anthropological grouping to be defined as possessing their own sociological identity. By coupling how Oklahoma is defined geographically and sociologically with how archivists are defined through the lenses of literature, popular culture, historical events, methods of communication and geolocale, the placing of Oklahoma archivists within their own socio-subculture group in the larger archival American landscape is established for the purposes of this thesis.

Before examining Oklahoma archivists as their own socio-subcultural group, it is important to place their beginnings in the larger United States archival picture. Scholars argue that the United States was behind the curve in creating a national archival repository, ‘by the time the U.S. National Archives opened in 1934, most American states had their own archival repositories.’⁴⁵ This is true of Oklahoma as well, where the

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.34.

⁴⁵ Blouin, Jr. and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, p.2.

Oklahoma Historical Society was founded ‘on May 27, 1893, by members of the Territorial Press Association. In 1918, the OHS was relocated to the State Capitol...’⁴⁶ It wasn’t until the twenty-first century when Oklahomans saw the movement of OHS to its own specially built structure in 2005.⁴⁷ The creation of OHS was just three years after the founding of the Territorial Normal School, now the University of Central Oklahoma, the University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Oklahoma State University in 1890.⁴⁸ And by 1910, still before the United States’ creation of NARA, ‘a total of nineteen public schools and colleges in the young state’⁴⁹ were created. Many of these institutions now have one hundred year plus histories and some component of repository through a library, archive, or museum, but also because of the population of the state, ‘a combination of an above-average number of public institutions and a limited tax base has thus plagued Oklahoma almost since 1907 statehood.’⁵⁰ While the numerous public higher educational institutions around Oklahoma in 2023 are not the purpose of this thesis, one does have to wonder if the funding stretched so thin for them directly impacts the historical preservation of the history they have long contributed to and nurtured within their walls might be lost due to the lack of labour workforce within the academy to adequately do the work.

⁴⁶ Oklahoma Historical Society, ‘About Us,’ *Oklahoma Historical Society Website* <<https://www.okhistory.org/about/index>> [accessed 21 January 2023]

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ University of Central Oklahoma, ‘History,’ *UCO Website* <<https://www.uco.edu/history>> [accessed 21 January 2023]; Oklahoma State University, ‘History,’ *OSU Website* <<https://go.okstate.edu/about-osu/history.html>> [accessed 21 January 2023]; and The University of Oklahoma ‘About OU,’ *OU Website* <https://www.ou.edu/web/about_ou> [accessed 21 January 2023]

⁴⁹ Dan S. Hobbs and John H. Feaver, ‘Colleges and Universities, State,’ *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CO025>> [accessed 21 January 2023]

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Oklahoma's Indigenous Peoples & Archival Practices (ATALM & PNAAM)

Oklahoma is home to many different Indigenous peoples, some relocated after the Indian Removal Act, and some living on the land prior to the official creation of Indian Territory. As argued by Rilla Askew and Muriel Wright before her, trying to define Oklahoma by one group or set of parameters is fundamentally flawed because of the many peoples and groups who call Oklahoma their home.⁵¹ This is why Oklahoma archivists are so important as navigators and guides, partners and amplifiers of the unheard, to all of Oklahoma's peoples and to those beyond Oklahoma's borders. Within the library, archives, and museum communities, the Society of American Archivists adoption of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM) in August of 2018⁵² puts forth a set of guidelines which need to be examined, endorsed, and adopted into practice by every archivist working within the state of Oklahoma. In turn, Oklahoma archivists need to be aware of Oklahoma's Indigenous and relocated people's histories, including the materials within their collections, which may need to be repatriated to the proper owners, and if kept handled within the traditions and procedures of that system, so that the appropriate culturally responsive care occurs.

Even before the protocols were adopted, the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums was 'Incorporated in 2010, [as] a non-profit organization that is building on the foundation of earlier efforts that began in 2002 with the first National

⁵¹ Cynthia Savage, 'Cultural Diversity and Historic Preservation in Oklahoma,' article, Autumn 2016; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, <<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc2017402/m1/1/>> [accessed 19 March 2023], *The Gateway to Oklahoma History*, <<https://gateway.okhistory.org>> crediting Oklahoma Historical Society; Rilla Askew, 'Most American,' *Voices from the Heartland*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, p.3; (originally appeared in *Nimrod* 50.1 (Fall/Winter 2006): pp.102-11).

⁵² Society of American Archivists, 'Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,' *SAA website* Adopted/Endorsed August 2018 <<https://www2.archivists.org/standards/protocols-for-native-american-archival-materials>> [accessed 2 January 2023]

Conference of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums held in Mesa, Arizona sponsored by the Arizona State Museum and the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records.⁵³ Former state librarian at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Susan McVey, who helped as part of the envisioning committee for the IMLS-funded grant on *Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums Education for Professional Growth and Field Sustainability* and received a Guardian Award ‘Honored One’ from ATALM in 2012 demonstrated Oklahoma’s commitment through her advocacy and work to living out the PNAAM even before the national entity endorsed them.⁵⁴ In fact, when the ATALM conference was held in Oklahoma in 2008, she, along with ‘ODL recruited 72 presenters, all of whom were exemplars in the archives, libraries, and museum fields’ making for a true collaborative conference between skilled professionals and the workers in institutions and tribal repositories doing the archival labour.⁵⁵

Another notable Oklahoman from the LAM field who received an ATLAM award is Dr. Lotsee Patterson, Professor Emerita, School of Library and Information Services at the University of Oklahoma. She is a 2008 ATALM Guardian Award winner who educated future LAM professionals for years and was recognised by the ALA, who awarded her an honorary membership in 2005, as ‘one of the most outspoken advocates for equitable library services for American Indians in the history of this country.’⁵⁶ Even

⁵³ ATALM, ‘History of ATALM,’ *Association of Tribal Archives Libraries and Museums website* <<https://sfy.gxm.mybluehost.me/node/27>> [accessed 28 January 2023]

⁵⁴ Miriam Jorgensen, *Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums Education for Professional Growth and Field Sustainability* 30 September 2011, pp.1-37 <https://www.atalm.org/sites/default/files/2005_2011_imals_tribal_project_final_report.pdf> [accessed 28 January 2023]; ATALM, ‘Guardian Award Winners,’ *ATALM Website* <<https://www.atalm.org/node/369>> [accessed 28 January 2023]

⁵⁵ Jorgensen, p.8

⁵⁶ ATALM, Guardian Award Winners; Elizabeth Dreazan, ‘Patterson, Taylor Named ALA Honorary Members,’ *American Library Association*, 4 February 2005

with its complexity, Oklahomans can be defined as a unique group of people and culture. Oklahoma LAM professionals belong to and partnering with Indigenous peoples, working with all Oklahoman's documents and stories. This truly makes them a unique socio-subcultural group working to preserve the stories Oklahoma tells about itself and all its peoples. Their work on the front lines of connection, advocacy and education ensures that Oklahoma's history represents all its peoples in the historical record, and not just the voices of those in power.

Political Structures of Oklahoma

Oklahoma's political discourse has emphasised 'fiscal responsibility' or conservative methods of balancing Oklahoma's state budget. This often leads to flat budget structures where pay raises and open positions are left unfilled. In a budgetary breakdown from the Oklahoma Senate, Senator Roger Thompson states:

My job as appropriations chairman is not to just look at next year but to look at what's best financially for Oklahoma 5, 10, 20 years down the road. We need to continue being fiscally conservative, which calls for passing a mostly flat budget. This means most state agencies would receive the same amount in FY'23 as they did this fiscal year, which was an average 7% increase over their budgets from last year.⁵⁷

Flat budgets may be seen as a way to manage and continually operate services, but when inflation is increasing at exponentially high rates, flat budgetary procedures are in reality more of a budget cut for institutions already operating in a stressed 'do more with less

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=archive&template=/contentmanagement/contentdisplay.cfm&ContentID=155846> [accessed 28 January 2023]

⁵⁷ Oklahoma Senate, 'Budget Breakdown,' 30 December 2021 <https://oksenate.gov/press-releases/budget-break-down> [accessed 2 December 2022]

model'.⁵⁸ And while public education funding is increasing in the state, it is especially earmarked for the 'expansion of engineering, STEM, nursing, and other workforce development programs at our public colleges and universities to address Oklahoma's business and industry needs', which does not necessarily help those in the historical preservation field, despite the field becoming more and more technologically advanced.⁵⁹ By examining the archivist through the lens of the state of Oklahoma with their unique socio-cultural setting, this thesis reveals a new perspective for examining those in governmental positions of power, individuals' biases in workforce setting and how the creation of narrative behind the historical record occurs. The latter happens on a much smaller scale, a micro-examination versus the traditional lens of globalisation.⁶⁰ Therefore, enabling the stories of Oklahoma archivists and keepers of the historical record to be voiced, examined, and analysed through the lens of oral history interviews provides data on power, biases and narrative creation. This smaller scale then allows the motives, practices, and experiences which occur during the professional LAM duties to emerge, and a better cultural understanding of Oklahoma and its diverse peoples is created.

⁵⁸ Braegan Abernethy, 'Budgeting in Crisis: Responsive Decision-Making in Academic Library Collections,' in *Managing Crises in the Academic Library: Past Present and Future*, ed. Doris Van Kampen-Breit Chicago IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2023: pp.47-57.

⁵⁹ Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 'State Regents Receive Funding for Oklahoma Colleges, Universities,' *OSRHE News Release* 28 May 2021 <<https://www.okhighered.org/news-center/Appropriations-fy22.shtm>> [accessed 21 January 2023]

⁶⁰ Luciana Duranti, 'Whose truth? Records and archives as evidence in the era of post-truth and disinformation,' in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, p.26, argues that archivists first must 'gain an understanding of the way in which individuals identify within different socio-political environments participates in the use or rejection of different sources of evidence in establishing "truth". It is essential to understand whether there are global values that dictate the acceptance or rejection of sources of evidence (Schaeffer, 1992) and how records and archives compare with other memory traditions in terms of their effectiveness in revealing and evaluating power dynamics and establishing the truth within specific socio-cultural configurations.' Her reference: R. Schaeffer, 'Transcendent Concepts: power, appraisal, and the new archivist as social outcast,' *American Archivist*, 5, 1992: pp.608-19.

Oklahoma politics is historically distinguished by its corruption, even before statehood. Harry Holloway's article in the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History* gives a general overview of the scandals up to the turn of the 21st century, covering such things as the Indian Removal Act, fraud occurring during the 1889 Land Run, the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, the ousting of Governor Johnston in 1929, Governor Murray's anti-Semitic beliefs, corruption in the Oklahoma Supreme court in the 1960s, the 1975 conviction of Governor Hall, followed by Governor Walters misdemeanour plea bargain in 1991, and lastly the 2000 Public Health department scandal.⁶¹ Perhaps this is why a 2022 poll showed that only 4% of Oklahomans believed there was no government corruption.⁶² More alarming to Oklahoma's current government makeup is the 2023 removal of the only educator from the Oklahoma State Department of Education's school board.⁶³ The removal should not come as a surprise to locals, as the last doctor on the medical board for the state was removed in 2021.⁶⁴ Within Oklahoma politics, the relationship between authority, experience, and professional expertise has not always been robust.

Professionals in the LAM sector become vitally important in a state where history has been obfuscated. Much like the founders of the United States focus on informed citizenry, archival professionals are doing the work of preserving all sides of the

⁶¹ Harry Holloway, 'Scandals, Political,' *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=SC001>> [accessed 30 January 2023]

⁶² KOCO staff, 'Vast majority of likely Oklahoma voters believe corruption exists in state government, poll finds,' *KOCO news* 28 September 2022 <<https://www.koco.com/article/oklahoma-elections-government-corruption-grocery-income-tax-poll/41409673>> [accessed 30 January 2023]

⁶³ Bennett Brinkman, 'Stitt names four new state school board members, removes only educator,' 11 January 2023 <<https://nondoc.com/2023/01/11/stitt-names-four-new-state-school-board-members-removes-only-educator/>> [accessed 30 January 2023]

⁶⁴ Associated Press, 'Oklahoma governor removes only physicians from medical board,' *KFOR News* 7 September 2021 <<https://kfor.com/news/local/oklahoma-governor-removes-only-physicians-from-medical-board/>> [accessed 30 January 2023]

historical record, despite the evidence of political corruption. LAM professionals make known the stories, documents, histories, and knowledge which tell all of Oklahoma's history. The appointment and election of the State Department of Education's Ryan Walters makes the work of archiving and archivists even more relevant due to Oklahoma's post-COVID political climate. One of the state's journalists argues that,

...keeping people uninformed, oppressed and hopeless is the key political strategy of Gov. Kevin Stitt in unleashing Walters on our state's educators. Walters is a modern Sen. Joseph McCarthy, the chief inquisitor during the "red scare" of the 1950s, attempting to obliterate culture and independent thought in a nation that supposedly cares about those things...creating an 'authoritarian theocracy' for education and Oklahoma.⁶⁵

Fearmongering speaks to the motives behind the removal of the last educator from the State Department of Education's board. While this may seem a bit polemical, it is important to the argument of this thesis to understand the current political climate in which libraries, archives, and museums are operating in relation to the obfuscation and misinformation occurring within Oklahoma.

Archivists who work closely with educators, researchers, students, and citizens use these allies to create and promote primary historical research. One such partnership is an OHS workshop promoting National History Day to educators for grades 6-12.⁶⁶ Other LAM professionals are holding elected officials to back up their words with data. Library directors on the listserv group OCALD (Oklahoma Council of Academic Library Directors) are asking who defines the criteria Walters is using to ask for information

⁶⁵ George Lang, 'Ryan Walters' McCarthyism is destroying Okla Public Education,' *Oklahoma City Free Press* 7 September 2022 <<https://freepressokc.com/ryan-walters-mccarthyism-is-destroying-okla-public-education/>> [accessed 30 January 2023]

⁶⁶ OHS, 'National History Day Boot Camp,' *Okhistory.org* 27 July 2023 <<https://www.okhistory.org/calendar/event/national-history-day-boot-camp-4/>> [accessed 9 September 2023]

regarding his 23 January 2023 request to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.⁶⁷ In this missive he asked each institution of higher education to review ‘its 10-year spending history on and current materials used for diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, programs.’⁶⁸ In response to Walters’ request, the State Department’s Chancellor of Higher Education, Dr. Allison Garrett noted:

Oklahoma colleges use these programs to benefit military veterans, first-generation students, low-income students, students of color, international students, single parents and students with different gender identities, among others. Federal laws, like the Americans with Disabilities Act, require colleges to have diversity, equity and inclusion programs. University accreditation depends on having diversity practices, as well.⁶⁹

Ultimately the report concludes that it ‘will cost only three-tenths of 1% of all higher education spending.’⁷⁰ The political spin on a state higher educational system that spends nominal funds on initiatives tailored to all their populations seems like a waste of the time and resources entrusted to Walters as the State Superintendent of Education. But whatever thoughts or political stance is had on the issue, what remains is if higher educational institutions are not funded with the resources to represent their constituents, archivists are here documenting the process to be studied now and in the future. With a state as diverse as Oklahoma, is limiting its diverse history even going to be possible? Perhaps Walters is weary of the changing nature of public history where the prioritisation

⁶⁷ Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, ‘About OCALD,’ *Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* site <<https://www.okhighered.org/ocald/about.shtml>> [accessed 30 January 2023] Established in 1988, OCALD is a collaborative effort for networking created by OSRHE. The listserv is and email group which can be subscribed to at OCALD-L@LISTSERV.OKSTATE.EDU

⁶⁸ Eger, Andrea, ‘Walters wants 10-year history of DEI spending in Higher Ed, review of current programs,’ *Tulsa World* 26 January 2023 <https://tulsa-world.com/news/local/education/walters-wants-10-year-history-of-dei-spending-in-higher-ed-review-of-current-programs/article_16fdb7c4-9c3e-11ed-821a-3794eaa7dff3.html> [accessed 30 January 2023]

⁶⁹ Nuria Martinez-Keel, ‘Walters says report showing Oklahoma colleges will spend millions on diversity programs is concerning,’ *The Oklahoma* 2 Feb 2023 <<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/education/2023/02/03/ryan-walters-oklahoma-colleges-spend-over-10-million-diversity-report-shows/69868506007/>> [accessed 4 February 2023]

⁷⁰ Ibid.

of ‘being comfortable with being uncomfortable and accepting uncertainty [as] generative,’ are embraced ‘in our planning conversations’ at the National Council of Public History.⁷¹ With a state hard to categorise as poetically described by Rilla Askew and demonstrated throughout the generational histories of oil and gas, greed and politics, horrors and havens, the crucial work of archivists to partner with communities through skills training, offering up collaborative endeavours, and doing the work of historic preservation of all peoples despite outcries from the capitol building is more important now more than ever. Capturing the voices of the professionals who have been doing this kind of work for decades is instrumental in learning the skills, motives, and integrity of the profession within the state and their ongoing work to ensure all peoples are represented in the historical record despite ongoing political pressures and posturing.

The Primacy of Narrative

The medium of story is often found within the archive. Some of these are told in the capture of formal narratives and some in more informal recordings. In her groundbreaking longitudinal study, Charlotte Linde examines how institutional memory is created through narrative by examining a life insurance company over a period of three years. As an embedded sociolinguist she argues that the stories themselves are more important than the records housed within an institution arguing, ‘within institutions, perhaps the obvious resource for remembering is the production and maintenance of written records ... However, remembering does not happen until these written materials

⁷¹ Marla Miller, Tara White, and Lacey Wilson, ‘To Be Determined: Joy, Humility, and the NCPH 2023,’ *Public History News* 43, 1 (December 2022), pp.1-11, p.1

are actually used in ongoing interaction.⁷² Utilisation of remembrance is a key factor in what makes up institutional memory; it helps define a company in a much more comprehensive manner than just a mission statement and organisational chart. Linde extrapolates the main point of her work in defining why narrative is essential, saying,

Narrative works to establish identity, that is, to answer the question, ‘Who are We?’ Narrative is also the link between the way an institution represents its past, and the ways its members use, alter, or contest that past, in order to understand the institution as a whole as well as their own place within or apart from that institution.⁷³

The institution is intertwined with the archive through documentation. The historical threads in the archive coupled with the organisation’s told stories make up the value and identity of a place. The first chapter on methodology further justifies the self-identification of Oklahoma archivists through their responses to a survey type questionnaire.

Workforce Transitions

The American workforce is ageing at an exponential rate; beyond the U.S. this is a global phenomenon related to the unusually high birth rate which occurred after World War II.⁷⁴ This global phenomenon is discussed in an undergraduate thesis focusing on Japan and South Korea, where the author writes, ‘As life expectancy increases, an increased number of people are claiming their pensions while fewer are supporting the

⁷² Linde, *Working the Past*, p.12.

⁷³ Ibid, p.4.

⁷⁴ Jan Van Bavel and David S. Reher, ‘The Baby Boom and Its Causes: What We Know and What We Need to Know,’ *Population and Development Review* 39, 2 (2013): p.258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41857595>>. This was especially true in developed countries and ‘Most explanation relation the baby boom to a period of economic growth after World War II, when soldiers returned home and resumed work and family life.’

economy in the workforce, thus burdening the security of the welfare state.⁷⁵ A study on the Google Greyler network in China, which exists to help greying individuals network and continue to develop as employees, was created to fight back against the ‘rewarding [of] those who work hard and [do] overtime, [where] companies force the greying to opt out.’⁷⁶ And a 2012 report on the future of the American workforce focused on the greying of the Baby Boomer generation affecting the labour market and the needed educational knowledge and technological skills for it.⁷⁷ For corporations and industries worldwide, concerns are raised ‘about the loss of experience and company-specific knowledge if a significant proportion of the workforce retires together.’⁷⁸ Since many of the archival entities in Oklahoma are staffed with very few or just one archivist, this mass retirement together will not affect individual repositories economically as much. Still, it will have a lasting effect on the experience and institutional knowledge of the repositories throughout the state, when a generation of library, archival, and museum professionals retire at approximately the same time. This workforce effect will be even greater if their positions are left unfilled or open for lengthy gaps of time in order to balance the ever-tenuous state budget. The literature is ripe with examples from all over the world and how this generational shift is occurring in almost every known industry, but in Oklahoma, the greying generation of archivists is having a broader impact on LAMs across the state.

⁷⁵ Isabella Ronca, ‘Governing a Greying East Asia – Fertility Decline and Policy Response: A Case Study of Japan and South Korea,’ submitted May 2020, p.7

<<https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOid=9013948&fileOid=9013949>>

⁷⁶ Jiang Lyuke, ‘Research on the Current Situation of Female and Older People in Chinese Labour Market,’ *Journal of Advanced Management Science* 9, 2 (June 2021), p.30

<<http://www.joams.com/uploadfile/2021/0604/20210604033606171.pdf>>

⁷⁷ Achieve, Inc., *Future of the US Workforce: Middle Skills Jobs and the Growing Importance of Postsecondary Education* (2012) <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537116.pdf>> [accessed 10 December 2022] p.8.

⁷⁸ Clark, p.82.

Libraries, archives, and museums face the same ageing workforce woes as the rest of the world. A Generation Y librarian wrote an alarming study of librarians when she realised, ‘With up to 50% of library professionals set to retire over the next 15 years I started to panic – what will happen when they are gone?’⁷⁹ Her realisation of the institutional knowledge loss and its impact in specific locations was a wake-up call to the profession. LAM industries may not be considered essential in the post-COVID-19 era, despite their essential worker status during and after it.⁸⁰ However, the post-COVID-19 healthcare worker (HCW) burnout and what that means for the ageing population will impact LAMs with additional worker shortages and gaps in knowledge transfer.⁸¹

The LAM community heard a loud cry during COVID-19 for the more extensive digitisation of materials, so much so that the Denver Public Library posted a three-part blog series answering the question, ‘Why Everything in the Archives Isn’t Digitized (Yet)’ in which the process of digitisation and how the work is prioritised and ultimately completed is laid bare for the general public.⁸² LAM institutions, such as the Cornell University Library Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, have been studied on how they handle the funding, workforce, and calls for digitised collections: ‘Like many

⁷⁹ Kirsty McPhe, ‘The Gen Y Librarian and the Future of Library Services,’ *Australian Law Librarian* 18, 4 (2010): p.311 <<https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/auslwl18&i=323>>

⁸⁰ John Chrastka, ‘Libraries are an Essential Service. Give Librarians the Vaccine Now | Opinion,’ *Newsweek.com* posted 26 February 2021 <<https://www.newsweek.com/libraries-are-essential-service-give-librarians-vaccine-now-opinion-1572082>> [accessed 13 September 2023] and Robert A. Scott, ‘My Turn: Libraries are an Essential Service,’ *The Island 360.com* posted 8 December 2022 <<https://theisland360.com/opinions-100/my-turn-librarians-are-essential-workers/>> [accessed 13 September 2023];

⁸¹ Dharam Kaushik, MD, ‘COVID-19 and health care workers burnout: A call for global action,’ *The Lancet* 35, 100808, 1 May 2021 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2021.100808>> The author writes, ‘There are concerns that burned-out HCW can threaten the quality of health care delivered and patient safety.’

⁸² Katie Rudolph, ‘Why Everything in the Archives Isn’t Digitized (Yet),’ *Denver Public Library, Genealogy, African American and Western History Resources* 26 October 2021 <<https://history.denverlibrary.org/news/cataloging-digitization-access>> [accessed 11 December 2022]

institutions, RMC has focused on digital projects organized around the short-term objectives necessitated by grant funding.’⁸³ As for the amount of materials that merit digitisation, historian Reyes lays it out well in the letter he wrote to a magazine about why archival research is something historians still need to do. He says, ‘historians travel to archives because that’s the only way to access most of the materials preserved in archives, but they also go there to work with and learn from archivists.’⁸⁴ This latter point lies at the heart of this thesis that visitors come to archives not only for materials but to work *with* the archivists and their knowledge of collections and institutional knowledge beyond the physical documents. Despite the general public’s call during COVID-19 to make more materials available, and with technology’s continued development to answer the call, the funding is still limited to short-term projects funded by outside organisations who are fighting for dollars from the same granting agencies. Thus, workforce availability is limited by the greying of a generation of open, unfunded, or transient voluntary workers and a profession slowly shrinking and combining. LAMs must continue to lean heavily on collaborative endeavours for shared staffing and funding to meet the demands of the public.

Before discussing the grouping used for this project, the ways in which academic and popular researchers have grouped workforce individuals collectively must be noted. A 2020 study in the *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* sets forth the many types

⁸³ Peter Botticelli, ‘Cornell University Library Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections: Exploring New Media in the Archive,’ in Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard, and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds., *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), pp.49-60, p.50

⁸⁴ Marc Reyes, ‘Why do Historians Still Need to Go to Archives?’ *Contingent Magazine* 25 March 2019 <<https://contingentmagazine.org/2019/03/25/mailbag-march-25-2019/>> He asks and answers ‘Why not digitize everything, though? Digitizing historical materials takes significant money, resources, and institutional support, and the work itself takes time, expertise, and lots of equipment.’

of groups studied within business and other academic disciplines. The theories used are social identity theory, self-categorisation theory, and generational identity.⁸⁵ Specifically, in the generational grouping identity among academia, these authors write that, ‘one consistent definition has yet to emerge.’⁸⁶ This study refers to an even earlier publication which is harsher on academic generational naming conventions: ‘...has resulted in confusion and dilution of what it really means... [And] have been described in multiple ways in academic literature.’⁸⁷ Urick and Hollensbe report that in their coded passages related to generational identification, the themes include ‘generations as strong identities [and] identifications with generation identities (including age-based generation identities).’⁸⁸ In a separate article, scholar Jane Pilcher looks at the legacy of Mannheim’s generational groupings as an undervalued legacy, arguing that: ‘Mannheim is insisting then, that in order to share generational location in a sociologically meaningful sense, individuals must be born within the same historical and cultural context and be exposed to experiences that occur during their formative adult years.’⁸⁹ Mannheim hoped to create a standard for groupings to be studied, but academia has often found fault or discrepancies in how these groups have been interpreted and utilised. This thesis, in order to reduce confusion both in academic circles and deferring to the interview participants’ popular knowledge of biological groupings, will defer to a more popular standard of

⁸⁵ Rhett L. Standifer and Scott W. Lester, ‘Actual Versus Perceived Generational Differences in the Preferred Working Context: An Empirical Study,’ *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 18,1 (2002): pp.50-51 <[doi: 10.1080/15350770.2019.1618778](https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2019.1618778)>

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.51.

⁸⁷ Michael J. Urick and Elaine C. Hollensbe, ‘Toward an identity-based perspective of generations,’ in E. Parry, ed., *Generational diversity at work: New research perspectives* New York, USA: Routledge, 2014, pp. 114–128, p.114

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.118.

⁸⁹ Jane Pilcher, ‘Mannheim’s Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy,’ *The British Journal of Sociology* 45, 3 (1994): pp. 481–95, p 490 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/591659>>

biological groupings for analysis's sake. Using standardised and familiar generational identifications with participants is only a starting point in the examination of the LAM profession. The priority of participants training and skills will prevail over the generational identification determined by an archival professional and will be discussed later in this thesis.

As workforce transitions occur, especially between those of the Baby Boomer generation retiring – those trained in post-World War II America archival theory – and the Millennial generation of workers being hired as replacements, a shift in workplace culture and institutional memory is occurring. Especially relevant is the training noted by Margaret Cross Norton: ‘The archivist’s training in research methods, his intimate knowledge of the history of his government, and the experience with the various ways in which records are used for purposes other than administration qualify him to take an active part in the creation of government records.’⁹⁰ Beyond the creation of records, archival theory and practice today has shifted into a discipline deeply aware of social justice and, within these justice endeavours, identify how archives have controlled the past. In America, these popular generational naming conventions have become a part of America’s coded vocabulary when discussing generational groupings. As stated in the NPR article, and for the purposes of this project, the following generation divides will be utilised to distinguish between participants:

GI Generation: Born 1901-1924
Silent Generation: Born 1925-1942
Baby Boomers: Born 1943-1964
Generation X: Born 1965-1979
Millennials: Born 1980-2000

⁹⁰ Thomas W. Mitchell, ed., *Norton on Archives: The Writing of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival & Records Management*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2003, p.248.

Generation Z: Born 2001-2013.⁹¹

Birth year groupings have been historically relevant but this generational grouping set, while popular in nature, adheres to the generational birth year studies done within the literature, even as new literature in workforce studies is shifting from birth year relevance to preferred skill sets in different industries. The new, younger generation coming into the LAM fields have grown up immersed in technology, and are defined as ‘digital natives,’ or those fluent and immersive in technology environments. Marc Prensky coined the term in 2001, ‘stat[ing] that younger people tend to be digital natives, speaking the language of technology fluently. In contrast, older people, even those who remain current with technological advances (whom he calls digital immigrants), retain vestigial behaviours like printing out emails.’⁹² Other studies have shown in examining these two different clearly defined groups, natives and immigrants, that the complexities of technological initiation and adaptation are not as easily defined in generational terms, especially in higher educational settings.⁹³ However, archivists who learned their skills in an era of paper-based photographs, papers, and the emergence of A/V technology and multimedia are ‘digital immigrants’ many self-taught in acquiring the needed skills and

⁹¹ Samantha Raphelson, ‘From GIs to Gen Z (Or Is It iGen?): How Generations Get Nicknames,’ Special Series, New Boom, *National Public Radio* 6 October 2014
<<https://www.npr.org/2014/10/06/349316543/don-t-label-me-origins-of-generational-names-and-why-we-use-them>> [accessed 29 January 2019] More in-depth generational descriptions are given within the article itself. In comparison, Jean M. Twenge’s *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers and Silents—and What They Mean for America’s Future* New York: Atria, 2023, she defines them with slightly different breakdowns: ‘The United States is currently populated by six generations: Silents (born 1925-1945), Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1994), Generation Z (aka iGen or Zoomers, 1995-2012), and an as-yet-unnamed generation born after 2013 (I call them Polars; some marketers have called them Alphas.’ p.2.

⁹² Sarah Ransdell, Brianna Kent, Sandrine Gaillard-Kenney, and John Long, ‘Digital immigrants fare better than digital natives due to social reliance,’ *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42, 6 (2011): p.932.

⁹³ Florin D. Salajan, Dieter J. Schönwetter, and Blaine M. Cleghorn, ‘Student and Faculty Inter-Generational Digital Divide: Fact or Fiction?’ *Computers & Education* 55 (3) 2010: pp.1393–1403.
<doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.06.017>

tools to be able to fully engage with archival collections both traditionally and through new technologies.

Rather than lumping archivists into digital natives or digital immigrants, this thesis argues for digital fluency through skill sets put forth in the conceptual model proposed by Wang, Myers, and Sundaram. This theory states that over the course of life, one becomes knowledgeable in the technologies and skills that one needs to express and articulate the requirements of one's work.⁹⁴ This is the lens through which archival workers should be viewed. These are the individuals who have migrated photos from print to digital scans of low quality in the late 1990s or early 2000s, to the high-definition scans that are easily made with cheaper technology today. Two social scientists who delved into examining archives and archival transactions between researcher and employee 'came to see the relationship between the discipline of history and the discipline of archival administration to be located very much at the intersection of humanities and information science.'⁹⁵ Technology not only shifted the roles the archivists performed behind closed doors but also their interactions with patrons who come into the space for research, as well as in the online digital environment many distance researchers are now utilising. The flexibility and strategies they have employed in adopting and utilising technology as 'immigrants' are skills relevant to the work of current archivists.

⁹⁴ Qian (Emily) Wang, Michael D. Myers, and David Sundaram, 'Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants,' *Business and Information Systems Engineering*, 5 (2013): pp. 409–419, p.409
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12599-013-0296-y>>

⁹⁵ Blouin, Jr. and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, p.4.

The navigation of digital immigrants through technology permeates into their work with researchers. Both immigrants and natives are having to redefine the digital landscape of archival research with their patrons. As one philologist argues,

As our libraries [and archives] move toward digital organization, their primary traditional commitment – to collect and maintain the heritage of manuscripts and books – has raised acute problems. These emerge through that event now to become an accepted fact of social policy: the migration of our traditional cultural inheritance to a system of digital storage, access, and reuse.⁹⁶

Engaging in digital humanities research is no longer done solely on a dedicated machine within an archives research room or library. Instead, patrons now begin their research online, only to make appointments or visit archives when hitting a barrier in the digital environment, or more likely limited by the availability of non-digitized materials. The institutional culture of archival research must learn to accommodate this societal change, even as the roles assigned to professionals are in flux.⁹⁷ Through the narratives of those who have been digital immigrants combined with the narratives of practising professional digital natives, institutional culture and organisational memory is bridged and the gaps created during workforce transitions are filled through story.

One early example of a digital humanities project being recorded is the story of *The Rossetti Archive*, a project which utilised and created interconnected digital repositories to make a cohesive whole for researchers. The website for the project is titled

⁹⁶ Jerome McGann, *A New Republic of Letters: Memory and Scholarship in the Age of Digital Reproduction*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2014, p.10.

⁹⁷ Theimer, p.5. ‘This blurring of professional roles and the elimination of ‘bright lines’ between professions as people and organizations seek to adjust to a changing playing field is a hallmark of the transition into the end of the professional era.’ which is based on a comparison of the Richard and Daniel Susskind 2016 book titled *The Future of Professions: how technology will transform the work of human experts* with the archival profession. And while technology has blurred many lines, the author would like to argue the reduction in workforce of many libraries, archive, and museums has created a more pressing need for blurred job descriptions, i.e. reference librarian and archivist, or director and outreach specialist.

‘the complete writings and pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a hypermedia archive.’⁹⁸ Jerome McGann records the frustrations and troubles encountered in creating such a tool for researchers.⁹⁹ Even in the creation of knowledge, there is a gap in what is known and what is not known. According to McGann’s CV online, he was born in 1937, before the Baby Boomer generation instead being grouped at the end of what is called the Silent Generation.¹⁰⁰ Because of his birth year, one could easily assume Prensky would label him as a ‘digital immigrant’, yet he immersed himself in this project, both its success and its failures, and recorded his story in the form of a book (both print and electronic) that largely discusses digital humanities and digital reproduction and the need for changes in the way the field of humanities organises and utilises the resources within public educational institutions. This project moves beyond the conventional generational groupings which are often caused by isolating one distinct birth group from another, allowing for ‘Mannheim’s insistence on the importance of understanding the interaction between generations and other factors...’¹⁰¹ In this case, the factors are individuals interacting with technological innovations and how best to incorporate future innovation to utilise the changing technological formats which society interacts within an online

⁹⁸ Jerome McGann, ed., ‘The Rossetti Archive,’ *Rossetti Archive*, <<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/index.html>>

⁹⁹ McGann, *New Republic*, p.14, in which he describes the process: ‘Initially, these flaws appeared as technical limitations and contradictions. Dealing with them brought a second surprising realization. The de facto historical status of certain problems could only be managed but not removed from the design without tearing it all down and starting with a new design. The problems also exposed deeper design issues that we had no idea how to address, much less resolve: for instance, how to design automated analytic relations between traditional materials and their digital surrogates. They could be linked and, as on a lightboard, compared, but beyond that lay the *mysterium*. All this amounted to learning, by doing, which is to say as well, learning by failing. At first these failures seemed conceptual and technical, but with the rapid expansion of the technical capacities of the internet we could see that the most intractable problems were political and institutional...Perhaps never before have we been able to ‘know about’ so much and to ‘know’ so little of what we know.’

¹⁰⁰ ‘Jerome McGann Vita,’ Jerome McGann, <<http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/jjm2f/vita.html>>

¹⁰¹ Jennie Bristow, *Baby Boomers and Generational Conflict*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p.186

environment, but not the information itself. McGann's work as a philologist redefining humanities research tools is also a story that can be seen as a recorded narrative bridging the workforce transition of those who use and those who create in traditional and digital archival repositories and spaces. His creation of a digital humanities tool allows multiple interactions of numerous generational identifications, something from which LAM professionals of any generational identification can learn and employ in their repositories, experiences, and online interfaces.

New archivists entering the profession straight from graduate school are being taught about the silence of the archive and the gaps in the historical record, something an earlier generation of graduates was only beginning to recognise and study.¹⁰² Document destruction is a reality, especially in those institutions that contain a clear and concise disposition schedule. Disposition schedules are routinely used in government repositories who must hold on to some information longer than others but not all is deemed to have lasting historical relevance. For Oklahoma, these schedules are part of the records management function of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Their website states:

With certain statutory exceptions, all state agencies, boards and commissions are required to establish and maintain ongoing programs for the efficient and economical management of records and have their programs approved by the [Archives and Records Commission](#) (PDF of [67 O.S. § 206, 305](#)). Most programs are delineated in records disposition schedules that have been prepared

¹⁰² See Joan M. Schwartz, and Terry Cook, 'Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,' *Archival Science* (2002) 2: pp.1-19, Riorella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver, eds., *Engaging with Records and Archives: histories and theories*, London: Facet Publishing, 2016; and David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archives*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017. The latter two are books of essays which discuss different topics related to silences. Of particular importance to this discussion is an article in the last work by Simon Fowler titled 'Enforced Silences' which lists out six different types of silences found in repositories, pp.6-34.

by the Oklahoma State Archives, working in conjunction with the Records Management Coordinators in individual agencies.¹⁰³

Archivists realise that not every record can truly be kept forever. When archival records are destroyed due to incompetent or untrained staffing practices external to the repositories, such as the transfer of backups to magnetic tape, despite policies stating otherwise, archivists face a harsher reality as to the permanence of records.¹⁰⁴ Archival practitioner Rapport argues there exist records on all our shelves we would not accept today, asking why we should keep them, as there should be no grandfather clause; instead as practitioners, we should reappraise them for longevity and think about what records we can afford to preserve.¹⁰⁵ Often workers feel inadequately trained to make such determinations or are frustrated at the transfer of incomplete records from other agencies, especially when the previous iteration of archival employee is often unavailable to consult on such matters. Document destruction, collection re-evaluation and incomplete record transfers all occur at the same time as burnout and high stress levels rise among LAM professionals who are compensating for the reduction in people workforce through technology's ability to do more with less model.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Geoffrey Yeo argues that

¹⁰³ Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'Records Management,' *ODL Website*, Last modified 12 October 2023 <<https://oklahoma.gov/libraries/state-government/archives-and-records/records-management.html>> [accessed 20 January 2024]

¹⁰⁴ Colin Woodward, 'Huge number of Maine public records have likely been destroyed,' *Portland Press Herald*, 30 December 2018, <<https://www.pressherald.com/2018/12/30/huge-number-of-maine-public-records-have-likely-been-destroyed/>> [accessed 3 January 2019] in which the staffer writes about the destruction of Maine public records saying 'A huge number of emails and public documents from the administrations of Govs. Angus King and John Baldacci have likely been deleted from state government servers – some lost forever, others in storage on difficult-to-access backup tapes. The loss hampers the ability of citizens, historians, journalists and lawyers to learn how policies were developed and implemented. State officials transferred emails and documents to backup devices as part of routine purges to free up server storage, not realizing many of them should have been retained in accessible forms and eventually transferred to the state archives, Maine State Archivist David Cheever said.'

¹⁰⁵ *Archives Reader*, p.80.

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Dying for a Paycheck: How Modern Management Harms Employee Health and Company Performance – and What We Can Do about it*. New York: Harper, 2018, p.77. Pfeffer deals

the changing nature of technology may make us able to keep and make available larger quantities of data than ever before, completely re-writing the paradigm of the traditional archival appraisal practice.¹⁰⁷ Navigating different theories and practice, changing paradigm shifts in archives, and incorporating new technologies and methods is the nature of the archival profession. A generation more familiar with the ever-changing needs and practices within repositories are today more aware than ever before of the flexibility needed by the profession.

A different generation familiar with cloud-based computing and unlimited cheap storage options faces its own challenges, the onslaught of data. One scholar explains that ‘we need a range of strategies to make the archive as exploitable as possible: from enriching records to make them discoverable, to surfacing our content via external tools and services.’¹⁰⁸ The data is coming to professionals from multiple sources through multiple forms, so strategizing and exploiting the technology to harvest and enrich data for contextualisation becomes the goal of this generation of archivists. The idea of data contextualisation is supported in other disciplines such as education.¹⁰⁹ The focus shifts to the validity of the data itself as it enters repositories and archives, as emphasised by scholars shifting their gazes to ‘establish first whether the traditional role(s) of records

specifically with layoffs when he writes, ‘Consequently, those employees who still have their jobs find that they must do much more work to compensate for the reduced number of people now expected to get about the same tasks accomplished. Burnout and job stress typically increase following layoffs, resulting in adverse health consequences for those remaining employees.’ He wrote before the time of COVID-19, which caused burnout and stress to become exponentially higher.

¹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Yeo, ‘Can we keep everything? The future of appraisal in a world of digital profusion,’ in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, pp.55-56.

¹⁰⁸ Sonia Ranade, ‘Access technologies for the disruptive digital archive,’ in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, p.80.

¹⁰⁹ Theodore B. Creighton, ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Digital Learners: An International Empirical Integrative Review of the Literature,’ *Education Leadership Review*, 19, 1 (Dec 2018): pp.132-140, p.135 argues that within education generation is not the issue but the lack of context, and he cites many different authors arguing that within higher education ‘context [should be] providing faculty with information communication technologies that are specific to content and context.’

and archives professionals in ensuring the contextual accuracy, reliability and authenticity of digital records, irrespective of user, use, reuse and purpose of use, need to be re-examined in order to counter human deception and its amplification on the internet.’¹¹⁰ A second scholar makes the argument of a paradigm ‘shift in human schemas of thought and the social and material world – the shift to networks,’ which is a more accurate description of how archival practice has evolved.¹¹¹ The intellectual then parallels archives as being reflective of this network paradigm shift in the way information is created, captured, stored, and retrieved, necessitating a change in thought for how archivists approach digital, networked information. Ketelaar sums it up best when he writes, ‘A profession is not static, however. It adapts itself to changing circumstances in society.’¹¹²

COVID-19 also saw remote work begin to emerge for younger workers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics reported ‘in February 2021, 25.5 percent of those ages 25 to 54 teleworked, compared with 22.2 percent for workers age 55 and older.’¹¹³ Employees younger than the Baby Boomer generation have shifted their thinking in how to accomplish workplace goals from a physical space to a digital environment. The paradigm shift in labour is continuing to occur even now. And while some archivists have been adaptable and embracing of new and emerging technologies, some have not, whether due to personal preference, lack of knowledge, or non-receptive managers to the

¹¹⁰ Duranti, p.21.

¹¹¹ Victoria Lemieux, ‘The future of archives as networked, decentralised, autonomous and global,’ in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, p.33.

¹¹² Eric Ketelaar, *Archiving People. A Social History of Dutch Archives*, Stichting Archiefpublicaties: the author, 2020, p.278a

¹¹³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ‘TED: The Economics Daily,’ 11 March 2021 <<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/workers-ages-25-to-54-more-likely-to-telework-due-to-covid-19-in-february-2021.htm>> [accessed 12 December 2022]

changes needed for success. Each generation will face its own technological hurdles and successes as required by the societal circumstances they face. Learning from one workforce generation of workers to another through oral history bridges the memory loss of institutional knowledge through the ever-occurring organisational changes.

A new societal generation with its belief in fake news and desire for instant answers is already emerging, both in the professional literature and in popular journalism stories. An archival futurist argues that the age of new ideas is dead because the

information universe has changed the game for information professionals as having such quantities of information at our fingertips has made us come to expect, as consumers, instant results. The consumer is the central figure in the twenty-first century discourse and marks a shift from passive recipient to active choice-maker in relation to service provision.¹¹⁴

The consumer drives the capitalist society, with ready ‘knowledge’ becoming the commodity up for grabs. The burning of the National Museum of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro which only left approximately ten percent of its collections intact and other events like this cause an even greater public outcry of ‘why wasn’t it digitised?’¹¹⁵ When the Glasgow School of Art burned not once, but twice, in a four-year period, information professionals were left to pick up what pieces remained in a state of underfunding, with unrealistic expectations of job performance by the general public.¹¹⁶ Or as stated in a book focused on library management during workforce transition:

¹¹⁴ Craig Gould, ‘The end of archival ideas?’ in Brown, Caroline, ed. *Archival Futures*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, p.144.

¹¹⁵ Manuela Andreoni, Ernesto Londoño, and Lis Moriconi, ‘Double Blow to Brazil Museum: Neglect, Then Flames,’ *The New York Times* 3 September 2018 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/world/americas/brazil-museum-fire.html>> [accessed 9 October 2018].

¹¹⁶ ‘Glasgow School of Art fire: Iconic library destroyed,’ *BBC News* 25 May 2014 <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-27556659>> [accessed 12 February 2019]; Severin Carrell, Libby Brooks, and Kevin Rawlinson, “‘Heartbreaking’”: fire guts Glasgow School of Art for second time,’ *The Guardian* 16 June 2018 <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/16/firefighters-tackle-blaze-at-glasgow-school-of-art>> [accessed 12 February 2019].

After decades of parroting the phrase ‘people are our most valuable resource,’ managers in both the for-profit and non-profit worlds have finally realized that staff members are a resource well worth systematically cultivating, one that is taken for granted only at the organization’s peril.¹¹⁷

Being called a valuable resource but not being treated like one is detrimental to any organisation’s culture. This happens so often that the literature has termed them Endangered Archives. Those who advocate for them argue, ‘It is easy to condemn neglect, but these communities often struggle to preserve their heritage, let alone the heritage of others that came to them through accidents of history. We cannot expect them to shoulder the burden alone.’¹¹⁸ The advocates for Endangered Archives solution was to help with a grant program for particularly endangered programmes. However, this thesis proposes by listening to what previous professionals have encountered in their own workplace(s) and learning from their failures and successes through the medium of oral history, the current generation of archival practitioners can add contextual value to their own experience. Then, they can make better-informed choices as to how to handle these digital conundrums which occur, even if it is only to be flexible, receptive to new media, adaptable at each encounter, and to continue the push for digitisation initiatives and full funding. For as Lemieux writes, ‘Archives and records professionals have made the transition into new recordkeeping futures before and they likely will make the transition again.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth J. Wood, Rush Miller, and Amy Knapp, *Beyond Survival: Managing Academic Libraries in Transition*, Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2007, p.12.

¹¹⁸ Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, ‘Introduction,’ in Maja Kominko, ed., *From Dust to Digital Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme*, United States: Lightning Source, 2015 <<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0052>> pp.xxxvii-xxxviii; p. xxxvii.

¹¹⁹ Lemieux, p.43.

This constant transition correlates to a study done on Baby Boomers and generational conflict from a sociological perspective in which ‘the Baby Boomer problem fails to acknowledge the extent to which young people will make the world anew.’¹²⁰ Instead, LAM professionals like the historical view that adult society’s responsibility is ‘preserving cultural heritage of the past and engaging with the problems of the present, while recognising that younger generations can, will, and *should* use that heritage to make their own world in the future.’¹²¹ Allowing generational conflict to be put aside while acknowledging the bias and construction of history that has taken place in libraries, archives, and museums will allow future information professionals to acknowledge their own bias and place in the archival workforce, whether in generational identification, technological advancement, or creation of access to resources. The stories passed on through oral histories are material from which future individuals have the opportunity to learn. In hearing the stories of fellow professionals, current and future practitioners can fully embrace what it has meant and what it may continue to mean to be an Oklahoma archivist.

Invisible Workforce

Feminist theory and research is uncovering many ways in which women in specific workforces or jobs classified as women’s work have been missing within the literature. Libraries, archives and museums (LAM’s) are heavily female in their workforce population. This is both true today and historically as these institutions were

¹²⁰ Bristow, *Baby Boomers and Generational Conflict*, p.190

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

seen as acceptable places for women to be employed.¹²² In the second wave of the women's liberation movement, a call from within the library profession for equal pay and leadership opportunities resonated loudly in the professional literature.¹²³ An explanation for the historical placement on work equality is defined by the writing of Arlene Daniels, when she says, 'Work provides a clue to a person's worth in society – how others judge and regard him or her. To work – and earn money – is also to gain status as an adult. Thus, working is an important way to develop both a sense of identity and a sense of self-esteem.'¹²⁴ Daniels' work focuses on volunteer work and how not being paid causes women who undertake these endeavours to be undervalued. While this is a valid claim, and many archivists have entered the profession through volunteer work like internships or unpaid course credit, the focus of this research is on those men and women who chose to be paid for their work in the archival sphere. Thus, Schiller's feminist call for equality is just a first step in creating equitable working conditions for archivists across the state.

The nature of archival work, sometimes also grouped together with records management in corporate instances, complicates the desire for visibility. A study out of

¹²² Gretchen Keer, 'The Stereotype: Our obsession with librarian representation,' *American Libraries* 30 October 2015 <<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2015/10/30/the-stereotype-stereotype/>> [accessed 20 January 2024] in which she writes, 'Administrators endeavored to hire women because they were better educated than men attracted to the profession and were unable to demand comparable wages. By the end of the 1920s, white women did indeed come to dominate librarianship. In fact, in 1930 librarianship was 90% female. In response, librarians tied themselves in knots trying to rationalize that fact.'; In the United States 'In 2022, women accounted for 82.2 percent of all librarians...' as cited in Department for Professional Employees, '2023 Fact Sheet,' *AFL-CIO* p.4 <<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d10ef48024ce300010f0f0c/t/643eb8ba21d7df4d81f9a11d/1681832122377/Library+Workers+Facts+%26+Figures+2023.docx+%281%29.pdf>> [accessed 20 January 2024]

¹²³ Anita R. Schiller, 'The Disadvantaged Majority: Women Employed in Libraries,' *American Libraries* 1, 4 (1970): p.345. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25617879>> states 'The top positions in the largest institutions are held increasingly by men, and there appears to be a growing trend toward greater inequality between the sexes in the library profession.'

¹²⁴ Arlene Kaplan Daniels, 'Invisible Work,' *Social Problems* 34, 5 (1987): p.404. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/800538>>

Finland highlighting record management in an electronic context states the complexity of system design and collection management when,

Questions like what is a record, what is meant by creation or receipt of a record, what is an archive, how records should be appraised, what records should be preserved long-term and how the mandates and responsibilities should be organized between public organizations and archival institutions, are looking for answers.¹²⁵

There will always be more questions than answers in trying to keep abreast of the many technological changes society embraces and how to apply those changes to archival and records management policies and practices. The work is viewed as hidden, with decisions being made from people internal to organisations. These decisions are often allocated to non-archival or records management professionals, which the study argues is an oversight by top management.¹²⁶ In a plenary Zoom lecture on the nature of making women's history more visible, scholar Sandra Gioia Treadway says:

Today we know that the 18,000 collections described in women's history sources represent only a fraction of what libraries and archives across the United States contain relating to women. So it may be hard for those of you who are not practicing archivists at that time to fully appreciate just how pathbreaking a worth work, this was, there was nothing like it out there.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Tuija Kautto and Pekka Henttonen, 'Records management as invisible work: A study of Finnish municipalities,' *Government Information Quarterly*, 37, 4 (2020): p.1
<<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101460>>

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.2. Their 'studies show that top management and other professional groups are not aware of the demands that RM professionals meet in their daily practices or the core of the records management work that is in making sure that the accountability, transparency and the evidentiary value of the records are secured. The consequence of not knowing is that [the] existence of records managers and archivists is recognized in case of paper documents, but not always when digital information is in question. The fact that RM professionals are not acknowledged is shown in poor resourcing of records management and in how the work in records management is increasingly given to other professionals.'

¹²⁷ Sandra Gioia Treadway, 'Plenary: Making Invisible Women Visible: Women's History and Women in the Archives, 1970 - 2020,' *MARAC 2021 Spring - Virtual Meeting 12-16 April*, Given 12 April 2021
<<http://hdl.handle.net/1903/27018>> [accessed 8 December 2022]

The ground-breaking work of female archivists is beginning to be acknowledged.

However, sometimes the recognition only comes in the acknowledgements section of historical works written by others:

This book is grounded in the principle that the study of the past is only possible with the support of those in the present. It is true about historical research at large, which is built upon the tireless work of archivists and librarians, both those of generations past who gathered and preserved historical materials and those who continue to make sources available today.¹²⁸

These acknowledgements recognise and acclaim the work of professionals who helped the researcher. But for society at large, the clarity of the archival work being done is still clouded in the day-to-day endeavours of the professional. Hopefully this recognition will continue to grow as more projects studying the archivist as practitioner and person are completed, as community partnerships become more prevalent, and as these conversations spread outside traditional classrooms and publications. These all aid the visibility and recognition of archival professionals' work.

Applying feminist theory to archival practice allows for a critical examination of power structures and gendered labour within the sector. The intervention:

begins with the recognition that self-representation and self-historicization is a vital element of collective identity, political organization, and structural change. We also learn that the epistemological foundations of archival theory are not adequate for our political ideals or practical challenges. This means taking seriously the critiques of power coming from outside of archival studies as well as from within and while we might want to easily dismiss concepts of the archive that do not adequately address or understand the specifics of archival labor and expertise, we must contend with the way that the archive/s operates for people outside of our field.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Jason Lustig, *A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p.vii.

¹²⁹ Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood, 'Critical Feminism in the Archive,' in 'Critical Archival Studies,' eds. Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand. Special issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no.2 (2017): pp.1-27, p.21 <[10.24242/jclis.v1i2.27](https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.27)>

The mixed methodological nature of this thesis represents an attempt to understand archivists both collectively and as individuals within their larger community context. The use of oral history provides a lens of archivists' positionality and structuring ideas, taking into consideration the ways that their work is shaped by the ideas and powers held by governing boards, legislative bodies, or other administrative elements. Feminist theory then is a valid tool to use in examination of Oklahoma's archivists.

Feminist scholars have also developed questions around care, authority, types of labour. In this 'the feminist ethics of care...incorporates morality and moral language in scholarly discourse, opens the door to emotion in archival practice, and is compatible with a philosophical turn towards archival covenant.'¹³⁰ Cifor and Caswell who originally introduced the idea of the feminist ethics of care within archives, later returned to them. Here they point out four key points moving forward from 2021: '1. Care work is more important than ever', '2. Care work is more undervalued than ever', '3. Radical empathy demands a power analysis', and '4. Feminist ethics are both personal and structural.'¹³¹ All four of these points are critical in archival work and are hallmarks of the merging of feminist theory into archival theory and practice. The second point in particular is where the heart of this thesis resides; the fact that archival work as care work is undervalued specifically by the treatment of funding and staffing in Oklahoma repositories. This leads to their third point and one in which a woman's place in Oklahoma culture will be discussed later in chapter 5 which will show how women relate and interact with power

¹³⁰ Cline, *Archival Virtue*, p.39.

¹³¹ Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, 'Revisiting a Feminist Ethics of Care in Archives An Introductory Note,' *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3, 2 (2021): pp.1-6.
<<https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v3i2.162>> [accessed 17 January 2022] pp.2-4.

structures. In addition, the place Oklahoma women hold within Oklahoma culture through historical realities combined with oral history participants' responses to their own views and experiences will be examined.

Conclusion

By examining archives through three main facets – the socio-subculture of Oklahoma and its politics, the genre of oral history as a methodology, and workforce transitions – it is possible to consider what it means to be an Oklahoma archivist. The next section will begin using quantitative research methods to examine how Oklahoma's archivists understand themselves and their professional roles. From this survey, a pool of self-selected archivists was then interviewed. This, I suggest, allows us to consider the multiple personal interpretations of archivist identities and roles within the state of Oklahoma and to hone in on how workforce transitions affect organisational culture and institutional memory.

Chapter 3

Trends reported in Oklahoma's archival workforce

Introduction

In the current twenty-first century environment, surveys are used routinely from customer satisfaction links sent via text or email to Zoom classroom instruction polls soliciting student input on course preferences. Living in a data rich society where everyone has their opinion lets researchers acquire mounds of data. As data-driven solutions abound, the shift from user experience (UX) design has evolved into customer experience (CX). The difficulty lies in how to best access and interpret survey data to find meaning once it is collected. In this thesis, qualitative oral history interviews complement a mixed methodological approach using a quantitative survey data collection model. In this technique, meaning is revealed to the extent to which Oklahoma archivists contribute to and partake in the creation of community, perform preservation work, and function throughout their careers as both the institutional memory and foster the organisational culture of their various repositories. The argument that emerges from the data is that the particular, grassroots and state-level context of archive professionals' working lives interacts with and sometimes diverges from national trends. One participant said:

I was 10 years at the library, at the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism. We were funded by a Department of Justice appropriation, and after 9/11, that appropriation was changed, and we fell under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security. The grant actually ran out. I was there for 10 years, and we did an extraordinary amount of work to build databases and a physical library. And so anyway when we lost our grant, it just sort of dissipated.¹

¹ Brad Robison, Interview by JJ Compton 19 May 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, p.3.

As the quote highlights, LAM organizations across the state, even one receiving national monies, rely on using those funds to operate and exist.

This chapter sets out the core quantitative information created by this project and highlights some key trends and themes that will be fleshed out in a subsequent chapter. For as mentioned earlier Gelo, Braakmann, and Benetka have argued, quantitative research involves data collection reducing people ‘to numerical values in order to carry out statistical analysis.’² The key trends that emerge are first, the age of the employee is unrelated to their qualifications if the skill development and flexibility to technological changes are present. Second, higher education is still preferred when hiring archivists nationwide. Third, the archival community is necessary for acquiring needed skills and creating key networks for solo archivists to query for help and advice. Fourth, there is an inherent value in the role that archivists play in institutions and organisations as memory entities and culture keepers. Fifth, the turnover and changes occurring in LAM institutions in Oklahoma are affecting the state’s larger historical record. The qualitative data results are covered more fully in Chapter 4 and then combined in a mixed methodological, thematic analysis in Chapter 5.

The survey method of delivery was chosen because it is used widely in the social sciences for its ability to enable data collection about issues which characterise demographic groups in a society so as to draw comparisons.³ Historically, the survey collection method is one that has worked well for information professionals in the state of Oklahoma. In April 1978, the Battelle Report titled *A Needs Assessment Study of*

² Omar Gelo, Diana Braakmann, and Gerhard Benetka, ‘Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Beyond the Debate,’ *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 42 (2008): p.268
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-008-9078-3>>

³ Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.65.

Oklahoma Libraries was presented to the Oklahoma Department of Libraries by Columbus Laboratories out of Columbus, Ohio. This report was ‘funded under the Library Services and Construction Act (PL-600)’ and was ‘commissioned by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries in May 1977.’⁴ This survey was one of the first comprehensive analysis of the funding and staffing needs of information professionals within the state, more of which will be examined in the section titled Archival Community. However, the Battelle Report set a quantitative measurement baseline for information professionals across the state, thus creating the first state-wide documentation of information professionals through survey collection.

Because the Oklahoma Archivist Association (OAA) was not founded until 2017, looking at historical information on how archivists were organised and surveyed is a vital part of examining the methods and responses of data collection. By comparing the historical data and its collection method with the current data collected in this thesis, patterns over decades emerge of publicly funded archival employee work shortages in both staff and budget across the state. The demographic group in this thesis is archivists, specifically those who work or have worked in Oklahoma. In order to reach the largest pool of respondents to the survey, it was decided to contact both state-wide Oklahoma organisations like the Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA), the Oklahoma Library Association (OLA), and the Oklahoma Archivists Association (OAA), among others, as well as regional organisations that would be able to pull in archival employees who may

⁴ ‘Battelle Report’, *Oklahoma Library Association Archives*, Box 110, Folder 6, 1978, Oklahoma State University, Special Collections and University Archives.

have left the state for various reasons.⁵ The OMA and OLA are historically where groups of archivists have sought out membership and networking opportunities, despite the organisations not being primarily archival in nature. It was also decided that national and international organisations would probably not have a large percentage of current or former Oklahoma archival employees who would not also be in the smaller regional or state-wide organisations, so they were not contacted to distribute the survey.

Research participant gathering then commenced with the initial pool of respondents being garnered by sending out the Google Form survey link to members of different library, archival, and museum organisations. It sought feedback on what organisations each individual chose to belong to in the hopes a pattern of self-identification would emerge, i.e. does the person identify more as a librarian, archivist, museum professional, or something else.⁶ The first release of the survey closed after a three-month period in May 2018. The author agreed to re-release the same survey for an additional three months in the hopes of gathering more respondents, and then it was re-closed in August 2018. The re-release was successful and produced a total of forty-three respondents from within or formerly within the Oklahoma LAM community.

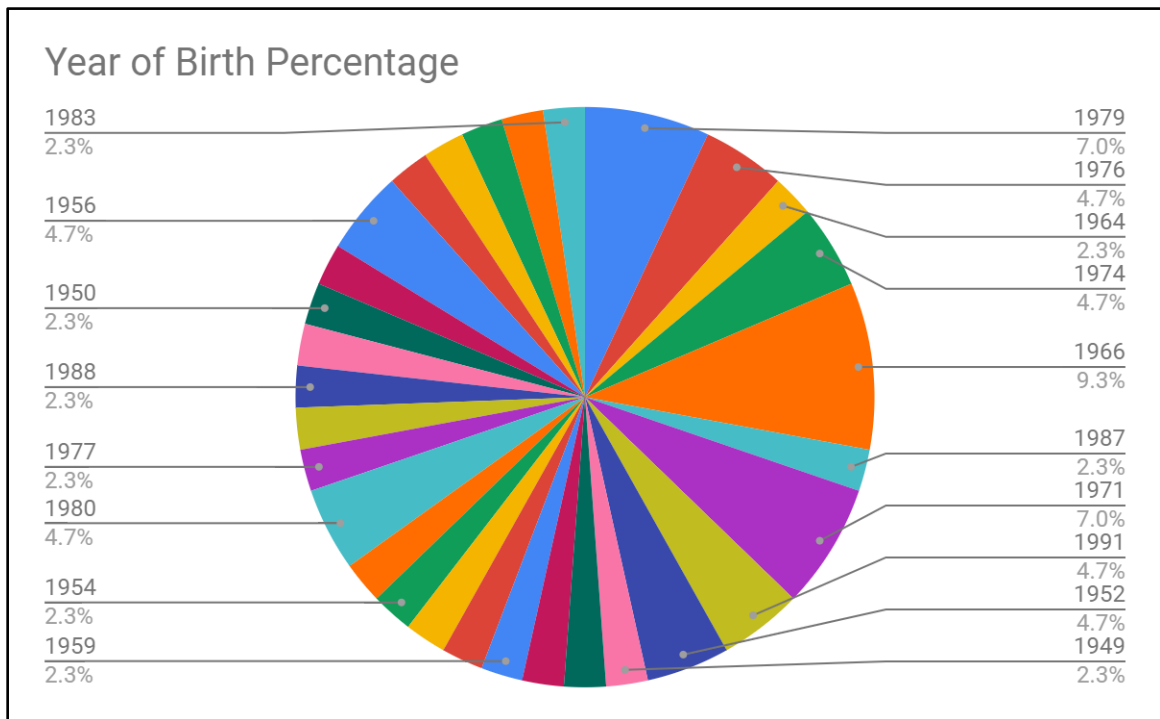
⁵ Before releasing the survey to the various state and regional organisations who agreed to distribute it via email, the initial survey questions were sent to the Ethics Review Committee at Swansea University in December 2017 and approved for distribution with revisions in March 2018.

⁶ The survey was not limited to just 'archivists' because, as we have seen historically and as other researchers have pointed out, 'By the end of the nineteenth century, libraries, archives, and museums had begun to evolve distinct identities and methods; yet libraries continued to amass art collections, while museums continued to build library and archival collections. In other words, the hybrid nature of cultural institutions in the nineteenth century never went away.' Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds. *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*. 'Introduction,' New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, p.xx.

Reporting of the Quantitative Data

From this six-month data collection period, several generalities can be determined immediately. As a reminder on the generational groups used in American normative vocabulary, please refer back to Chapter 1's section on workforce transitions for their language use and justification in this thesis. The first demographic observation is that there is a wide range of birth years, ranging from 1949 to 1995 (see Figure 3.1 for a complete breakdown), with a median birth year of 1970. Using the normative American generational vocabulary, there is no representation from Generation Z, those born after 2001, at least from within this sampling group and those willing to take the survey.

Figure 3.1 Year of Birth Percentage of Total



Fourteen of the respondents would be considered Baby Boomers, fourteen of the respondents are Generation X, and fifteen would be considered Millennials. This creates an almost even one-third age distribution between the three different generations

represented. Thus, the original idea of focusing solely on retiring archivists was widened to include two other demographic areas: mid-career and beginning or early-career archival professionals.

Generational groupings occur not only in history and social science research but in cross-disciplinary fields like the sciences, business, and engineering. Because so many archival repositories are either publicly funded or have not-for-profit status, the discipline of business is the most relevant to the purposes of this thesis for comparison. Business research is utilised to see if archival employees fit into the traditional American generational groupings done by employers. It immediately revealed that current research in business shows that generational groupings of employees are inaccurate. The data instead correlates to the differing career points and skills development of archivists. Thus, the conceptual model of digital fluency proposed by Wang, Myers, and Sundaram (as seen in Chapter 1), where over the course of life, one becomes knowledgeable in the technologies and skills needed to meet the requirements of their work, becomes key. Quantitative data collected in the survey reflects that Oklahoma archivists do not need to be grouped into larger generational categories.⁷ Rather, as scholars Mahmoud, Riesel, Grigoriou, Fuxman, and Mohr point out, motivation and retention of employees must be kept in mind by ‘employers [who] need to identify and manage generational dissimilarities in the workplace.’⁸ Further, the validity of the idea of generational groupings is negated by the work of Lester, Standifer, Schultz, and Windsor, who argue that by embracing the intergenerational workforce, strength can be found by the

⁷ Wang, Myers, Sundaram, ‘Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants,’ p.409

⁸ Ali B. Mahmoud, William D. Reisel, Nicholas Grigoriou, Leonora Fuxman, and Iris Mohr, ‘The reincarnation of work motivation: Millennials vs older generations,’ *International Sociology*, 35, 4 (2020): pp.393-414, p.393 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580920912970>>

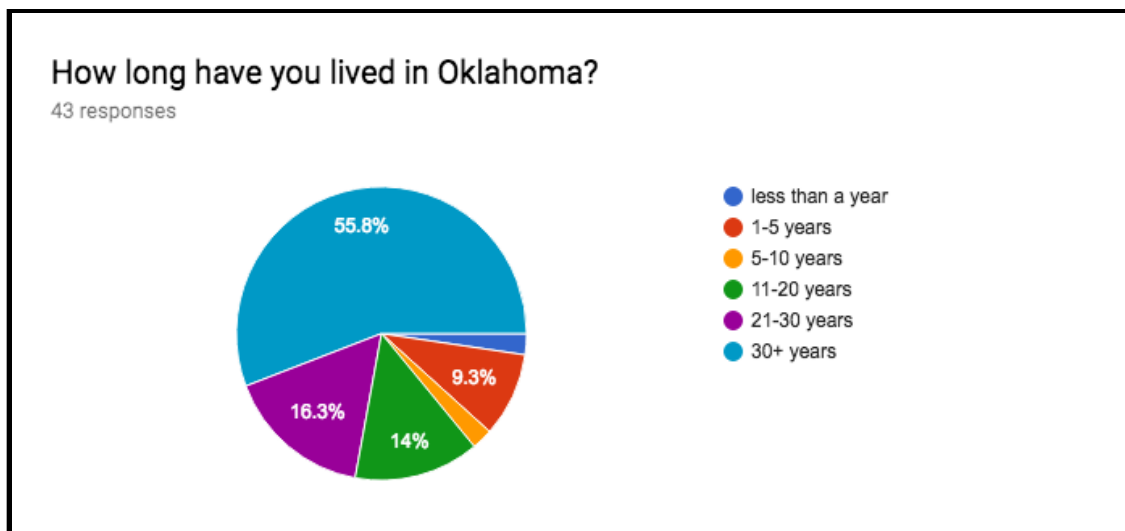
generations ‘work[ing] together to achieve goals, to innovate, and to problem solve’ together.⁹ New trends emerge when we examine archivists beyond their generational birth years but instead examine their motivation, retention, digital fluency, and ability to create intergenerational places of work.

Second, many archivists who are employed in the state of Oklahoma have lived in the state for more than thirty years (see Figure 3.2). The literature within fields such as anthropology, geography, psychology, communication studies, and history shows that cultural identity can be interpreted in many different ways, from the verbiage used in describing groups, to the creation of new spaces to examine non-dominant voices, to the transmission of values from generation to generation. The field of psychology has extensively examined identity development, as numerous articles found within the publications *Developmental Psychology* and *Research in Human Development* demonstrate.¹⁰ Thus, for purposes of this research, the majority of respondents will be considered ‘Oklahomans’ as opposed to outsiders who have relocated to the state from other areas of the country, or even the world. This is due to their autobiographical reasoning as self-reflection.

Figure 3.2 Length of Time Lived in Oklahoma

⁹ Scott W. Lester, Rhetta L. Standifer, Nicole J. Schultz, and James M. Windsor, ‘Actual Versus Perceived Generational Differences at Work: An Empirical Examination,’ *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 19, 3 (2012): pp.341-354, p.353 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051812442747>>

¹⁰ Renee V. Galliher, Kate C. McLean, and Moin Syed, ‘An Integrated Developmental Model for Studying Identity Content in Context,’ *Developmental Psychology* 53, 11 (November 2017): pp.2011-22 <<https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000299>> argues specifically that the majority of literature only examines how people develop their identities and less on what identity actually is. Specifically, to this research project, the idea of narrative identities tied to autobiographical reasoning will be used, ‘Narrative identity research emphasizes the process of *autobiographical reasoning*, which is how individuals reason about their past experiences and connect them to their current identities,’ p.2012.



The third area of employment in archives, specifically within the state of Oklahoma, is demonstrated by the responses in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4. A side-by-side comparison shows that the majority of respondents have been employed in archival institutions for eleven or more years and that over half of those eleven or more years have been spent working within the state of Oklahoma at some type of archival repository. Again, this data correlates with the ages of the individual respondents in that those who would be considered mid-career or late-career employees are the same individuals who are retaining employment in the archives, both in and outside of Oklahoma.

Figure 3.3 Length of Time Worked in Archives

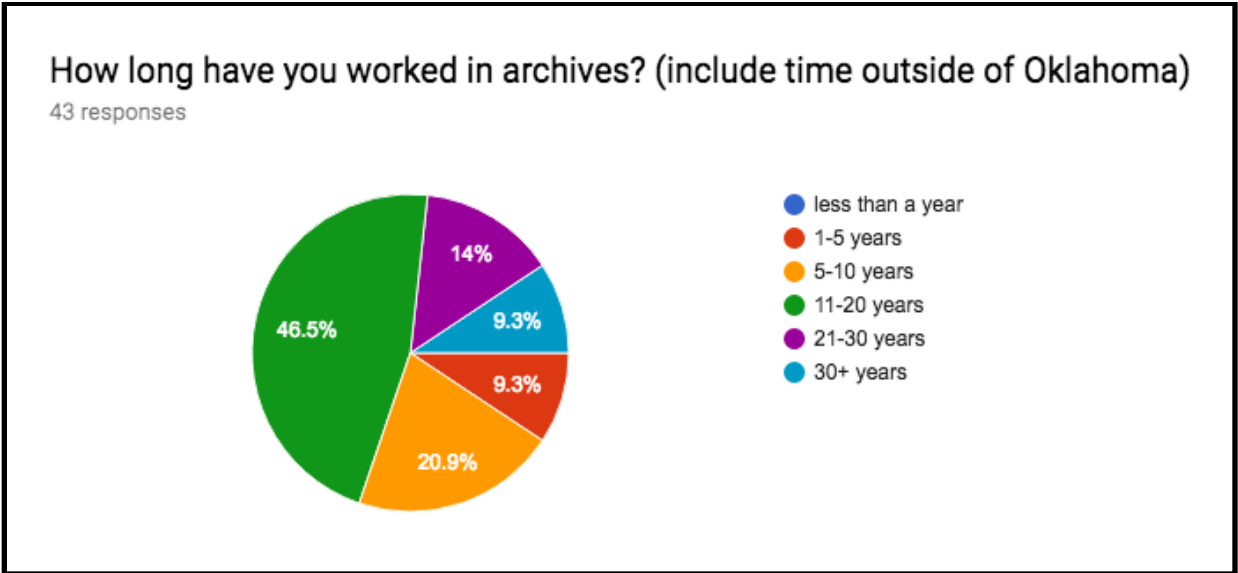
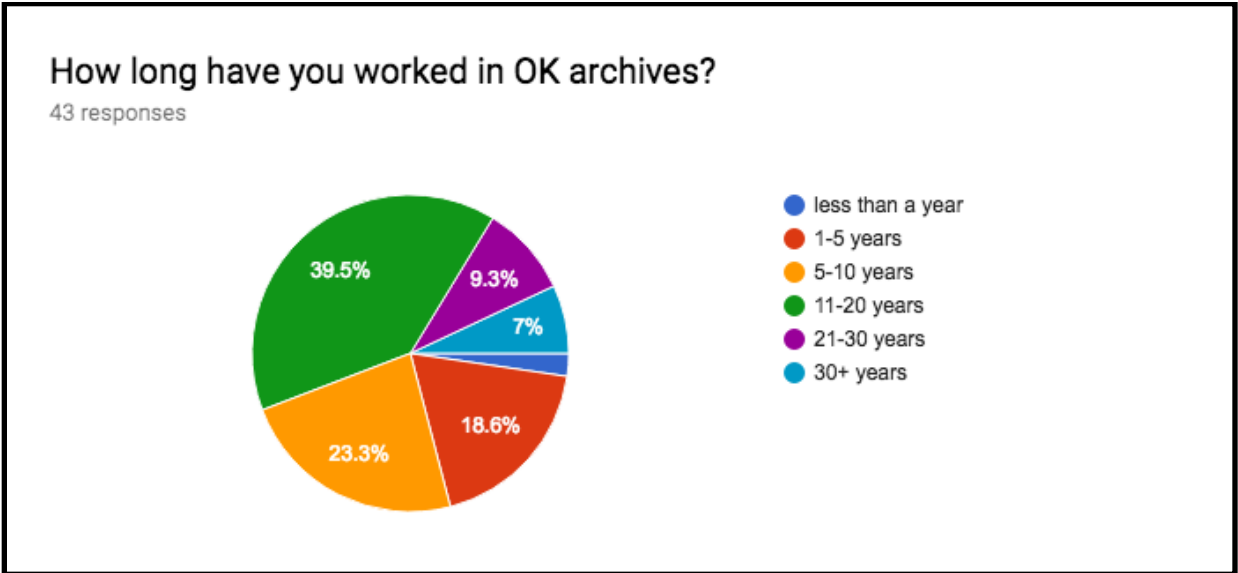


Figure 3.4 Length of Time Worked in Oklahoma Archives



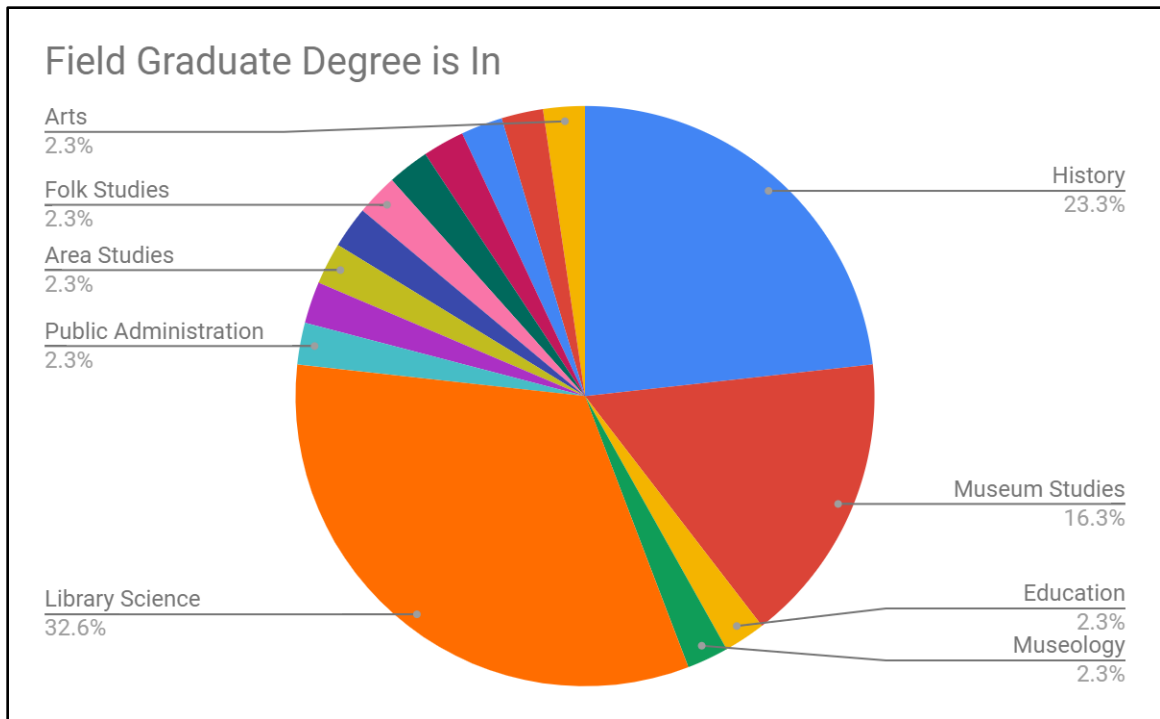
Continuing education is typically considered a prerequisite for archival employment, whether it is on-the-job training, attending workshops and conferences either in person or virtually, or the encouragement of a supervisor guiding an employee along the lifelong learning pathway through mentorship or in-house training. In a 2012

blog post, the Smithsonian Institute Archives gave this career advice for future professionals regarding higher education, ‘Many, but not all, employers will require a Master of Library Science ‘or equivalent’...Other common graduate degrees held by archivists include public history and museum studies. Some positions may only require an undergraduate degree, but a graduate degree will likely be “preferred”.’¹¹ This is historically standard across the profession, as Eastwood summarised Cox’s ‘measured assessment of the archival profession in the United States in the mid-1980s, [he] concludes that ‘archivists should strengthen their educational foundation, theory, and public profile by forming full master’s-level archival administration programs’,’ while writing about recruitment, training, and the fostering excellence in archives by utilising the traditional university system.¹² Thus it is not a surprise when the reported data shows 97.7% of the participants have undergraduate degrees and 88.4% have graduate degrees, with an additional 7% reporting their current enrolment in a graduate degree program. However, unlike the fields reported on by the Smithsonian blog, a wider demographic of graduate degrees is reported by Oklahomans (see Figure 3.5). Twenty-three individuals have what would be considered a typical degree, an MLIS, MIS, Public History, Museum Studies, or some version of these degrees. An additional two respondents had these graduate degrees plus a graduate degree in some other discipline. Thus, twenty-five participants, or slightly more than half, have obtained what would be considered an across-the-board recognizable degree for the archival profession.

Figure 3.5 Field Graduate Degree is In

¹¹ Jennifer Wright, *Some Archival Career Advice*, Smithsonian Institute Archives Blog Post, 26 April 2012, <<https://siarchives.si.edu/blog/some-archival-career-advice>> [accessed 5 September 2018]

¹² Terry Eastwood, ‘Nurturing Archival Education in the University,’ *American Archivist* 51, 3 (Summer 1988), p.229.



Within certain employment circles, a graduate degree in History is also acceptable, often aiding an archival institution by providing someone steeped in the historical context of the materials. Five additional respondents reported having a graduate degree in History, with one more opting to report Art History as their graduate degree. This brings the total number to thirty or thirty-one, depending on the validity of the Art History degree being considered within the main History group or not.¹³ Other graduate degrees were reported in such fields as Healthcare, Design, Cultural Anthropology, Education, and Folk Studies. Without knowing the institution doing the hiring, it is impossible to conclude if these other degrees are being used from within the area of expertise of the individuals or if they are from a career switch of some sort. Further research could be conducted on the types of graduate degrees compared with the types of

¹³ The author would argue an Art History graduate degree would be useful and beneficial for those archives or museums which contain large amounts of artwork; without knowledge of the respondent's employer, it is difficult to say if the degree is within the typical requirements of hire or an outlier, thus the open-ended total of the data.

employing institutions for archival professionals within the state, but this is outside the immediate interests of this thesis.

Further context is added when we turn to the requirements for professional librarians. The American Library Association states, ‘A master’s degree in library science (MLS), preferably from an American Library Association (ALA) accredited program, is necessary for most librarian positions in most public, academic, and special libraries.’¹⁴

While scholars point out the flaws of the preference saying:

the profession has embraced the policy of the master’s degree from an ALA accredited program for appointment as a librarian...but it continues to grapple with the issues of defining appropriate training and education for various categories of jobs in libraries. At the moment the responsibility rests with the individual library or library system, not with the profession at large, to determine the categories of jobs and the training requirements for those jobs.¹⁵

And as recently as 2023, the San José State University School of Information presented data on ‘MLIS Skills at work’ demonstrating that in 63% of all job postings, an MLIS degree is key – this includes postings for archivists. They go on to show in that same presentation geared towards information professionals:

The MLIS degree is called for explicitly in academic, research, law, government, cultural and nonprofit job announcements, but LIS professionals still need to demonstrate their “return on investment” (ROI) value to business employers. LIS professionals have the skills needed for many media/marketing, UX/UI, business intelligence/competitive intelligence, data analytics, and AI/GPT design positions, along with the key communication and IT skills needed for managerial and leadership roles in corporate settings.¹⁶

¹⁴ American Library Association, ‘Become a Librarian’, *ALA Website* 15 July 2016. <<http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/libcareers/become>> [accessed 19 July 2023]

¹⁵ Beverly P. Lynch, ‘Library Education: Its Past, Its Present, Its Future,’ *Library Trends* 56, 4 (2008): p.940. <[doi:10.1353/lib.0.0016](https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.0.0016)> [accessed 19 July 2023]

¹⁶ San José State University School of Information, ‘MLIS Skills at Work: A Snapshot of Job Postings,’ *SJSU iSchool Website*, Spring 2023 <https://ischool.sjsu.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/career_trends.pdf> [accessed 19 July 2023]

This argument for Return on Investment (ROI) demonstration and the skills overlap into other areas reveal the flexibility and complex nature of technological skills interwoven into all areas of the LAM fields. These skills necessitate that those employed in LAM organisations have continuing education and networking opportunities for skill development in order to continue to work in the highly evolving field of information professionals, including libraries, archives, and museums. This will be demonstrated in the next section on Archival Community, in which we look at the motives behind archivists joining the professional organisations they do.

Although some pursue higher education above and beyond what the Smithsonian Institute Archives and ALA recommend (i.e. pursuing a Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., or other doctoral degree) most from within the LAM profession feel a master's level graduate degree is sufficient. Many employment opportunities still advertise for a master's degree, or perhaps at most, two master's degrees for highly specialised institutions. However, the Society of American Archivists journal has pointed to the need for research to be conducted about archivists by archivists and continue to write about theory and practice. As Caswell has pointed out, 'while there is certainly a body of literature focused on professional practice, archival theory remains an important aspect of archival studies.'¹⁷ Two University of Texas Ph.D. candidates were among the authors of a study which published results of an extensive survey on 'Enterprise Archiving' advocating for the value of well-managed archives.¹⁸ However, examining the publication further, most of

¹⁷ Michelle Caswell, "'The Archive' Is Not an Archives: On Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies," *Reconstruction* 16, 1 (2016) <<https://scholarship.org/uc/item/7bn4v1fk>> [accessed 6 October 2023]

¹⁸ Sarah Buchanan, Jane Gruning, Ayse Gursoy, and Lecia Barker, 'Surveying Archivists and Their Work toward Advocacy and Management, or "Enterprise Archiving",' *American Archivist* 80,2 (Fall/Winter 2017) from abstract.

the keyword results when discussing Ph.D. or doctorate degrees are focused on working with Ph.D. students as archivists, not pursuing such degrees. Thus, it is no surprise that of the forty-three respondents, only four reported having a Ph.D. and an additional two reported they were currently enrolled within a program, for a total of 14%. Furthermore, of those six, the areas are varied: two specialised in Higher Education ('Public Policy/Higher Education Administration' and 'Higher Education Administration'), two in history ('History' and 'History with an emphasis in public history'), one in 'Library and Info Science', and one in 'Political Science'. The data shows the remaining 86% of the responses by Oklahoma archivists do not have, nor are working towards a Ph.D. or its equivalent.

This is not to say that persons employed within archival institutions in Oklahoma remain stagnant in their educational endeavours. If anything, the results show the specialisation of skills within the body of professionals. Six respondents indicated they have completed the requirements to become a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists.¹⁹ Originally ACA was created to police the profession for as Linn writes in his history of ACA, 'archivists cringe when library directors say that anybody with an MLS is "good enough" to be an archivist.'²⁰ He goes on to argue that the certified archivists today, as reported through collected survey data, '71% of CAs had held a leadership position in a professional organization during their careers, while only 51.5% of SAA members and 43.3% of archivists in general had done the same.'²¹ Archival

¹⁹ For a complete listing of the requirements please visit <https://www.certifiedarchivists.org/get-certified/>

²⁰ Mott Linn, 'Not Waiting for Godot: The History of the Academy of Certified Archivists and the Professionalization of the Archival Field,' *The American Archivist* 78, 1 (1 March 2015): pp.96-132, p.97 <<https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.1.96>>

²¹ *Ibid*, p.118.

certification educates and develops the leaders within the profession through training, networking, and skills acquisition. However, a gap in Linn's history was exposed in 2022 when it was determined that no perspective or voice was given to the value of certification by 'full-time, tenured and tenure-track archival educators.'²² Todd-Diaz and Poole conducted a study which revealed 'most full-time graduate archival educators across North America neither hold personal certification nor are involved with ACA, suggesting a dangerous disconnect between what archivists are learning in the classroom and the knowledge needed to pass the certification exam.'²³ The authors concluded that more research would need to be done to bridge the classroom-to-certification gap which exists in today's archival educational environment. Despite this disconnect with the larger American landscape, Oklahoma's archival professions still value the ACA accreditation, as shown in the participants' responses to obtaining the certification.

Two more people have completed the SAA's Digital Archivists Certification curriculum and received a certificate.²⁴ The DAS curriculum was announced by SAA's President during the organisation's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 with the motive behind it as stated: 'DAS certificate requires evidence that students have knowledge of technical standards and of core archival activities as they relate to digital archives.'²⁵ The archival field recognised the technological changes occurring in the profession and created a certificate designed to aid employees in training and navigation of the information

²² Ashley Todd-Diaz and Alex H. Poole, 'Who Is This Godot? The Academy of Certified Archivists and Graduate Archival Education,' *The American Archivist* 85, 2 (1 September 2022): pp.678-699, p.679 <<https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.2.678>>

²³ Ibid, p.693-694.

²⁴ For a complete explanation of the requirements, visit <<https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das>>

²⁵ Helen R. Tibbo, 'On the Occasion of SAA's Diamond Jubilee: A Profession Coming of Age in the Digital Era,' *The American Archivist* 75, 1 (2012): pp.17-34, p.32 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23290578>>

landscape. Furthermore, one person has indicated completion of the following programs: Professional Associate in the American Institute for Conservation, two archival administration certificates, one from a historical society and one from a university (locales removed to anonymise the individual), Certified Institutional Protection Manager (CIPM), Certified Records Manager (CRM), and Museum Accessioning and Registration Course (MARC). While doctoral-level education seems to be in the minority, the development of skills and specialised professional knowledge within the field and recognised by the field is apparent in the respondents' varied answers to continuing education. Oklahoma archivists, when taken as a group, belong to a profession which actively demonstrates knowledge and skill development over time and that actively devotes resources to develop themselves through certifications and continuing education.

Archival Community

The second section of the survey focused on gathering archival community data or determining how and why archivists joined organisation(s). A list of eighteen state, regional, and national organisations was provided, with an 'other' option to fill in those organisations unidentified by the author.²⁶ Of those provided organisations, only two did not have any membership from the respondents, the ICA (International Council on Archives) and the IRMT (International Records Management Trust). Also, it was discovered after the survey's release that ATALM (Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums) was left off of the provided list. The author hoped the 'other' option would allow respondents to write it in; however, this was an oversight and should

²⁶ For a list of the organisations provided within the survey and their reported percentages, see Appendix B, Section 2 Archival Community.

the survey be further released, this organisation will be added to the options provided. That being said, none of the respondents reported belonging to ATALM either, but whether by oversight on the author's part or the fact none of the respondents actually belong to the organisation should be investigated if similar studies are done in the future.

These organisations overlapped only slightly with the organisations archivists could self-select as part of the A'CENSUS and A'CENSUS II data collected by the national archival organisation, the Society of American Archivists. Interestingly enough, the only Oklahoma-specific organisation listed by both surveys is the Oklahoma Conservation Congress (OCC), which reported fourteen members in 2006 and only two members in 2022.²⁷ This organisation was also not listed on the survey link for this project, mainly because it is an organisation within Oklahoma that I had never heard of being referenced by other practising archivists. Again, like with ATALM, none of the respondents reported belonging to OCC.²⁸ Should additional studies be done, it should be investigated to see if the Oklahoma Conservation Congress is still in existence and, if so, included in the survey for data collection.

As for the two international organisations listed, ICA and IRMT, which were not selected, I can only surmise it is because they are 1) international in nature and most of the respondents belonged to state or regional entities, 2) there could be a cost correlation

²⁷ Victoria Irons Walch, Elizabeth Yakel, Jeannette Allis Bastian, Nancy Zimmerman, Brenda Banks, Susan E. Davis, and Anne P. Diffendal, 'Special Section on A*CENSUS (Archival Census & Education Needs Survey in the United States),' *The American Archivist* 69, 2 (2006): p.504 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40294333>>; Makala Skinner and Ioana Hulbert, 'A*CENSUS II All Archivists Survey Report,' Ithaka S+R, Last Modified 22 August 2022. <<https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.317224>> [accessed 16 December 2022]

²⁸ While OCC still appears to have a tax id via the website 'Oklahoma Conservation Congress Oklahoma Chapter in Stillwater, Oklahoma' *EIN Tax ID.com* <<https://eintaxid.com/company/731150552-oklahoma-conservation-congress-oklahoma-chapter/>> [accessed 17 December 2022]; the website also reports the last tax year as 2007 making the author wonder if it has indeed gone defunct.

of belonging to an international organisation as membership dues for most cost more than state, regional, or even national organisations, 3) they are unknown as they are primarily European, or 4) they are deemed irrelevant to the day-to-day activities of Oklahoma archivists and museum professionals. This irrelevance can be demonstrated by the write-in responses of the participants, of whom nine mentioned the word ‘network’ and five mentioned the word ‘support’ as reasons for joining their organisations. One respondent even went as far as to write ‘grassroots interaction regarding the profession’ referring to being involved in small, local organisations trying to have an impact. Another participant reported it in this way, ‘I chose to join these organisations to extend my network of peers inside and outside of Oklahoma. As someone who managed a repository with little to no staff, I often depended on my connections in these organisations to better understand an issue or challenge that I faced.’ ‘Connection’ can be another word to combine with ‘network’ and ‘support’ in beginning to understand why Oklahomans join the archival, library, and museum associations they do.

The most nationally recognised archival organisation in the United States is the Society of American Archivists (SAA), much like the American Library Association (ALA) is the most recognised one for libraries. The SAA’s website states:

Founded in 1936, the Society of American Archivists is North America’s oldest and largest national professional association dedicated to the needs and interests of archives and archivists. SAA represents more than 6,200 professional archivists employed by governments, universities, businesses, libraries, and historical organizations nationally.²⁹

The site lists the association’s mission, vision, and core organisational standards, which help support the archival profession in the United States. However, as new census data

²⁹ Society of American Archivists, ‘Who We Are,’ SAA Website, last updated 22 September 2021, <<https://www2.archivists.org/aboutsaa>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

from 2022 revealed, Oklahoma's poverty rate compared to the rest of the United States is the 10th highest.³⁰ This means that for an archivist earning between \$20,000 and \$89,000, the individual membership rate to join SAA is between \$105 and \$285 per calendar year.³¹ Federal data shows that for a family of three living in Oklahoma in 2023, living below the poverty line is an annual salary of \$24,860.³² When most Oklahoma archivists pay out of pocket for memberships, paying the minimum membership rate for SAA of \$105 for an individual just is not feasible or realistic for some persons. This is why regional and state-level organisations are more likely for archivists to join, because the benefits of networking and continuing education still occur but on a much more reasonable fiscal scale relative to their income.

A regional organisation that encompasses Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, the Society of Southwest Archivists' 1972 founding constitutions and bylaws state that:

...it is a professional organization established to provide a means for effective cooperation among persons concerned with the documentation of human experience; to stimulate and make available the results of, research in archival administration and records management; to promote the adoption of sound principles and standards for the preservation and administration of records; to promote opportunities for the education and training of archivists, records managers, and custodians of private papers; to maintain and strengthen relations with others in allied disciplines; and to cooperate with other professional organizations and institutions having mutual interests in the preservation and use of man's recorded heritage.³³

³⁰ Carly Putnam, 'Latest poverty, health insurance data show that Oklahoma still has work to do,' *Okpolicy.org* Posted 16 September 2022 <<https://okpolicy.org/latest-poverty-health-insurance-data-show-that-oklahoma-still-has-work-to-do/>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

³¹ Society of American Archivists, 'Individual Membership' SAA Website, last updated 10 February 2021, <<https://www2.archivists.org/membership/individual>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

³² 'Federal Poverty Level (FPL),' *Healthcare.gov* Website <<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

³³ Society of Southwest Archivists records, Accession #1319, Box 40, Folder 3, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, p.1.

To compare to the SAA, the SSA membership rate is ‘Annual Membership dues are \$25.00 for individuals, with a reduced rate of \$15.00 for students and retirees.’³⁴ Because of the pay archivists receive and the poverty level of Oklahomans, the pay scale is much more feasible for archivists to join as members. This does not take into account the costs for conference registration, hotel, flight, and travel to attend in person at either SAA or SSA. However, as the SSA region is closer than SAA, flights or driving travel will be reduced as well as other conference costs. The addition of virtual workshops, meetings, and webinars has helped to mitigate these costs but, as many acknowledge, networking in virtual spaces is just not the same as in-person. Engineers studied this phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic and found the following disadvantages: navigating different time zones and lengths of presentations, as well as the fact ‘conducting workshops virtually presents inevitable barriers to experiencing fully fledged, in-person interactions and exchanges with colleagues.’³⁵ The establishment and inclusion of Oklahoma within SSA provided a first step in grassroots organisations for education, networking, cooperation, and documentation.

In the 1969-1970 report of the archives committee of OLA, activities included ‘surveying existing OLA archives’ as well as issues surrounding the holding body, the condition and extent of materials, processing procedures, expanding holdings, and to ‘consider and make recommendations about whether a written narrative history of the

³⁴ Society of Southwest Archivists, ‘Join Us,’ SSA Website
<<https://societyofsouthwestarchivists.wildapricot.org/membership>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

³⁵ Zoe M. Becerra, Nadia Fereydooni, Andrew L. Kun, Angus McKerral, Andreas Riener, Clemens Schartmüller, Bruce N. Walker, and Philipp Wintersberger, ‘Interactive Workshops in a Pandemic: The Real Benefits of Virtual Spaces,’ *IEEE Pervasive Computing*, 20, 1 (1 Jan.-March 2021): pp.35-39, p.35-36
<[doi: 10.1109/MPRV.2020.3044072](https://doi.org/10.1109/MPRV.2020.3044072)>

Association could be produced.’³⁶ Thus, while the archives committee was composed of historians and archivists, the primary purpose of the committee was not to connect archivists in the state but rather to preserve and make available the history of the Oklahoma Library Association.

Around a decade later, the first real needs assessment was conducted in the late 1970s, with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries commissioning the Battelle Report. What immediately comes to light is that Oklahoma libraries faced essentially the same challenges Oklahoma LAMs face today. The report summarised:

The top priority issues facing Oklahoma libraries in 1978 are those concerned with:

1. Personnel to staff the libraries
2. Funding for libraries
3. Cooperation among all types of libraries
4. Communications among libraries, their communities, and state and local government ...

Throughout this report we have made nearly 60 recommendations for improving libraries and interlibrary relationships in Oklahoma. There are 26 recommendations (43%) which involve the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The present budget of the Department will not permit it to employ the necessary staff to implement these recommendations.³⁷

When outside consultants recognise that the recommendations they have been hired to suggest are not even going to be feasible because of the amount of staffing needed to implement them, this is extremely problematic for the state of Oklahoma.

Even as early as 1983, approximately ten years after the founding of SSA, an archival researcher proposed ‘the dramatic growth of the regionals, both in terms of numbers of organisations and total membership, offers graphic testimony to the fact that

³⁶ Della Thomas, Robert L. Clark, Mariam Craddock, and Mary Anne Wentroth, ‘Archives Committee Suggestions,’ *Oklahoma Library Association Archives*, Box 40, Folder 3, 1969-1970, Oklahoma State University, Special Collections and University Archives.

³⁷ ‘Battelle Report’, *Oklahoma Library Association Archives*, Box 110, Folder 6, 1978, Oklahoma State University, Special Collections and University Archives, pp.i-ii

they serve a very real need.’³⁸ Nearly a decade after this article came out, the Oklahoma Library Association 1990-1991 membership reported that for the Special Collections & Archives Division and Roundtable, membership had declined from 32 members in 1989-1990 to only 26 in 1990-1991.³⁹ Why this decrease occurred is unknown, but it could be argued that the Oklahoma Library Association at the time centred more on public and school librarianship and less on archival areas; this is seen in the 239 members of the Children’s & Young People’s Roundtable and the 138 members of the Public Libraries Roundtable.⁴⁰ Relevant data can also be found in the twenty-five different committees that were reported in the 1980 Annual Report, where the archives committee is just listed as one of the options.⁴¹ Thus, the pull to join the OLA for archivists in Oklahoma was not for skills training in archives but more to network, help preserve, and make available the materials of the organisation.

Sadly, not much has changed since the 1978 report. Jan Davis, of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries reported in 2019 on the current state of archives with ODL:

Because this is the Department of Libraries, we have a focus on libraries across the state and working with librarians. So, I don’t think the archives is perceived as a key component of this agency and the work that it does. So I think sometimes it does not necessarily get the focus that it needs. In comparison with other states, there are many states that have much stronger support, both staff and financial, for the permanent records of state government, they’re state archival collections. If I

³⁸ Patrick M. Quinn, ‘Regional Archival Organizations and the Society of American Archivists,’ *The American Archivist* 46, 4 (1983): p.439 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40292899>>

³⁹ ‘Special Collections & Archives Roundtable’, *Oklahoma Library Association Archives*, Box 142, Folder 1, 1990, Oklahoma State University, Special Collections and University Archives.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ ‘OLA Annual Reports 1980’, *Oklahoma Library Association Archives*, Box 110, Folder 1, 1980, Oklahoma State University, Special Collections and University Archives. Other committees included: Governor Mansion Library, Resolutions, Automation Roundtable, Children’s & Youth Division, College & University Division, Junior Members Roundtable, Library Education Division, Oklahoma Association of School Library Media Specialists, Public Library Committee, Social Responsibilities Roundtable, Technical Services Division, Printing Arts Roundtable, Trustees Division, Reference Division, Constitutional & Bylaws Committee, Sites Committee, Membership Committee, Union List of Serials Committee, Continuing Education Committee, Intellectual Freedom Committee, Library Development Committee, National Library Week Committee, Publications Committee and Recruitment Committee.

were going to speculate, I would say we're probably in the bottom third with respect to staffing and funding for what we do.⁴²

Oklahoma political funding agencies need to be in better dialogue with those doing the work of preservation to realise their permanent records are not permanent due to budget allocations. This means that there may be some Freedom of Information Act violations occurring which are unknown to both the public and those elected officials chosen by the constituents. In addition, the staffing has turned over significantly. Many working now reported the median birth year as 1970, meaning that when the Battelle Report was released, this group of employees were in elementary school. When LAMs are a key component of the American democratic system, one begins to wonder how a politically conservative government who touts the importance of democracy is really implementing its principles. Today, Oklahoma practitioners are reporting their need to belong to organisations for support, for networking, and for connection both to other practitioners as well as to the profession on state, regional, and national levels. This is why organisations like the Oklahoma Archivists Association, the Society of Southwest Archivists, and the Society for American Archivists are essential to foster education, advocate for the profession, and support professionals. Community organising thus becomes integral to the survival of history, especially from those outside the in groups and communities.

In the same time frame the Battelle report was provided to the ODL, the regional membership numbers of the Society of Southwest Archivists highlight where Oklahoma archivists have placed membership, especially before the creation of the OAA in 2017. The earliest numbers were compiled by counting the number of individuals in the SSA

⁴² Jan Davis, Interview by JJ Compton, 1 October 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Transcript, p.3

directory: in 1974 there were 140 members of SSA, nineteen of which were from Oklahoma; in 1985 there were 232 members of SSA, twenty of which were from Oklahoma; in 1990, there were 447 and thirty-seven respectively; in 2007, there were 487 and forty respectively; 2013 had 504 and thirty-one; and most recently in 2023, SSA total membership is reported to be 498 with thirty-eight being from Oklahoma.⁴³ While membership numbers for SSA exist for most years across the decades, this sampling of decade membership since the time of the Battelle report provides figures which show continuous upward growth, not only of the total membership numbers for the regional organisation, but also for the number of Oklahoma archivists choosing to belong to this archival community. Oklahoma's archivists were and still are searching for grassroots communities for networking and continuing education both within and outside the borders of the state.

The Oklahoma Archivists Association was incorporated in 2017 when a small group of archivists who had been meeting informally as the COAL – Central Oklahoma Archivists League – decided to pursue non-profit organisational status and open the group to archivists all over the state. COAL has previously only served the centrally located OKC metropolitan area archivists. In her oral history, one founder of OAA, Jennifer Green recalls meeting Gerriane Schaad and how the organisation came about in this way:

I can't remember exactly which year it was, but she started and I met her through Jan Davis, who is the administrative archivist for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. And Gerri said, "Who's your archivist group?" And I said, "Oh, we don't have one." She said, "Well, let's get everybody together." So, she hosted the first meeting of what we were then calling Central Oklahoma Archivists League, because it had a great, great little acronym, COAL. So we met informally at

⁴³ Numbers compiled from Society of Southwest Archivists #1391, Box # 13, 14, 15, 30, & 31, The Texas Collection, Baylor University

different peoples archives for at least two or three years, probably quarterly, just an informal group of people. We had a Google group email list. We'd come and meet at someone's facility, have a little tour and then just talk. It was really well attended and it was really great. And after so many years of doing that, some of us decided we would like to formalize the organization so we could apply for grants and have a real resource for archivists in the state of Oklahoma. And it expanded to be state wide. So in 2015, we started talking a little more in-depth and that group consists of Jan Davis, myself, Sarah Milligan, Lisa Henry, uh, you, JJ Compton.⁴⁴

The informal COAL group, where no membership dues were required, did provide networking and continuing educational opportunities. Like many grassroots organisations, it started small, just six individuals, but has evolved into the non-profit OAA with membership numbers of 103 for the 2022 calendar year.⁴⁵ The financial dues for membership are much more realistic for Oklahoma's economy than SAA, coming in at \$25 for individuals and \$10 for students.⁴⁶ Oklahoma archivists can be proud of coming together at the grassroots level and organising to be able to support their profession within a conservative state that seems to understand little in governmental circles about the vital role archivists play in the system of democracy.

The survey then asked participants to select only one main option as to why they joined an archival organisation, the idea being to identify the rationale behind joining an archival organisation in order to determine how grassroots organising of archivists was occurring. Surprisingly, the highest percentage reported for joining an organisation was not networking, as one could assume from Jan Davis' recollection, but instead, the main reason when forced to choose only one is given as 'continuing education opportunities', which twelve persons reported. 'Networking' came in second with eleven persons

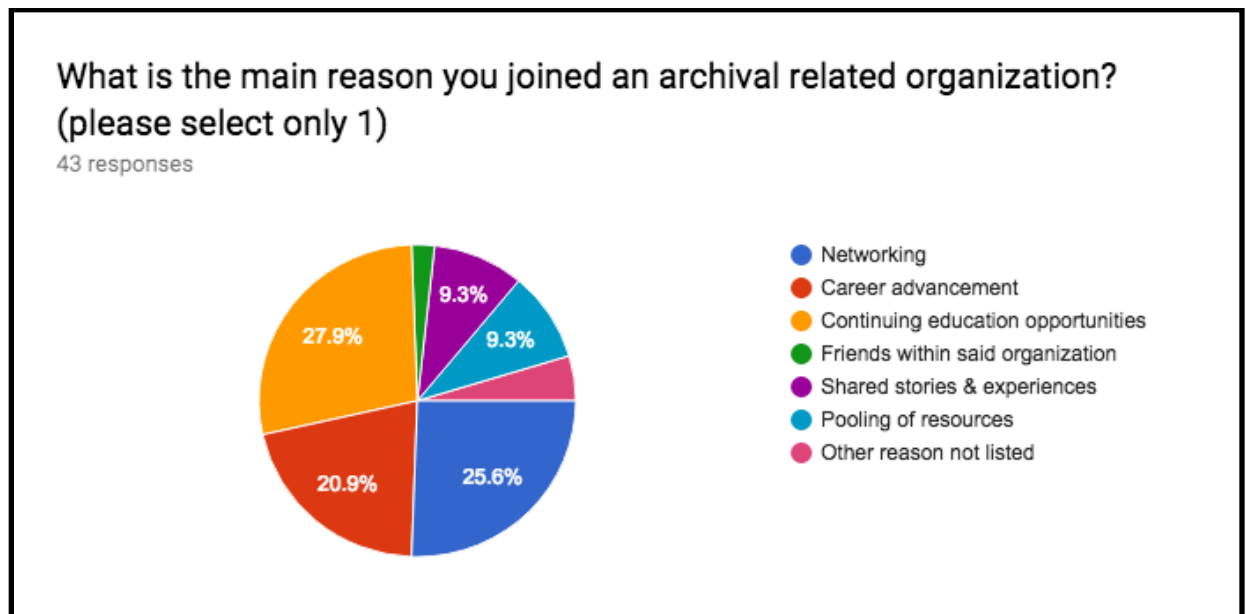
⁴⁴ Green, p.4.

⁴⁵ Email from Max Prud'homme, current OAA president, dated 13 December 2022.

⁴⁶ Oklahoma Archivists Association, 'Membership,' *OAA website* <<https://okarchivists.org/membership-payment/>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

selecting it, and ‘career advancement’ was the third largest group with nine reporting. These three main reasons for joining organisations comprise just under three-fourths of the total number of individuals (for a complete breakdown, see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Reasons Joined Archival Organisation



This data correlates with one of the Society of American Archivists main departments: Education. Their website states, ‘the Society of American Archivists Education Department is dedicated to offering quality in-person and online educational programs by partnering with hosts across the country to bring education to your doorstep, and by creating timely online content for accessible education at your fingertips.’⁴⁷ As a national organisation, they set the tone for educational standards within regional and state organisations as well. For comparison, a comprehensive study of academic librarians in Kerala, India, cited the ALA’s ‘In Service Training’ document arguing ‘librarian’s motivation for continued learning involves a mixture of social responsibility, desire for

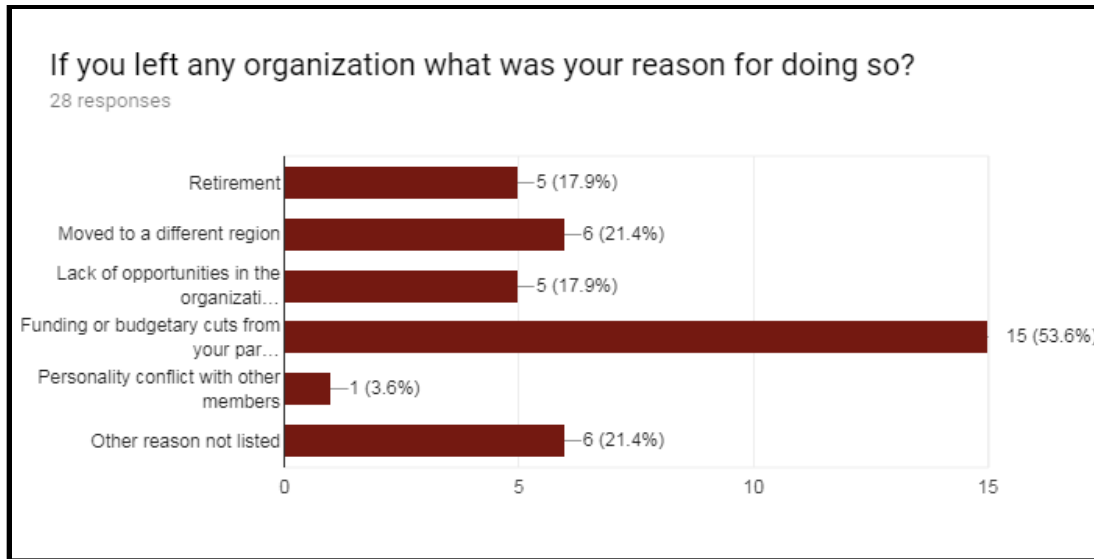
⁴⁷ Society of American Archivists, ‘Continuing Education,’ SAA Website, Last updated 30 July 2018 <<https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/continuing-education>> [accessed 10 September 2018]

advancement, professional pride, and a concern for future libraries, the need to keep abreast of new knowledge and technology, as well as an interest in supplementing professional training.⁴⁸ Since many archival entities straddle the same academic paradigms as libraries, it can be inferred from the survey responses of the archivists that continuing education is a strong motivator for individuals in choosing which organisation to place membership.

At the same time, the respondents' reasons for leaving an organisation are pretty clear. Over half (53.6%) stated their reason for leaving was due to 'funding or budgetary cuts from your parent institution' (see Figure 3.7 on the next page). This is in contrast to 39.3% who withdrew their membership based on retirement or relocation to a different region. Of the 21.4% of respondents who selected 'other reason not listed' many chose one of the above other options in conjunction with their response, as they were encouraged within the survey to select all options which applied to them. Thus, while the desire for continuing education remains high in both the literature and the local responses of the archivists, the funding provided by their parent entities is hindering the life-long learning skills Oklahoma archivists both desire and require to stay abreast in their field.

Figure 3.7 Reason for Leaving an Organisation

⁴⁸ K. Susan Mathew, M. D. Baby, and S. Sreerekha Pillai, 'Professional development of academic library professionals in Kerala,' *Education For Information* 28, 2-4 (June 2010): pp.215-216. <<https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2010-0903>> [accessed 10 September 2018]



Institutional Memory and Organisational Culture

The third section of the survey provided the following definitions to respondents before they progressed to answering questions related to the definitions. The survey stated:

For the purposes of gathering data Institutional Memory will be defined by researcher Charlotte Linde as stories ‘retold contained in both oral and written versions. These are the central element of the institution’s memory: the parts of the past that are so important that they are always included. This consensus tells what is most important in the story of the institution: what anyone must know about us to know who We are. Oral tellings of these stories are extremely important for arguing for the existence of a core institutional memory.’ *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory*. Oxford: OUP, 2009, 95.

Organisation Culture will be defined by Antonio Castillo Gómez as ‘Archives are fully part of the history of written culture, which includes all the testimonies, practices, representations and agents involved in the different stages of the writing process, namely the production, reception and preservation of written documents.’ ‘The New Culture of Archives in Early Modern Spain’ *European History Quarterly* 2016, Vol. 46(3): 546.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See Appendix B, Section 3 Institutional Memory & Organisational Culture

These definitions were provided in the hope that by having a clear distinction of both ‘institutional memory’ and ‘organisational culture’, the archivists would be able to better place themselves within their work environment and culture to determine what their specific role entailed. To scale this study in the larger field of cultural studies, a Scottish survey at the turn of the 21st century provides a parallel picture. In attempting to define culture through survey, the authors write of their methodology: ‘the first steps in the articulation of the meaning, value, function and administration of culture in the devolved Scotland were taken through public consultation in 1999.’⁵⁰ And while their study revolved around trying to set up public policy, the importance of articulation of meaning through definition is still crucial in the first steps of attempting to understand the cultural norms and behaviours of Oklahoma archivists.

Theory versus practice is an ongoing discussion in the professional organisation journals in the United States. In order to understand the day-to-day job responsibilities of archivists – are they focused more on theory or practice – the survey next asked the archivists to think about and identify their daily work routines. The question in Figure 3.8 lists the options I identified as typical in an archival setting. However, since the survey allowed for additional data fields to be added, the author also wanted the respondents to be able to self-identify job roles which may have been missed in the creation of the survey. Within the open-endedness of the question, all forty-three

⁵⁰ Anne Bonnar, ‘What does culture mean to you? The practice and process of consultation on cultural policy in Scotland since devolution,’ *Cultural Trends* 23, 3 (July 2014): p.136. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2014.925278>> [accessed 10 September 2018]

Figure 3.8 Viewpoint of Position in the Archives

How do you view your position at the archives?
(select all that apply)

- Preservation specialist
- Organization specialist
- Information specialist
- Local historian
- Selection specialist
- Tour guide
- Storyteller
- Data entry and/or file clerk
- Collector
- Exhibitor
- Digital archivist or Digitization specialist
- Other...
- Add option

participants provided an answer about their self-identified job responsibility. Ten self-identified only one responsibility, even when given multiple options. One person identified sixteen, choosing to add five additional roles and responsibilities beyond those provided in the survey options. Twenty-three persons (or over half) identified between four and seven roles they play within their respective organisations. This leads to the conclusion many archivists working with the state of Oklahoma are performing many different and varied functions with their repositories, from data entry *and* tour guides to

preservation specialists and administrators.

In order to get a better idea of the main job responsibility the participants self-identified, I repeated the question in Figure 3.8 but pressed the surveyors to choose only their main or top responsibility. Each of the following categories had only one participant select it as their main responsibility: Administration, Educator, Data Entry and/or File Clerk, Facility Administration, Outreach Specialist, Registrar, Selection Specialist, and Storyteller. The largest category, Preservation Specialist, had fourteen people claim it as their top role. Four respondents self-identified as Information Specialists and four as Digital Archivists or Digitization Specialists. Another five chose an Organisational Specialist. Rounding out the responses, two identified as Collector and the last six as Local Historian. Even when pushed to select only one, many archivists identified position titles with multiple responsibilities, such as Administrator or Information Specialist. These last two roles typically require oversight of other employees, working with other departments like Information Technology, or having a liaison role in more academic institutions. The assumption inferred from the data is that even when an Oklahoma archivist is forced to narrow responsibilities down to one, many still picked titles and/or roles with numerous responsibilities.

Joanne Birkl and Anne Cooke’s seminal definition of a “small” archives...by its personnel quotient—one or less than one full-time staff member, in other words, the “lone arrangers” lays the foundation for discussing solo or small staffed repositories.⁵¹

⁵¹ Anne Cooke and Jo Birkl, ‘Small Archives or.... The Plight of the Lone Arranger,’ *Archives & Manuscripts* 22, 2 (1 November 1994): p.330
<<https://publications.archivists.org.au/index.php/asa/article/view/8437>> [accessed 2 May 2023]

The authors go on to address the workload phenomenon of the lone arranger in the following manner:

Most sole archivists struggle to find time for the basic archival tasks. Their limited time will be spent on the general administrative tasks, planning, budgeting, report writing and correspondence. They will also be responsible for all reference services, and will usually provide quite detailed research in response to queries.⁵²

Birkl and Cooke's creation of the term still resonates nearly thirty years later, the lone arranger as a work type identity corresponding with the amount and type of responsibilities performed. Ideas within the article so permeated the professional landscape that Christina Zamon expanded them into a 2012 book titled *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository*. Zamon defines the term 'lone arranger' as 'those of us who work alone or with only part-time or volunteer staff', offering that such positions exist, at least within the United States, in greater abundance than larger multi-staffed organisations.⁵³ Many of the forty-three Oklahoma archivist respondents see themselves as 'specialists' but also as 'lone' fitting into the 'many tasks, not enough time' category. Further substantiation of this could be done with the institution's names and staff sizes matched up with the respondents. However, many participants did not provide a personal or repository name in the optional name field. If they chose to provide one, they may now be retired or have moved out of state for employment. Gathering and identifying this data would require an additional survey or a different survey altogether. It is suggested that further research could be done within this area at another time.

⁵² Ibid, p.334.

⁵³ Christina Zamon, *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2012, p.1.

In 2023, the SAA endorsed the ‘Best Practices for Archival Term Positions’ as an external standard. It brings to the forefront the funding crisis in LAMs, pointing out that temporary or term labour is detrimental on many fronts. In the document, the committee identify several areas of concern, the first being the impact upon the individual: ‘Relying on contract work often results in a lack of investment in creating position lines for permanent, direct employees and enables institutions to avoid creating and supporting sustainable staffing models.’⁵⁴ The second major area identified is the impact on the institution itself. The working group reports, ‘Relying on project work is unsustainable in the long term and often antithetical to institutional goals and needs, resulting in high turnover, unfinished work, and a loss of institutional memory.’⁵⁵ The last area of concern relates to the diversification of the LAM profession through DEI programs. The committee states: ‘Diversity initiatives must come hand-in-hand with long-term investment in people.’⁵⁶ Institutions across the profession, not only in Oklahoma, need to recognise the harm they do to not only the people they employ temporarily but also to themselves by the use of continual short-term labour.

Sustainability becomes impossible when continual turnover exists. The toll placed on permanent positions to onboard and train new employees cyclically limits the job functions and tasks they can sufficiently perform. Because archivists are so key in institutional memory and organisational culture, the constant turnover places both in a state of flux. Beyond the working group’s identification of diversity, individual, and

⁵⁴ Alison Clemens, Courtney Dean, Angel Diaz, Margaret Hughes, Monika Lehman, Lauren McDaniel, Kit Messick, et al., ‘Best Practices for Archival Term Positions,’ *OSF* published 21 March 2023, pp.1-15, p.4 <[doi:10.17605/OSF.IO/A4ZC8](https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/A4ZC8)> [accessed 7 October 2023]

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.6.

organisation, I believe the larger community the repository serves both in space and partnership is negatively affected as well. The sustainability of employees then becomes a key factor in providing an organisation with a workforce which can learn and grow from each other. For an example of workforce decrease in Oklahoma’s LAMs, see Figure 3.9 below.

Figure 3.9 FY22 Budget Performance Review, Oklahoma Department of Libraries⁵⁷

FY'21 Budgeted FTE								
Division #	Division Name	Supervisors	Classified	Unclassified	\$0 - \$35 K	\$35 K - \$70 K	\$70 K - \$\$\$	
10	Administration	4	5	3	1	5		2
20	Service to Libraries	5	17	0	3	14		0
30	Government Information Services	3	9	0	3	6		0
88	IT and Telecommunications	0	0	0	0	0		0
Total		12	31	3	7	25		2

FTE History						
Division #	Division Name	2021 Budgeted	2020	2019	2017	2012
10	Administration	8.0	9.0	9.0	10.0	14.0
20	Service to Libraries	17.0	17.0	16.5	19.0	19.0
30	Government Information Service	9.0	9.0	8.1	9.0	13.0
88	Information Technology	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total		34.0	35.0	33.6	38.0	46.0

From the ODL Fiscal Year 2022 budget, we can see the number and salary ranges of employees, as well as the division in which they are employed. In many cases, the stable archival workforce does not exist in Oklahoma; thus, capturing the grassroots organising and generational voices is vital in demonstrating the resilience of Oklahoma’s archival employees.

Beyond the problems of term labour positions, intergenerational workforce issues arise as well. In the context of the strength of workplaces which foster cooperation and learning among intergenerational employees, the lone archivist model held in the state of Oklahoma becomes problematic. When only one person is employed within an institution, the knowledge and skill-building needed to foster growth and problem-

⁵⁷ Melody Kellogg, Director, Natalie Currie, Deputy Director, ‘FY22 Budget Performance Review, Oklahoma Department of Libraries,’ *Oksenate.gov* published January 2021
<https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/FY%2022%20ODL%20Budget%20Request.pdf>
 [accessed 7 October 2023]

solving becomes non-existent. It does not matter what generational grouping the archivist falls into if they are the only employee. New studies on workplace loneliness, which can correlate to working solo in an archival repository, point to it doing ‘harm to an organization as well as its employees’ and point to outcomes like ‘an employee’s engagement and commitment’ as a direct result of workplace loneliness.⁵⁸ Thus, having solo, single person, or a lone archivist in repositories around the state of Oklahoma is, in fact, doing harm to the larger work of the preservation of Oklahoma’s historical record. In response, archivists are organising at grassroots levels to combat the isolation and political pressures under which they operate. Thus, the need for an archival community becomes even more integral to successful long-term archival employees state-wide.

Archivists, as I have underlined in the introduction, have multiple overlapping responsibilities; giving contributors the opportunity to explore their own perception of their key responsibilities highlights how they situate themselves professionally as well as locally within a repository. Of the forty-three participants, eight chose not to elaborate on their responses. Of the remaining thirty-five participants, some provided brief but insightful reasons, while others more fully elaborated on their choice. Of those five respondents who selected Information Specialist as their main role, one said ‘it seems to be the thing that best encompasses the variety of tasks I have to undertake each day.’ Another provided, ‘I am a processing archivist, mostly, but a [sic] wear many hats related

⁵⁸ Payal Anand and Sushanta Kumar Mishra, ‘Proximal and distal causes of workplace loneliness: An exploratory study,’ *Academy of Management Proceedings* published online 9 June 2018 <<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2018.13827abstract>> [accessed 2 May 2023]; Hyo Sun Jung, Min Kyung Song, and Hye Hyun Yoon, ‘The Effects of Workplace Loneliness on Work Engagement and Organizational Commitment: Moderating Roles of Leader-Member Exchange and Coworker Exchange,’ *Sustainability* 13, 2 (2021): p.948. <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020948>> [accessed 2 May 2023]

to information.’ And a third of the four said they were the ‘only source of historical information available to the organisation.’ All three of these narratives point back to the ‘lone’ mentioned in the previous question – the ‘many hats’, the ‘only source’, and the ‘variety of tasks’ vocabulary.

Preservation Specialists was the largest category recorded with fourteen. These fourteen had some informative responses as to why they selected the choice they did. One rather lengthy respondent wrote, ‘many organizations don’t understand they must actively preserve their histories. They don’t try, they don’t pass along information to the archives, but they expect all sorts of answers about the past. And they don’t always understand why we don’t know the answers.’ Another put it this way: ‘I must first and foremost preserve the collection through archiving so that I may then proceed with telling the stories through the development of gallery exhibitions.’ A more concise answer was given by another respondent ‘posterity for future generations is key’. Four others who self-identified as Preservation Specialists focused more on the day-to-day work in their answers: ‘The proper care and maintenance of the collection is my primary duty’, ‘It is my job to preserve the archival collections’, ‘The film I work with needs preservation or else it won’t be able to be digitised at all,’ and ‘I take care of art’. While these answers may not be as philosophical about the preservation of items as the first three, it is evident that all of these professionals can identify what it is about being a Preservation Specialist that makes them unique. Further, other aspects of their roles can be garnered from words like ‘film’, ‘art’, ‘stories’, ‘digitised’, and ‘gallery exhibitions’ showing even while they chose only one role – to identify as a Preservation Specialist – this choice still extended

into other areas like ‘Digitization Specialist’ or ‘Storyteller’, other provided options on the survey.

The second largest group had six respondents who self-identified as a Local Historian. One person put their main role this way: ‘There are a lot of responsibilities required of my job, and while I preserve, organise, digitise, etc., I’m absorbing information within the archives that I can then recall on a tour or in a team meeting. And I probably annoy my family with historical tid bits [sic] about every where [sic] we go in OKC and surrounding areas.’ Apparently there is some spill over into this person’s home life from their work life. Another said this of being a Local Historian: ‘While I preserve and organise records it’s the sharing of this information that makes what I do valuable. The value I bring is being able to answer the historical questions or be the local historian because I’ve organised the information to be able to find the answer.’ The testimony of value and the ability to obtain information is key to this archivist’s self-identity in the workplace.

The final three respondents shared perspectives on their self-identification as a Local Historian in the following way: ‘Local history is the primary aim of special collections in our library’, ‘I’m the person who started actively collecting our site’s stories and artifacts (storytelling was my second choice)’, and ‘I’m a writer and enjoy researching plus the history must be retained and told for future generations.’ From these last responses, evidence of non-traditional archival methods, i.e. grassroots or community-based as opposed to transfer of materials within organisations and the active seeking of donors related to a specific collection development policy, can be seen through the verbiage of ‘local history...our library’ and ‘actively collecting our site’s stories’.

Also the importance of retention for ‘future generations’ and ‘primary aim’ point back to the priority of the institutional memory of the organisations. Thus, those professionals who self-identified more as Local Historian work hand-in-hand or from the ground up with community-based and community-centred archives and libraries.

Of the five who self-identified as Organisational Specialists and four who identified as Digitization Specialists, only three within each area chose to provide further information in the open-ended option. The three Organisational Specialists said ‘cataloging and arrangement and description are my main interest and we have a small archives staff so they are my responsibility also’, I am a ‘director of a number of archivist and specialists, I supervise and direct them to collect preserve and provide access to Oklahoma history’, and ‘Processing Archivist’. Two focused specifically on more traditional archival tasks like processing, cataloguing, and arrangement. The third respondent, the ‘director’ could also have chosen to select Administration but instead focused more on the preservation and access of Oklahoma specific materials, again relying on the more traditional terms and roles of archival practitioners. Thus, those three Organisational Specialists who chose to provide context to their answer point back to archival terms and practices that have been foundational in United States archival practice. Digitization Specialist is a more recent position as materials are born digital and those on older formats are facing data loss without migration and digitization.⁵⁹ For those

⁵⁹ With the supercomputer’s advent and technological innovation jumps, libraries and archives began wrestling with digital preservation from the beginning of digitisation. As early as 1992, problems with tape media emerged in archives while new technologies emerged on a parallel timeline. One archivist proposed, ‘Preservation in this new age must respond from good management... [and] the new law is that with each new storage medium, archivists must re-examine their theory and expect to meet new preservation challenge.’ Frederick J. Stielow, ‘Archival Theory and the Preservation of Electronic Media: Opportunities and Standards below the Cutting Edge,’ *The American Archivist* 55, 2 (1992): pp.332-43, p.343 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40293646>>. A 1999 article then raised the question of digital storage versus

respondents who selected to identify as a Digitization Specialist chose the following ways to elaborate on their primary choice: 'I view the above as my main responsibility because it was the area that needed the most support at the institution where I worked in Oklahoma. It has since become the core of my career', 'I maintain and collect very specific audio-visual material,' and 'primarily worked in Archives and with libraries and museums on digital projects and digitization of materials.' The niche of digitization skills and archival digitization specialists is a growing and much needed specialisation; the self-identification of these specialists use different vocabulary from traditional archival roles in describing their functions in the workplace. The first simply put it was 'needed' and now it is the 'core of my career.' The word choice selected showed the initiative of one person to see a need and fill a gap within an organisation, which has since directed their own archival career path. The second person also articulated the niche job of 'very specific audio-visual material' as well as the third identifying the 'digital projects' and 'digitization of materials'. Thus this self-identification of Digitization Specialist appears

digital preservation saying, 'Preservation means keeping the stored information cataloged, accessible, and usable on current media, which requires constant effort and expense. Furthermore, while contemporary information has economic value and pays its way, there is no business case for archives, so the creators or original collectors of digital information rarely have the incentive – or skills, or continuity-to preserve their material. It's a task for long-lived non-profit organizations such as libraries, universities, and government agencies, which may or may not have the mandate and funding to do the job.' Stewart Brand, 'Escaping the Digital Dark Age,' *Library Journal* 124, 2 (1999): pp. 46-48, p.47. <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=1474780&site=ehost-live>>. Thus funding began to enter the dialogue of storage versus preservation. Since the burning of the Museum Nacional in Brazil of 3 Sept 2018 (see Dom Phillips, 'Brazil museum fire: "incalculable" loss as 200-year-old Rio institution gutted,' *The Guardian* 3 September 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/03/fire-engulfs-brazil-national-museum-rio>> [accessed 9 October 2018]) many from both within and without the archival community have raised a cry of the importance of funding (see BBC News Latin America, 'Brazil museum fire: Funding cuts blamed as icon is gutted,' *BBC News* 3 September 2018 <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45398084>> [accessed 9 October 2018]), staffing (see Manuela Andreoni, Ernesto Londoño, and Lis Moriconi, 'Double Blow to Brazil Museum: Neglect, Then Flames,' *The New York Times* 3 September 2018 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/world/americas/brazil-museum-fire.html>> [accessed 9 October 2018]) and digitization (see Emily Dreyfuss, 'Brazil's Museum Fire Proves Cultural Memory Needs a Digital Backup,' *Wired* 7 September 2018 <<https://www.wired.com/story/brazil-museum-fire-digital-archives/>> [accessed 9 October 2018]), three themes which are constant in this paradigm.

to be more unique with less overlap of skills than some of the other areas respondents chose.

The last remaining groups of archivists' self-identification are not really able to be categorized into larger specific groupings. Two respondents identified as 'Collector' and two identified as 'Administration or Facility Administration'. The Collectors said of their roles: 'the last archive in which I was employed started from the ground floor. We were all about getting the collection started,' and 'I am the Senior Curator at the museum, responsible for the entire collections.' Thus, these two individuals correctly identified their job as collector or curator of materials for the archives and museums in which they are employed. The Administration individual said, 'I do more overseeing of overall work now than actually collection management on a day-to-day level.' As an administrator, they have fully moved into a supervisory position rather than a more traditional archivist role. The Facility Administration respondent addressed the role of the job by saying, 'My mandate is to run the facility and manage the staff.' Larger staffed archives, as opposed to the lone arranger type of institutions mentioned previously, would be the ones who are able to employ administrative positions. Thus, staff size and institution size do play a role in how an archivist chooses to self-identify.

Of the last six areas offered on the survey, only two were selected from the offered list. The two selected from the list were Storyteller and Data Entry and/or File Clerk. The Storyteller wrote, 'All I do [is] provides [sic] those who use our resources with a story,' while the Data Entry person offered this portrait of their activities: 'I am the person who does most of the filing for the business files. I also catalog all books that are accessioned into the library database.' The Storyteller could also have chosen to identify

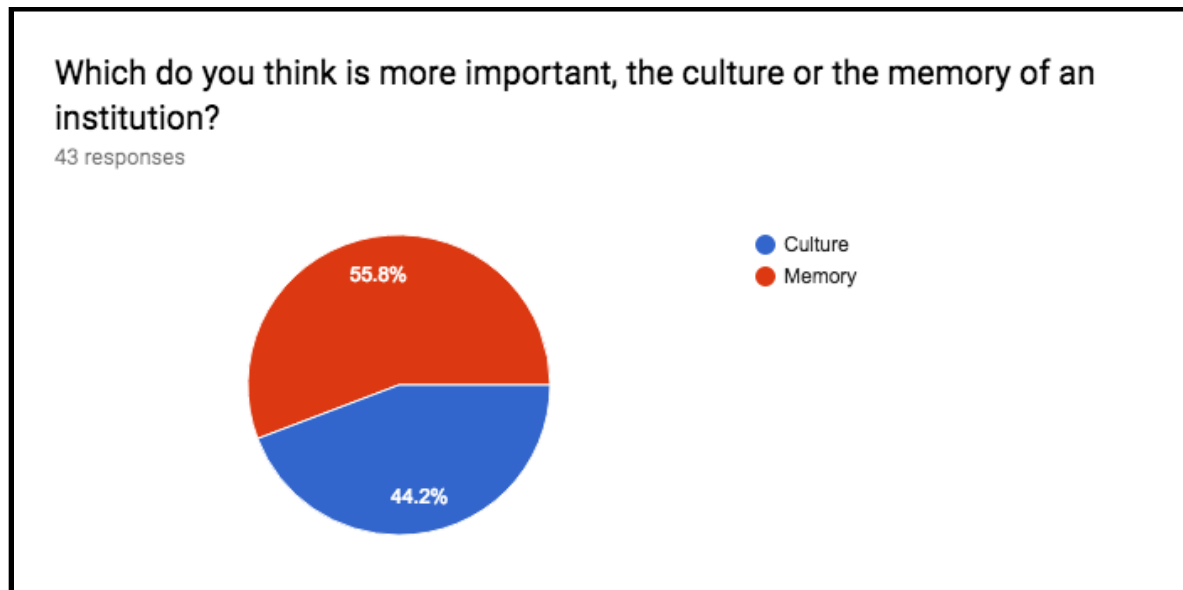
as Local Historian, as the provision of story and facts on local history overlap. The Data Entry person could also have chosen to select 'Other' and add 'Cataloging Librarian' as a possible second option since they reported adding books into the database. These two participants were the last who self-identified from the available options provided on the survey. Thus, these last two respondents who opted to select from the given list of titles also offered additional information to be able to place them within other areas as well.

The other four respondents self-identified as 'Other' and wrote in answers as to the nature of their chosen role with only three who chose to elaborate on what those roles meant in an organisation. The Educator did not elaborate on the self-selected title, probably in the hopes that it would be self-explanatory to the researcher. The other three elaborated somewhat more on their chosen identities. The first identified as an Outreach Specialist describing their work as 'people must know about and use the collection to keep funding.' The second identified as a Registrar reporting, 'it is my primary job duty and my job title.' The third, the Selection Specialist, identified more specifically in the nature of the materials being collected: 'I collected materials from all the college's [sic] and universities in Oklahoma to preserve the history of higher education in Oklahoma.' The fourth focused on the knowledge of the collections and making them known to others. Thus, the identification of Outreach, even though it was not on the list provided, is a valid option for an archivist to choose as their job self-identification. The second is more closely related to both a title and a job role within an institution. The third could have chosen Collector, but instead went for a more specific identity of the type of collector, a selector of materials related to colleges and universities in Oklahoma. To recap, the open-ended nature of the survey question allowed the archivists to explain

what they viewed as their main title and why they viewed their main job responsibility within the institution as they did. Of the forty-three participants, thirty-five chose to elaborate on their self-identification selection. Of those thirty-five, only four chose to self-select as ‘Other’, naming another role not provided on the initial survey. By allowing archivists to self-select their main job roles and responsibilities, more is learned about the day-to-day activities which occur in Oklahoma repositories.

The next three questions on the survey probed the archivists for motives of how and in what ways they feel they contribute or do not contribute to both institutional memory and organisational culture. When asked to pick between the two, there was an apparent split as to what the archivists viewed as more important (see Figure 3.10).

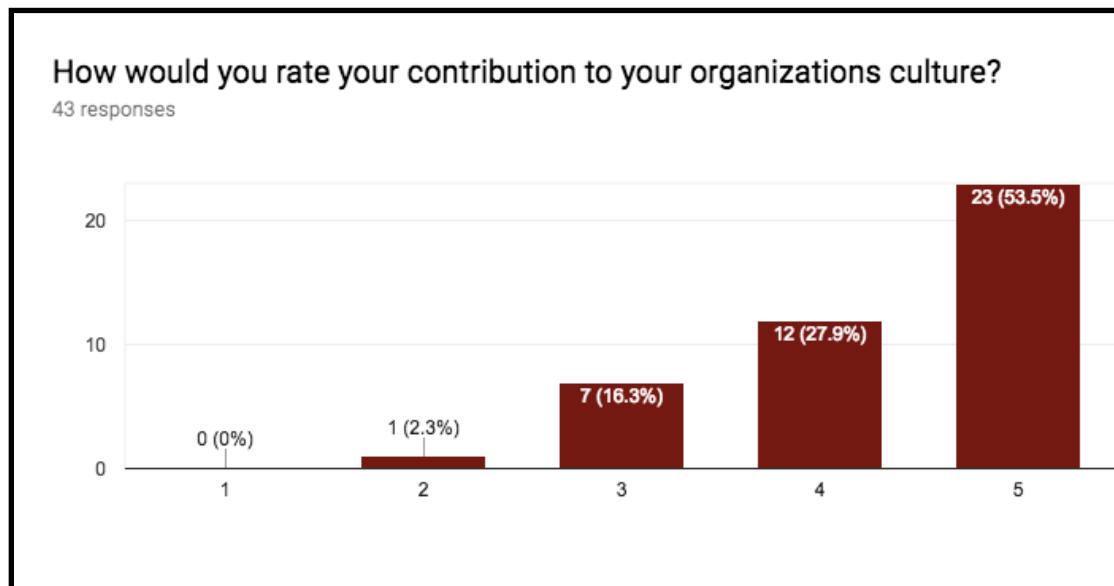
Figure 3.10 Is Culture or Memory more important for an institution?



Twenty-four of the respondents answered that the memory of an institution is more important than the culture; the other nineteen selected the culture of an organisation as more important than the memory. Thus the definition provided by Charlotte Linde of stories which ‘are the central element of the institution’s memory: the parts of the past

that are so important that they are always included,’ appear to have a slightly weightier connotation to Oklahoma’s archivists rather than the definition of Antonio Castillo Gómez’ ‘fully part of the history of written culture.’⁶⁰ To find out more about this split in archivist’s perception of their importance, additional questions immediately follow related to their own placement on the Likert Scale. The next two questions within the survey asked the respondents on a scale of one to five (with one being ‘not a big contributor’ and five being ‘contribute a lot’) how they would rank themselves as a contributor to their organisation’s culture and to their organisation’s institutional memory. No one answered ‘not a big contributor’ on either scale meaning no one selected the lowest option. See Figures 3.11 and 3.12 for a full breakdown of how the respondents answered. More telling is the fact that thirty-five selected a four or a five on

Figure 3.11 Rating Contribution to Organisation’s Culture

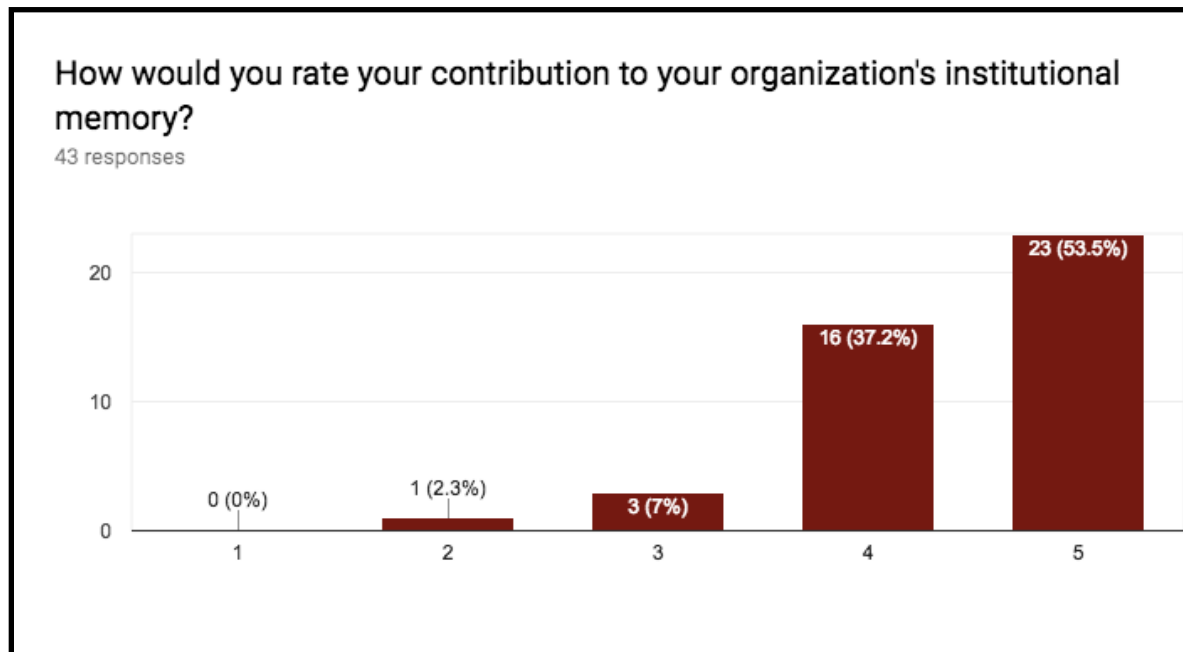


the ‘contribute a lot’ side as it relates to culture and thirty-nine selected a four or a five on the ‘contribute a lot’ side as it relates to their organisation’s institutional memory. For

⁶⁰ Linde, *Working the Past*, p.95; Gómez, *European History Quarterly*, p.546.

a deeper understanding of why archivists chose to respond on the high side of the scale in both questions, a closer examination of the answers they provided in their open-ended answers to ‘In what ways do you feel you contribute’ to both the culture and the memory.

Figure 3.12 Rating Contribution to Organisation’s Institutional Memory



As it concerns contribution to an organisation’s culture, eight of the respondents ranked themselves as a two or three. The thinking of these persons may have had more to do with personal preference or personality than actual contribution. One person bluntly stated, ‘I do not like to engage with people nor attend events.’ Another phrased it this way: ‘There is a clear divide between the archivists and the administration in my organization so I do not often participate.’ Still a third elaborated in this way ‘I may contribute more then [sic] I think, But I think of the archives as neutral - we take stuff in, we preserve it, we answer questions.’ And a fourth one answered, ‘I feel I play an important though often misunderstood part in our organization.’ The last two answers are not as clear in stating a personal preference, but the vocabulary of ‘more then [sic] I

think' and 'often misunderstood' shed light on their lower score on the importance of organisational culture.

The other four respondents in the two and three bar graphs, as seen in Figure 3.11, focus more on the endeavours of work as opposed to personal preference. Words like 'participate' and 'participation' and phrases like 'support of colleagues' and 'provide the knowledge and tools' give a better understanding of their views on organisational culture. They see themselves as the active part, helping others through the resources and information which have been collected, cultivated, and utilised. One person succinctly worded it this way: 'doubled the size of the archives in 30+ years.' Yet these four respondents still only ranked themselves as a two or three on the scale in their contribution. Archivist's ranking of their own contributions to organisational culture are lower than their reported interplay within the organisation.

Those who ranked themselves on the Likert Scale as a four totalled twelve of the participants. Their rationale for the self-selected ranking on their contribution to organisational culture is more closely tied to the organisation itself. Two people spoke of the 'mission' of the organisation. One spoke of having 'changed the perspective and vision of the institution'. Mission and vision statements are key to providing employees a clear picture of what an organisation is and does. In a recent article from inside the literature of the business world, scholars Moore, Ellsworth and Kaufman claim, '...we may be so used to talking about visions and missions in the traditional way (which tends to produce useless pabulum) that we're numb to the topic – but well-defined visions and missions remain critical elements for effective strategic planning. Both say where we're

headed; that's a big deal.'⁶¹ While commonplace in many organisations, mission and vision statements still help both employees and stakeholders define organisational culture. Thus, the respondents who scored themselves higher on their contribution are familiar with the mission and/or vision of their parent organisation and find value in the knowledge of their archival role within said mission documents.

Most libraries, museums, and archives would be considered service-oriented entities; thus, it is easy to see why many of the respondents provided service-oriented responses as to the nature of their contribution. Words like 'created', 'collected', 'training', and 'model' are used in self-defining the services they have offered, as they relate to organisational culture. One respondent put it this way:

I strive to provide useful context and mutual respectful support to all staff members, and take a key role in helping new staff to understand the organization's mission and various functions. I participate in the employee appreciation committee, conduct periodic collections storage tours for staff, disseminate relevant curatorial department, collections care, exhibition and integrated pest management information to staff. I endeavour to maintain a positive, professional and supportive approach to my colleagues, whom I consider to be my primary customers. As a non-profit entity, it is imperative that all employees respect and understand not only the roles of other staff members, but also the individual qualities that each person brings to the table, from the executive director to administration team to exhibits personnel to housekeeping and maintenance. We share a trench, and depend upon each other.

This notion of sharing responsibilities and performing varied tasks across the organisation is a common descriptor, no matter how the person ranked themselves on the survey. However, the knowledge everyone is contributing in some form in their role does create a 'shared trench' workforce, no matter if the respondents ranked themselves as a

⁶¹ Stephanie L. Moore, James B. Ellsworth, and Roger Kaufman, 'Visions and Missions: Are They Useful? A Quick Assessment,' *Performance Improvement* 50, 6 (July 2011): pp.15-24, p.15
<<https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.20222>>

two or a five. Thus, many who work in LAM organisations in Oklahoma have some element of service as part of their self-perception.

As for the largest group, those who ranked themselves as fives, they used words and phrases like ‘expertise’, ‘experience’, ‘diverse knowledge’, and ‘capturing current history as it unfolds’ in defining their role in organisational culture. They identify their roles and responsibilities as ongoing, vital, and active. One of the fives described their view of their own contribution in the following way: ‘without the information collected there would be virtually no museum or resource center.’ This suggests the person identified both the value of the work they do and its connection to the parent organisation as indispensable. This is unsurprising as this group of fives composed fifty-three percent of the answers provided on the graph in Figure 3.11. This also correlates to the pie chart in Figure 3.10, even though the number is slightly less when forced to pick between the importance of organisational culture and institutional memory. Still another five who took the survey presented their argument this way: ‘The archives serves [sic] as the institutional memory for my organization. How we are viewed in the future will be determined by what we preserve today. Making people on my campus aware of this has created a culture of people donating their materials to the archives to preserve for future generations.’ Even though the question specifically queried views on organisational culture, this archivist took it one step further, linking both the past, present, and future of the organisation to the institutional memory of their organisation. Perhaps this is because both definitions were given before respondents were asked to elaborate. More likely, the belief is that the goal of archives is to link together time through knowledge and documentation, while archivists endeavour for the creation of organisational culture

through institutional memory. But if we conclude this to be correct, we must be aware of those forgotten instances placed upon those who collect. As Kenneth E. Foote reminds us,

For archivists, the idea of archives as memory is more than a metaphor. The documents and artifacts they collect are important resources for extending the spatial and temporal range of human communication. This view implies that attitudes toward the past, as well as visions of the future, can sometimes condition collecting policies...Theorists must eventually come to terms with how archives, as communicational resources, are to be related to other means of memory conservation, and why some events are so well documented and stir so much interest while others leave such a small mark on the historical record, to the point where archives become a memory of last resort.⁶²

Even as they collect and contribute, as they remember and preserve, archivists must continue to be aware of gaps in the historical record to which they are contributing. Having self-identified as being high contributors to their organisational culture, Oklahoma archivists must be aware of the institution's memory as well, when it comes to Foote's 'communicational resources'. Otherwise, the archives will become a 'memory of last resort.' By utilising archivists' own memories through oral history, as this thesis does, the archivist is firmly placed within their parent organisation and larger historical record.

Archivists as Memory Carriers within Institutions

Next, I pursued an examination of the survey respondents' answers in relation to how they self-perceive their contributions to institutional memory. I surmised before interpreting the data that some might identify as a gap filler in an institution's memory,

⁶² Kenneth E. Foote, 'To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,' *American Archivists* 53 (Summer 1990): p.392.

while others might feel more tied to the top-down decisions implemented on them by their parent organisation. The spectrum of self-identification required more than just a simple yes or no scale. The bar graph in Figure 3.12 is almost identical to the bar graph in Figure 3.11, which shows that over half of the respondents felt they contributed a five on a Likert Scale of one to five, where five is ‘contribute a lot’ and one is ‘not a big contributor’. Those individuals who ranked themselves as a two or a three on the same sliding scale as the previous discussion felt they did not do enough work to contribute a lot. One such person communicated they were only part of ‘correcting records’, or they are still in the process of determining what the institutional memory is of their organisation. Another person said, ‘My organization is relatively new, so there is not much opportunity to share stories of the past’ while a different respondent described their identification of it as ‘try[ing] to find the institutional memory here and build forward [sic] movement.’ Thus, those who ranked themselves lower on the graph either self-identified a less important role in their contribution or were still trying to build momentum in identifying and retaining institutional memory from the ground up.

The second largest group of respondents, sixteen, ranked themselves as a four on the one to five scale. The reasons they self-identified as contributing to institutional memory are varied. Many times, the persons identified years of work and knowledge at the institution as epitomising their contribution. One person said it this way: ‘As one of the longest-serving curatorial staff members, I have a great deal of institutional memory that helps to fill in gaps and enhance staff understanding of past and current goals/objectives; I am also very diligent about forwarding each previous year’s pertinent departmental records to our organization’s institutional archivist for future reference as

needed.’ Not only are they relied upon for their experience, but for the cohesion they bring to documented practices and procedures, in essence, creating a paper trail for future generations, once their own personal memory has moved on. Another long-time employee had this to say: ‘With changes in leadership at the library, long-time employees are sometimes overlooked in the new decision-making process. We are not always consulted.’ Having the institutional memory of an organisation does not always translate into involvement in the organisation's decision-making processes. However, a different respondent bridged both the paper trail and the being overlooked: ‘I am able to record new oral histories as well as digitize all the old oral histories, as well as the recordings of institutional milestones.’ While all organisations are not active in collecting their long-time employee's oral history, those that do value the idea that these are ‘milestones’ within an organisation to be collected and digitised. Their voices become integral as archivists seek value in their work through the longevity that they provide an organisation.

Many others within this group who identified as four on the scale did not shy away from their active participation in institutional memory, even though only one participant in the four categories mentioned oral history. Several others contributed to the memory by written word – they ‘wrote annual histories of organization’ or ‘have written many things that pertain to institutional history’. One even said they are ‘trying to learn all I can from previous documentation’. Thus, the written word is still vital to the passage of knowledge from one individual to another, whether in the form of histories, goals, objectives, documentation of various kinds, or those records transferred from one area of an organisation to another for permanent storage and retention. All these electronic

records and paper documents still play a crucial role in the contribution towards institutional memory, at least from the viewpoint of those who took the survey.

As seen in Figure 3.11, the largest percentage of respondents in Figure 3.12 self-identified as a five on the contribution scale, comprising over half of the total percentage of respondents. As with those who ranked themselves a four, those that ranked themselves a five appear to have a vested career within the parent organisation and felt that this longevity contributed greatly to their knowledge of institutional memory. Their contribution is demonstrated through the ‘years of service’ mentioned by one person, a second saying they have been at the organisation ‘from the ground up’, and the coincidence of two different respondents crediting twenty-plus years of employment as positively influencing their knowledge base. In fact, one of these twenty year plus employees said they were a ‘veteran employee and as a historian, naturally, I *am* the institution’s memory’. Thus, those who ranked themselves highest on their contribution to institutional memory took ownership of it.

Memory was tied to the length of employment in many of the responses. However, only one respondent who identified as a four mentioned the taking of oral histories, despite the provided definition on the survey by Charlotte Linde and her argument that ‘oral tellings of these stories are extremely important for arguing for the existence of a core institutional memory.’⁶³ Retirement and other workforce transitions vacate these positions leaving no one able to tell the history beyond the documentation. Point in case, one archivist alluded to the concern of memory loss upon leaving their organisation: ‘I have recently retired from my organization and will not be contributing to

⁶³ Linde, *Working the Past*, p.95.

the memory process. I have concerns for the future of this process due to Administration values.’ Bridging the gaps in the memory of any organisation or institution amidst the changing administrators, governing boards, and the evolving importance of an institution’s value to the community is a paramount concern to those who retire from an organisation.

Archival practitioners Kahn, Evans, and Hinding wrote in the mid-1970s about the self-taught archivists of the early twentieth century, generalising that the archival profession had not been established and respected by society at large. They argue, however, that ‘a minority [of us] believed that this respect and acceptance would come only with the passing of time and ... by making ourselves and our work indispensable to others and by demonstrating our professional quality over a long period of time.’⁶⁴

Today’s 21st-century archivists, who have put in the ‘passing of time’ for as many as twenty-plus years, still fear the memory loss accompanying workforce transitions and loss of institutional memory when colleagues retire or move on. Within memory studies of Oklahoma, archivists and the roles they play in contributing to the historical record can often be found in the acknowledgements of other works, their place in the guidance of the process apparent. Linenthal credits the help he received in his work about the OKC

Bombing Memorial in the following way:

My early visits were mostly spent in the archives, where the Foundation’s curator of collections, Jane Thomas, guided me through, for example, the massive collections of documents, artifacts, and design competition boards. She also identified and often called people she thought it was important for me to meet. Without her energetic and enduring help this book would not have been possible. It was often very difficult working with certain materials in a setting where the human cost of the bombing was everywhere. Jane, Carol Brown, Charles Spain, Arlean Todd – who kept us well stocked with chocolate chip cookies – June

⁶⁴ Herman Kahn, Frank B. Evans, and Andrea Hinding, ‘Documenting American Cultures Through Three Generations: Change and Continuity,’ *The American Archivist* 38, 2 (April 1975): p.149-150.

Ranney and Brad Robison made each day in the archive a special one. I will treasure those times forever.⁶⁵

The importance of allowing these self-identified persons to have a place in the historical record allows their voices to move beyond the thanks, credit, and acknowledgements of other scholars. These individuals continue to show up and guide others along their research journeys, helping them to think critically about the information they encounter through the research process. This is where this thesis shines, in making a case for taking oral histories of late-career or retired archivists, as a point of reference and institutional knowledge for the next archivist as well as the state's historical record.

Still, another large group who self-identified as fives – a five on a scale of one to five, where five is 'contribute a lot' and one is 'not a big contributor' – on the survey discussed the organisation's processes and procedures as well as the cleaning up of duplicated materials and complicated record structures as key to their contribution (see Figure 3.12). One person 'create[ed] a clear and easy to navigate filing system for the organization's files' while another one reported 'there was no central organization...now it is all centralized.' Both respondents pointed back to the effectiveness of an efficient and non-redundant organisational system. Many said things like 'I created', 'I maintain', 'I save', and 'I have spent considerable time' to demonstrate the active role they play on a day-to-day basis within knowledge management and access of an institution. One eloquently worded answer summed it up best: 'As an archivist, institutional memory is as important as the collections under my stewardship. It is the key to understanding the broader context of materials and the basis for my intervention in their structure and

⁶⁵ Edward T. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.x.

description.’ The connection between how archivists perceive and identify their ability to contextualise and break down barriers to access is integral to the work of all archivists and museum professionals. Oklahoma’s professionals know their responsibility to both professional standards and local needs.

Without context it is impossible to get a complete understanding of history. In the case of repositories, it is integral to survival to know the larger historical context within the geographic location as well as the local collections context related to donors, items, and other materials. The creation of context has risen in concern in recent years as record keeping and other library, museum, and archival functions are outsourced to non-professionals. A 2008 article speaking mainly to the privatisation of military functions pointed out ‘that outsourcing of such work to firms that do not have proper means for producing and keepings records of their work will lead to memory gaps with regard to certain crucial aspects of today’s security governance.’⁶⁶ However, none of the respondents specifically addressed this outsourcing even though changes in process, objectives, or administration were recorded through the survey. It is assumed that knowledge loss will occur should an organisation or institution look to outsourcing as a cost-saving measure.

A final point in the analysis of the information collected on the survey as it relates to archivists’ contributions to institutional memory: archives are ever-changing entities. They are not static but are dynamic. One respondent described their role and contribution as being:

⁶⁶ Frederik Rosén, ‘Off the record: outsourcing security and state building to private firms and the question of record keeping, archives, and collective memory,’ *Archival Science* 8 (2008):pp.1-14, p.2. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-008-9066-x>>

involved directly with the evolution of the division I worked with over my career. That includes the many collections brought in, but development of the division hierarchy. I am still called on to help answer questions about collections that we have and other details related to provenance, interaction with donors, and any details not included on the deed of gift.

Elisabeth Kaplan argues that this evolution is, in essence, the bias of the archives. She states ‘assumptions about identity, like assumptions about archives, can be outdated and dangerous. Archival work is critical in shaping history. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we are major players in the business of identity construction and identity politics.’⁶⁷ It goes to reason then, as archival theory continues to articulate the archive’s place in history, then archives themselves must adapt and change, evolving to fit the cultural climate of their collecting. The workforce roles archivists continue to perform through documentation, written, oral, and electronic, help in constructing the identity of those keepers of the historical record, the archivists themselves.

In summary, institutional memory and organisational culture are examined in relation to how survey respondents self-identify their place within their organisation. Archivists do this by identifying the nature of their work and ranking how they perceive their contributions to both institutional memory and organisational culture. While the data collected was evenly divided as to which was viewed more important – culture or memory – it demonstrates that archivists contribute heavily to both. Despite what current literature is revealing about the positionality of archivists in their collecting practices and organisational structures, many respondents still identified as the institutional memory of their organisation, whether a ‘lone arranger’ or working within a larger staffed repository,

⁶⁷ Elisabeth Kaplan, ‘We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,’ *The American Archivist* 63, 1 (Spring/Summer 2000): pp.126-151, p.147.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40283823>>

many fear the loss of that memory, or perhaps their own identity, when faced with retirement or changing governing bodies. Thus, by taking oral histories of these respondents, a more holistic and oriented picture of the nature of each organisation is obtained, and the memory that these resilient career archivists amassed is preserved, even as the practices and policies continue to evolve.

Institution Specific Information

The last and final section of the survey asked questions specifically related to the respondent's institution and their responsibilities and experiences within the organisation. Many of the questions were posed after a review of Oklahoma's current public workforce. This review examined the furlough of state employees, something the state of Oklahoma has implemented on and off since the turn of the century.⁶⁸ Being an oil and gas state, the budget has fluctuated along with the market demand. As reported by the Oklahoma Tax Commission, oil and gas percentages are '6% of Oklahoma taxable income for tax year 2021 and 4% for tax year 2022.'⁶⁹ The state budget affects all of Oklahoma's public employees, from archivists and state librarians to public school teachers and medical examiners, just to name a few. Thus the 2008 economic downturn affected all areas of state employees. A 2011 public policy document written by economists Moody and Warcholik stated that it takes eighteen private-sector Oklahomans

⁶⁸ I chose not to examine data earlier than 2000, since many archivists were either new or relatively new to the field and would not be impacted by furlough or they were not yet employed within archives.

⁶⁹ Oklahoma Tax Commission, *FY2022 Revenue and Appointment Report*, (2022)
<<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/tax/documents/resources/reports/annual-reports/otc/AR-2022.pdf>> [accessed 11 October 2023]

to support one person in the public sector.⁷⁰ Moody and Warcholik updated their data five months later with monetary figures stating:

In total, for 2010, there were 86,641 state government workers (including higher education) in Oklahoma, earning \$4,284,870,000 – or an average of \$49,455 per job. As a result, it would take a total of 1,533,925 private-sector jobs to fund Oklahoma’s state bureaucracy – more people than were employed in the private sector in 2010 (1,224,047).⁷¹

The teacher walk-out of 2018 also brought much attention to Oklahoma’s budgeting problems, as it especially centred on underpaid teachers in need of pay raises.⁷² These budgeting concerns are not anything new to the state and its employees, which include both archivists, state librarians, Oklahoma historical society employees, and other museum professionals.

The furloughs were not limited to the Oklahoma Historical Society and Oklahoma Department of Library employees. One investigator protesting the 2009 state furloughs of the Pardon and Parole Board said,

‘Christmas is going to be pretty bleak,’ said Bill W. Malone, 58, of Wanette. Malone is an investigator. ‘They (state officials) should not have cut the tax base,’ Malone said of recent tax cuts. He said morale in the agency, which has about 35 employees, is pretty low.⁷³

⁷⁰ J. Scott Moody and Wendy P. Warcholik, ‘How Many Oklahomans Does It Take to Fund One Government Job?’ *Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs* Website, 2 June 2011 <<https://ocpathink.org/post/how-many-oklahomans-does-it-take-to-fund-one-government-job>> [accessed 2 October 2023]

⁷¹ J. Scott Moody and Wendy P. Warcholik, ‘What’s the Largest Industry in Oklahoma? Government,’ *Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs* Website 7 November 2011 <<https://ocpathink.org/post/whats-the-largest-industry-in-oklahoma-government>> [accessed 11 October 2023]

⁷² Dana Goldstein and Elizabeth Dias, ‘Oklahoma Teachers End Walkout After Winning Raises and Additional Funding,’ *NY Times* 12 April 2018 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/us/oklahoma-teachers-strike.html>> {accessed 10 October 2018]

⁷³ Barbara Hoberock, ‘Some State Workers Protesting Furlough Days,’ *Tulsa World (OK)* 25 October 2009 [accessed 8 October 2018] <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=2W61587876180&site=ehost-live>>

One decade later, an Associated Press story reported on the 2017 special congressional session in mid-summer which called for a bipartisan meeting of ‘Republicans and Democrats us[ing] different strategies to find a way to achieve a stable state budget.’⁷⁴ The state has used furlough as a measure to save funds and achieve a stable budget on more than one occasion.⁷⁵ By asking respondents to identify if they were part of these occurrences of furlough, it allows for a better picture of economic pressures affecting historical preservation work in the Oklahoma LAM fields. As the previous Executive Director of the Historical Society, Dr. Bob Blackburn, once reported, ‘further cuts in the workforce will threaten the ability of the research and museum facility to meet educational and heritage tourism obligations.’⁷⁶ Not surprisingly then, almost one-third of those surveyed (30.2%) replied that they had been furloughed in their archival job. Thirteen of the forty-three people had been off work without pay in order to create a more stable budget for the state of Oklahoma. While not all respondents identified as state employees, many had jobs that are state funded. Thus, the state economic fluctuations, which led to emergency measures like the furlough of state employees, directly impacted

⁷⁴ Tim Talley, ‘Budget Woes Bring Oklahoma Lawmakers Back to State Capitol,’ *AP Regional State Report - Oklahoma*, Associated Press DBA Press Association, 29 July 2017. <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=APaa9639f802484074a861c59597329424&site=ehost-live>>

⁷⁵ In 2016 two days of furlough were mandated for all employees of the Oklahoma Historical Society. Journal Record Staff, ‘Historical Society Declares Two Days of Furlough,’ *The Journal Record (Oklahoma City, OK)*, 15 March 2016, <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=L54934921JROK&site=ehost-live>> [accessed 8 October 2018] while in 2010 after allotting six days of furlough up to another twelve were under consideration. Journal Record Staff, ‘More Furloughs Possible for Oklahoma Historical Society,’ *Journal Record Legislative Report (Oklahoma City, OK)*, 29 January 2010 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=L54562153JROL&site=ehost-live>> [accessed 8 October 2018]

⁷⁶ Journal Record Staff, ‘More Furloughs Possible for Oklahoma Historical Society,’ *Journal Record Legislative Report (Oklahoma City, OK)*, 29 January 2010. <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=L54562153JROL&site=ehost-live>> [accessed 8 October 2018]

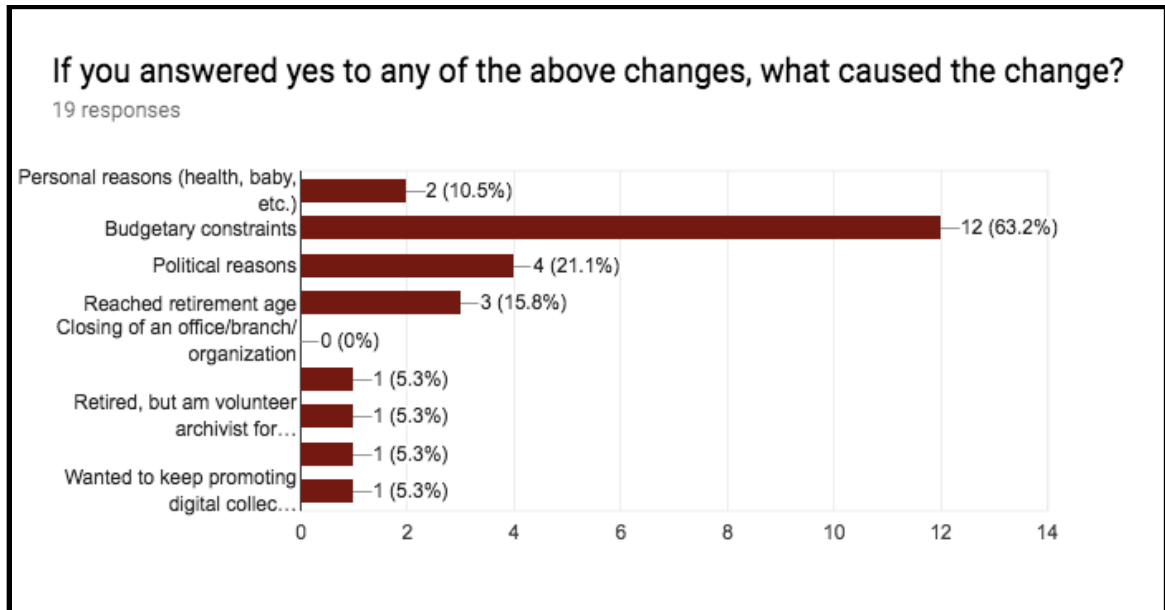
the day-to-day operations of state archival organisations like the Oklahoma Historical Society and Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

An organisation has many options to reduce staff, not just by furlough. The next three questions on the survey asked for yes or no responses to questions inquiring on different workforce reduction measures – being laid off, having hours reduced, i.e. moving from full-time to part-time, and/or earlier than planned retirement. These three methods are routinely employed by all types of organisations – being laid off, having hours reduced, or given the opportunity to retire early – instead of being forced out. The responses were not as negative as the furlough but still enough of a reporting measure to note. Two of the forty-three respondents had been laid off in an archival setting, five of the forty-three had had their hours reduced, and three of the forty-three had retired early. Because some of these respondents did overlap, a broader data analysis concluded that eight of the forty-three respondents (or 18.6% of the total respondents) had one, or sometimes two, of the above three options happen to them. To summarise, approximately one-fifth of the archival respondents self-reported having had a reduction in work and/or pay within the state of Oklahoma as a publicly funded employee. This a high percentage when one considers the data also reported many archivists as having self-identified as a ‘lone arranger’ in their institutions.

An even more telling account of the archival employment situation in the state of Oklahoma is garnered from the next question, which asked the respondents to explain what caused their workforce change. For a breakdown of the options provided in the survey, see Figure 3.13. Because not all reasons could be provided in a survey setting, the

option for ‘Other’ allowed respondents to provide a different reason than those identified

Figure 3.13 Reasons for Layoff, Reduction of Hours or Early Retirement



beforehand. However, eleven of those surveyed checked the ‘Budgetary Reasons’ box, two answered ‘Personal Reasons’, four answered ‘Political Reasons’, and three answered ‘Reached Retirement Age’. Also, two of respondents selected both ‘Budgetary Reasons’ and ‘Political Reasons’ which created an overlap in the data analysis. One of those two took advantage of the ‘Other’ option to voice further what led to the answer of ‘Yes’ in the previous section and wrote ‘Management and other duties crow[d]ed in so that my archival duties were minimalized. I started to feel that the current administration was being unsupportive of the archive and halting spending to the point that the quality was being affected. I decided to switch jobs.’ Not being able to properly care for the organisation's collections ultimately ended up being detrimental to the organisation itself when the employee sought employment elsewhere. Despite all these shortages and workforce transitions, when the respondents were asked if they had ever volunteered back in an archival setting, six answered ‘Yes’ and of those six, three had provided

‘Reached Retirement Age’ as the reason for leaving employment. Thus, economic issues are reported as the number one factor affecting archivist’s employment opportunities and retention within Oklahoma’s workforce.

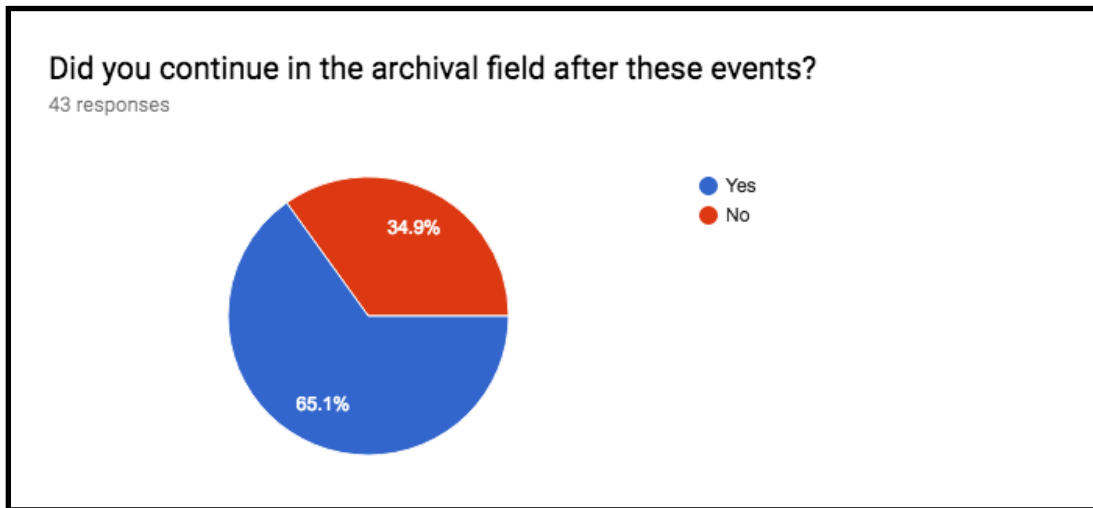
The New York Public Library in 2016 recently referenced a U.S. Department of Labor blog which posted statistics as to why more people over the age of fifty-five are still working; one of the conclusions was health and employer benefits.⁷⁷ Sustainability of both the organisation and the individual’s workforce benefits – retirement saving and health coverage – enter negative states of existence when employees are forced to retire early yet still feel the need to contribute to their former organisation. The same year as the blog posts, researchers published a study in the *Journal of Social Issues* discussing ‘Ageism in the Workplace’, what factors might lead to it, and what organisations can do to create support and reduce age discrimination by addressing key psychosocial factors, including identity.⁷⁸ These psychosocial factors and the person’s own sense of identity led respondents to volunteerism within an organisation forced to reduce staffing for budgetary reasons, with the offering and acceptance of retirement upon reaching retirement age. Regardless of the motive, the identity of the archivist seems to coincide with both a passion for the work or a knowledge of the work, which makes retired and long-gone employee’s still viable memories to tap for information within an organisation.

⁷⁷ Magdalene Chan, ‘Aging in the American Workforce,’ *NYPL Blog on Career Services* posted 20 December 2016 <<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/12/20/aging-american-workforce>> [accessed 13 October 2018] Referenced Terry Morisi, ‘Why More People Ages 55+ are Working,’ *U.S. Department of Labor Blog* posted on 18 November 2016 <<https://blog.dol.gov/2016/11/18/why-more-people-ages-55-are-working/>> [accessed 13 October 2018]

⁷⁸ Jamie L. Macdonald and Sheri R. Levy, ‘Ageism in the Workplace: The Role of Psychosocial Factors in Predicting Job Satisfaction, Commitment, and Engagement,’ *Journal of Social Issues* 72, 1 (March 2016): pp.169-190, p.170-172. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12161>>

Ultimately, what happens to these employees is covered in the last of the three questions asked on the survey. Figure 3.14 visually represents the continued work of a retiree within the archival field versus how many moved on to other sectors and opportunities after a workforce transition occurred. While this survey only contained forty-three respondents, when fifteen answered they did not continue in an archival setting, for a total of 34.9%, the result raises some serious concerns for what this means for the preservation, access, and dissemination of Oklahoma's history to the people of Oklahoma and beyond. Not retaining employees also has ramifications in the greater archival workforce sector for the state. Again, the follow-up open-ended question to this percentage of why or why not provides a better picture of the archival employment landscape of Oklahoma. For those who did not return to the archival profession after being furloughed, had time reduced, or answered retirement as to why they did not return, the answer was time. 'No time' and 'time restraints' were provided as answers. While retirement was the main contributing factor, one person commented, 'No high paying positions'. In this answer, career advancement or monetary benefits played a role in the employee not returning to the archival field.

Figure 3.14 Continued Connection to Archives after Layoff, Reduction of Hours or Early Retirement

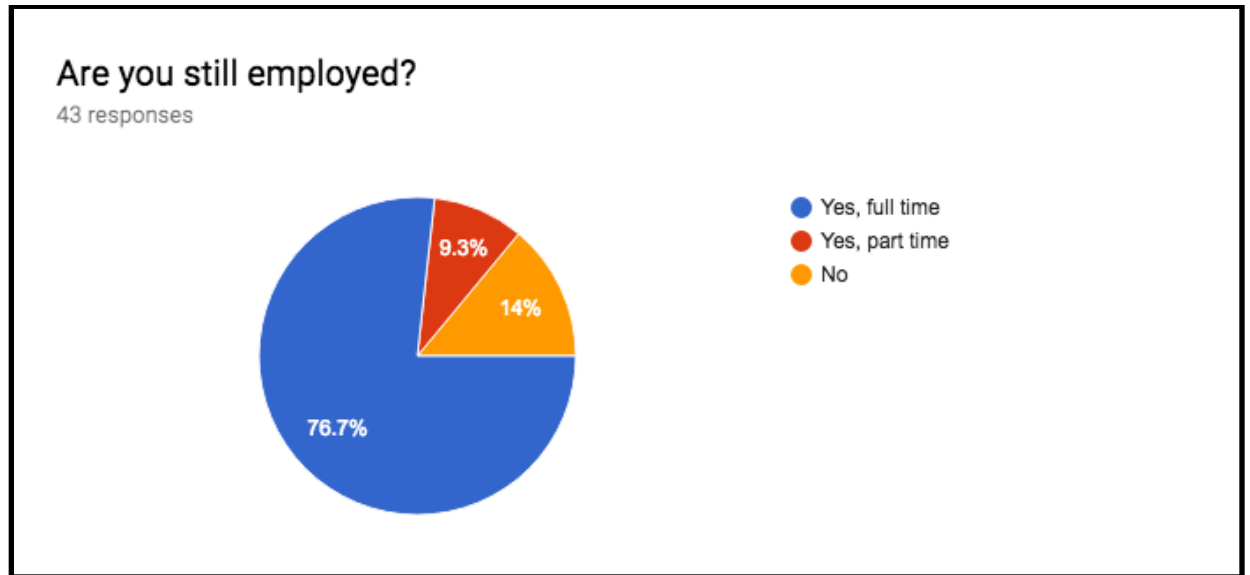


On the other side of the graph are those individuals who remained employed in the archival profession. Two of those surveyed replied that none of the options had happened to them: furlough, hour reduction, or retirement. With no real change in their employment, no move away from the profession would be necessary. However, for those impacted by furlough, hour reduction, or retirement, the answers they provided varied. Some simply chalked it up to enthusiasm for the job. Phrases like ‘this is what I do’, ‘because I like working in Archives’, and ‘it is my passion’ point to the mental energy and dedication these professionals bring to the workplace. A further individual elaborated, ‘I will continue to preserve history and memory throughout my life because it is a path to the future.’ The participants expanding their personal career motivation to a larger place in history also points to the dedication of Oklahoma archivists. Thus, job satisfaction through the work and a love for the discipline are factors in why Oklahoma’s archivists stay connected to the field.

Two individuals who had been furloughed answered the question this way: ‘It didn’t change my career path to be furloughed’ and ‘I was able to return to work full-time after our funding was restored.’ When the furlough, or temporary job loss occurred, these employees were either career minded or relieved to be employed. Either way, they were employed and able to carry out the responsibilities of their job. Another individual told a summary of staying within the archival profession but moving to a different organisation: ‘I was sad to leave, knowing that I was the storehouse of institutional history, but was too frustrated and stalled to make forward progress. I decided to use my skills at a site nearby, but plan to keep an eye (maybe even volunteer some) to keep my first site rolling.’ The knowledge of their place in the memory of the repository and the identification of organisational memory loss is recurring theme in the data analysis. Institutions must begin to recognize a need for overlap in workforce transitions to minimise a collapse in culture. Overlap in employees allows both a transfer of job responsibilities, as well as the memory and history of the job, to be passed on. That same respondent also pointed to the opportunity to volunteer back as a way to transfer that knowledge. This is something two other respondents concluded as well; they would volunteer back because ‘[I] believe in preservation and access to digital content through digitization and metadata collection’ and ‘I still see a need to assist my institution.’ Specialised knowledge, like the technical knowledge of digitization and metadata within archival collections and the assistance of retired persons to continue to provide context are other opportunities available to organisation’s wanting to have a knowledge transfer occur.

The final question posed on the initial data gathering survey of Oklahoma archivists and museum professionals asked if the person was still employed full time, part time, or not at all. The results can be seen in Figure 3.15, with most institutions having workforce retention. A little over three-fourths of the forty-three respondents reported

Figure 3.15 Current Employment Status



being employed full-time. Translating this into numbers, thirty-three of the forty-three persons who took the time to answer this survey, indicated they were still employed full-time. The full-time percentage is next examined in comparison with the data in Figure 3.14, where only sixty-five percent, or twenty-eight individuals, remained within the archival profession. This means five individuals chose to identify another area of employment, outside of the archival workforce, causing less qualified or no employees working within Oklahoma archives and museums. Four people, the 9.3% reported on the graph, retained employment, at a part-time status. Part-time employees in the United States – up to twenty-seven hours a week – work without benefits such as health or retirement options, as mandated by the U.S. Department of Labor, which does not require

the use of the Fair Labor Standards Act in part-time employment.⁷⁹ For an organisation, the benefits of having the archivist's memory, while at the same time not having to contribute to retirement plans or health care plans, is seen as optimal. But for those part-time persons, this type of not work with no benefits often necessitates looking for employment somewhere else, somewhere which provides them. Until employers realise the role of archivists and museum professionals play in contributing to both organisation culture and institutional memory, and fully fund these types of positions, the memory loss which occurs during workforce transitions will continue to weaken the preservation, organisation, digitization, and other functions done by archivists within the state of Oklahoma.

Conclusion

The quantitative data gathering survey of Oklahoma archival and museum professionals was sent out to identify and help provide data in five main areas. First, to obtain background on the individual respondents by identifying to which generation they belong through the use of birth year to create an initial grouping as determined by American normative vocabulary. Second, to determine the length of time they have lived within the state of Oklahoma, which is used to provide a knowledge of the respondent's connection to the state's history and culture. Third, a picture of the respondent's work history and education level is presented, and what types of educational backgrounds individuals employed within the state come from when entering archival employment.

Next, the archival communities of the respondents were identified through

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, 'Part-Time Employment,' *US Department of Labor Website* <<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/workhours/parttimeemployment>> [accessed 13 October 2018]

organisational involvement by the analysis of reasons why archival communities were joined and/or left. Then the ideas of institutional memory and organisational culture, as defined by Charlotte Linde and Antonio Castillo Gómez, were determined through the participant's self-identification of the view on the importance of it on its own as well as the role they play in it. Institution specific information was then gathered as it relates to Oklahoma's economic status in the 21st century, especially as it examined furlough, hour reduction, or retirement of the archivists and museum professionals. Lastly, the respondents were asked if they were willing to provide contact information and indicate if they would be willing to participate in a sit down follow up interview at a later time and date. I followed up with respondents who self-selected to be contacted to determine the best time and place to conduct an oral history interview.

The combination of survey data followed up with oral history interviews corresponds to the mixed methodological approach of this thesis documented in Chapter 2. The results of these oral history interviews are covered in Chapters 4 and 5. The qualitative data reported in the survey allows the self-identity of Oklahoma archivists and museum professionals to be obtained and examined as how archivists self-identify within specific socio-subcultural areas along with the profession is a missing gap in the literature. Specifically, the data gathered demonstrates the connection of archivist to their state, their culture, their community, and their organisation. The lens of economic pressures, technological changes, and the changing generations clarifies the motivations and limitations of the archival workforce in Oklahoma. Taken together with the oral history results, a new understanding of the connection between grassroots contexts and professional experiences is determined.

Chapter 4

Untold stories from within the Oklahoma archives

Introduction

The oral history interviews captured here reflect both the identities of the archivists and the work they perform for the state of Oklahoma during a period of funding crisis and job transitions; oral history allows for a more holistic picture of the profession to be reflected in analysis. This chapter analyses the twenty-five oral history interview participants.¹ Four key areas are identified in the oral histories. First, the archivists reveal stories about their connection to Oklahoma and Oklahoma history. I argue that they play an essential role in maintaining, curating, and disseminating knowledge of state-level, institutional, and local histories. Second, they discuss their entry into the archival profession, including a discussion of theory versus practice in their day-to-day work. Some recount becoming an archivist as being in the right place at the right time, as demonstrated through Bill Welge's emergency hire story. The retired Director of the Research Division and Office of American Indian Culture and Preservation at the Oklahoma Historical Society says,

And I wasn't particularly interested in going back to San Antonio. So, I said yes, I'd be very interested [in working at the Oklahoma Historical Society] and so she said what we'll do is we'll hire you under emergency status... Three weeks after being hired on emergency status then Governor David Boren abolished that policy. But I got in under the wire.²

¹ Due to COVID-19 the last four were conducted via phone during lockdown instead of in person like the other twenty-one. Also for a complete list of the interview questions, see Appendix D.

² Bill Welge, interview by JJ Compton, 23 March 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, p.2.

Third, they talk about workforce and career issues, especially those around lack of funding and staffing in a traditionally politically conservative state. Oklahoma's archivists operate in an environment that is distinctive within the broader context of the United States, but which shares characteristics with archivists outside the state: understanding how these local Oklahoman contexts shape their practice shines new light on the particularised and shared experiences within the profession. Lastly, they address the changing landscape of archival work, including current events, technological changes, and what they hope their legacy on the state's historical record will look like once they're gone. This is because archiving is at a moment of upheaval and change – most evidently through digitisation and record maintenance practices, but also through the changing demographics of the profession. The capturing of the voices allows us to implement a theoretically complex idea mentioned in chapter 1 by Terry Eastwood, 'that little about archives is simple, stable, and uncontested' and yet practitioners should be reoriented to grasp that 'it is more about the role archivists and archival institutions play in society...'³ Understanding the experiences of late-career, retired, and soon-to-be-retired Oklahoma archivists will help future professionals better understand the nature of the archive within a local context.

The people within the repository

Rather than have these individuals located within an Appendix, which sometimes happens in oral history research, the idea of this thesis is to bring their voices into conversations about the value and need for funding, staffing and furthering democracy by

³ Eastwood, *A Contested Realm*, p.21.

the work they do. This is in line with Portelli's unorthodox listing of narrators at the beginning of his work 'rather than hidden at the back amongst the appendices.'⁴ Their brief biographies listed alphabetically, were cowritten alongside me, in order to adhere to the idea of co-authoring as mentioned in Chapter 1. Beyond co-authoring, this is where this thesis adds to the body of work on the intellectual history of the archives. For as Terry Cook explained in his writings:

Archival historical analysis requires revisiting the principal professional discussions that leading archivists had about their work and with each other. It requires hearing again, and understanding within the context of their time, and our own, their assumptions, ideas, and concepts.⁵

It is my hopes in briefly introducing their current or past career in LAMs their voice will have more authority, create a place for them in archival intellectual history, and generate greater empathy in understanding their situations and connections with Oklahoma past and present. As a researcher, I have been fortunate to find respondents who, with even a cursory co-written introduction, immediately stand out of high-achieving, respected, serious professionals within their field. I have grouped them collectively and alphabetically by last name but bolded their names so they can be seen both as part of Oklahoma's archival workforce, but also as individuals having their own space in the collective.

Mattie Barlow is the Manager of Archives & Curatorial Projects at the Oklahoma Hall of Fame | Gaylord-Pickens Museum where she has been employed since 2017. She has played a vital role in building a robust rotating exhibition schedule and her curatorial

⁴ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.30.

⁵ Terry Cook, 'What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift,' *Archivaria* 43: (1997), pp.17-63, p.19.

work focuses on themes of history, identity, and placemaking. She is passionate about creating space for historically underrepresented voices in museum exhibits and archives. Outside of her role at the museum, she has volunteered for professional and community organizations including Allied Arts, Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition, Oklahoma City Ballet, Mountain Plains Museum Association, Oklahoma Archivists Association, and Oklahoma Museums Association.

Deborah Anna Baroff is the Senior Curator at Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton, Oklahoma where she has served in this role since 2001. Before this she was the Special Collections Curator from 1985 until 2001. She will be retiring in January of 2022. She has her AS from Santa Barbara City College (1977), her BA from San Francisco State University (1980) and her MLS from The University of Oklahoma (1984). She has been a long-time member of the Association of State and Local History, the Oklahoma Museum Association, the Oklahoma Conservation Congress, the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the Sierra Club. Upon retirement she is looking forward to living in Norman, Oklahoma to be closer to friends and family.

Kate Blalack was the Senior Archivist and Registrar at Archives of American Song | Woody Guthrie Archives / Bob Dylan Archives. She holds a Bachelor's in Art from Oklahoma State University (metalsmithing and oil-painting), a Masters in Human Relations (with emphasis in art therapy), and a Masters of Library and Information Studies from the University of Oklahoma (emphasis in archival management). She is passionate about the arts, human connections & relationships, historical preservation, museums, archives and libraries. She has 13 years of experience as an archivist (10 years as a Certified Archivist) and 20 years of experience in various roles of librarianship in

academic, public, and museum settings. She is also DAS certified. Her curiosity is always growing in the areas of anthropology, archaeology, religious history and philosophy, and economic innovation. "If you are a dreamer, come in...." As of July 2023, she moved out of Oklahoma, taking a job at Hesburgh Libraries - University of Notre Dame.

Katherine “Kay” L. T. Bost (Retired) was born and raised in Groves (next door to Port Arthur), Texas. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas, at Austin. She had her first job in a library at the University of Houston on the social science floor as a reference assistant while her husband finished his Ph.D. They moved to New Orleans and then to Cleveland, Ohio. While in Cleveland, she earned her library degree from Case Western Reserve University. After moving to Carrollton, Texas, she did a short term as a volunteer at the Dallas Historical Society. Subsequently, she took on half-time employment at Southern Methodist University in the DeGolyer Library. In 1990, she became full time curator for the DeGolyer Library and also took over the University Archives. In 2002 she followed her husband to Edmond and was hired at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater in the Special Collections and University Archives. She became Head of Special Collection in 2006 and then retired to work half time (again) in 2011. She retired completely in 2015. She now volunteers as curator of her church’s archive. She was a member of the Society of American Archivists. For about 30 years she has been an active member of Society of Southwest Archivists where she served on the board twice and chair (once) of the Site Selection Committee and (twice) on the Local Arrangements Committee. She has also made several professional presentations and/or chaired panel discussions over the years. As of 2023 she had relocated to North Carolina to be closer to family in her retirement.

Dr. James L. Crowder (Retired) completed a 41-year combined military and civilian career with the US Air Force in 2013. The majority of the time was spent as historian and archivist for the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, Tinker AFB. During that period, he produced numerous articles, books and pamphlets on Oklahoma people, towns and aviation and doubled the size of the base archives. Meanwhile, Crowder served as adviser to local museums and historical societies and continues as the archivist for the Zambia Mission Fund, Edmond Church of Christ and Downtown Medicine Mound Preservation Group. He is a graduate of the University of Texas and the University of Oklahoma and is a Life Member of both universities' alumni association, the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Edmond Historical Society and the US Capitol Historical Society.

Jan Davis (Retired) was the Administrative Archivist for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, where she managed the Oklahoma State Archives, which houses the permanent records of state government dating back to statehood. Davis was also the Coordinator of the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, which works to provide resources and support for Oklahoma libraries, archives and museums that hold historical records collections. She has master's degrees in library and information studies and business administration from the University of Oklahoma. She is a Certified Records Manager, a Certified Archivist, and a Digital Archives Specialist. She officially retired as of December 2023.

Jennifer (Day) Green was the archivist for The City of Oklahoma City. As part of the Office of City Clerk, she maintains the records retention schedule and conducts records management training and policy review for all departments. Jennifer also preserves and provides access to permanent records and conducts research for public record requests.

She previously worked as manuscript archivist for the Oklahoma Historical Society. Jennifer is dedicated to providing access to government records and advocating for preservation of government records on the municipal level in Oklahoma. Jennifer holds a master's degree in library science and a BA in History from the University of Oklahoma. Jennifer is a member of the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, the Oklahoma Museums Association Disaster Recovery Network and is a founding member of the Oklahoma Archivists Association. She has also been active on the boards of the Society of Southwest Archivists and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators. As of 2021 she had moved to the Oklahoma Department of Libraries as an Archivist III.

Dr. Jason Harris has nearly 20 years of experience in management of local, state, and national non-profit humanities-based programs and organizations and is currently the executive director of Chisholm Trail Museum in Oklahoma. He has a lengthy record of supporting immersive educational experiences for a wide variety of learners in informal learning settings and museum development. In addition, he has worked directly with K-20 educational institutions across the nation for project-based learning and museum partnership. He completed a PhD in History at Oklahoma State University in December of 2021.

Lisa M. Henry (Retired) completed a second career as the Archivist and Curator of the Julian P. Kanter Political Commercial Archive at University of Oklahoma during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was an active member of the Oklahoma Archivists Association where she contributed both financially and to educational opportunities, having posted as the Vice President in 2018 on the OAA website about 'CLIR Digitizing

Hidden Special Collections and Archives: 2018 Initial Application Round Open'. She also served as a local mentor for the American Archive of Public Broadcasting for the year 2018. In 2020, she was on the teaching faculty of the University of Oklahoma's School of Library and Information Science.

Bailey Hoffner was the Metadata and Collections Management Archivist at the University of Oklahoma (OU) Libraries at the time of this project. She specializes in cleaning and transforming legacy finding aids from their original formats into EAD using a variety of open source tools. Prior to her current position, was the co-chair of a consortium at OU that utilized a shared instance of ArchivesSpace to provide better, standardized access to collections information. She is currently leading a working group of 17 OU Libraries employees in hopes of rapidly standardizing existing finding aid metadata to provide better access for users. She now is the Metadata Librarian for Digital Resources and Discovery Services at Oklahoma State's Edmon Low Library, a position which she has been in since April 2023.

Larry "Buddy" Johnson is the Special Collections Manager for the Metropolitan Library System, the largest public library system in the state of Oklahoma. Larry Johnson holds a degree in history from Southern Nazarene University, a library degree from the University of Oklahoma, and a cherished certificate in Nuclear Disaster Preparedness from FEMA. At the Metropolitan Library System, he guides the Special Collections and Research Department. He is a frequent contributor to magazines and is the author of seven books on state and local history.

Dr. Pamela Louderback is an Associate Professor of Library Services and the Library Director at Northeastern State University's Broken Arrow campus. She holds a Doctorate

in Higher Education Administration and Public Policy from Oklahoma State University, and a Master's in Library and Information Systems from the University of Oklahoma. She joined the faculty of Northeastern State University in 2001 when the Broken Arrow campus opened. Pamela is a Fulbright Scholar whose research study focused on the comparison of language revitalization policies. She continues to serve the Fulbright as a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador. Pamela also serves as a Leading Change Fellow who supports efforts to integrate libraries and information technology in ways that benefit higher education. Her research and publications focus on Indigenous academic success, integrating curriculum technology into the classroom, and in assisting underrepresented students in the transition to college. During her tenure at NSU, Pamela has served the institution and the community through service on committees of the faculty, and of the university. Pamela has also served in community-engaged scholarship by directing multiple externally funded education and literacy grant programs totalling over \$1 million dollars.

John R. Lovett (Retired) is originally from eastern Oklahoma. He completed a BA in History in 1979 and a Master's Degree in Library & Information Science in 1985 at the University of Oklahoma. His first position at the Western History Collections was student research assistant. In 1983 he was appointed graduate research assistant and in 1985 photographic archivist. He also held other positions at the Western History Collections including librarian, assistant curator and curator. In addition, while serving as curator, he was Director of Special Collections and Director of Branch Libraries. He also held the William J. Welch Professorship and retired from the University of Oklahoma in 2016. During his tenure at OU he was the author and co-author of three books and over twenty-

five articles and essays. The topics for his published works included: frontier photographers in Oklahoma, Oklahoma Native Americans, Native American ledger art, Oklahoma lawmen & outlaws, the military in Oklahoma and the range cattle industry. He received a Wrangler Award from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum for the best photography book of 2010.

Sarah Milligan is the Head of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University Library, overseeing the production, access, and preservation of the 1,500+ interviews in the OOHRP collection. She has worked extensively in oral history outreach, including providing training for new interview production as well as technical assistance to oral history collection holders throughout the country. Before joining the OOHRP, Milligan was the Administrator for the Kentucky Oral History Commission (KOHC), managing the KOHC's archive of over 10,000 oral history recordings, a long-standing state-wide oral history granting program and an extensive outreach network. She has also worked as a Folk life Specialist for the Kentucky Folk life Program, managing their Community Scholars network and assisting in leadership for the Kentucky Folk life Festival. Milligan has expertise in archival preservation and access, and is a founding member of the Digital Public Library of America OKHub working group, has been an anchor trainer for the Library of Congress' Digital Preservation Outreach Education (DPOE) program and the inaugural President for the Oklahoma Archivists Association. She has worked for over a decade in the public history and library/archives fields, and is a member of the 2011 class of the History Leadership Institute and the 2015 class of Harvard's Library Leadership in a Digital Age. Milligan has served on numerous committees for the Oral History Association (OHA)

over the years, including co-chairing the 2018 Task Force to revise the long-standing OHA Principles and Best Practices and serving on the OHA Council. Milligan also currently serves on the OK Humanities Board of Trustees. She has a B.A. in English and German from Oklahoma State University and an M.A. in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University.

David C. Peters (Mostly Retired) was Department Head and Assistant Professor, Archives located in Oklahoma State University's (OSU) Edmon Low Library. Mr. Peters has been with the OSU Library 34 years having served in the General Reference Department, Map Room, and Archives. He still works ten hours a week despite having officially retired. Peters has degrees from Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of one book about the OSU Campus, co-author of two other books, and he has contributed 56 articles to OSU's STATE magazine. Peters is a Former Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Kitty Pittman (Retired) was the Administrative Librarian, for the Library Resources Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Her activities included coordination of state-wide Interlibrary Loan, information services, technical services, and helping spearhead digitization on the Images of Oklahoma project, which was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. In her retirement, she continues to help with local preservation and digitization efforts in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

S. Michelle Place began working as the Business Manager for the Tulsa Historical Society & Museum in 2001 and was named Executive Director in 2012. The dream of a permanent facility for the Society where Tulsa's history could be collected, preserved and presented began in 1997 after the purchase of the historic Travis Mansion and grounds.

Today, the Tulsa History Museum is housed in an expanded 27,000 sq. ft. facility with seven annually rotating galleries and extensive archives. Education programs for all ages, author lectures, musical programs, and community collaborations are a reality. She is a 2016 Heartland Emmy Winning writer and technical advisor for *Boomtown: An American Journey*. The documentary is an historical retrospective focusing on the booms and busts of Tulsa, Oklahoma, its cultural challenges and the impact of wealth from oil has had on the region. Michelle is the Executive Producer for *L'dor V'dor: Generation to Generation*, the story of Tulsa's Jewish community, which has received many awards. The documentary was released in 2018. She is a four-time delegate to an international conference on Just Governance through the United Nations in Geneva's Initiatives for Change in Caux, Switzerland. In 2018, Michelle was named as one of thirty-five Global Women Drivers for Peace. Michelle is a member of the Downtown Rotary Club of Tulsa, the Daughters of the American Revolution, Tulsa Public Schools Reading Partners, Women in Communication and the Boston Avenue Church where she sings in the Chancel Choir. When not passionately talking about Tulsa's history, Michelle enjoys: golf, gardening, reading and spending time with her husband, Kirk, at their cabin in the woods. They have one daughter, Laura Place, of Boston, MA. A graduate of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and native of Little Rock, Arkansas, Michelle has lived in Tulsa for 33 years and now calls it home.

Jeanne Prince (Retired), a native Oklahoman, received her BA-Journalism from the University of Oklahoma in 1995. She went on to earn a MA in Journalism (Professional Writing) in 1998 and a MLIS in 2000, also from OU. As a Graduate Student, she worked in the Library at the OU School of Journalism. Her work experience began as an Intern

on a collaborative work between the Colorado Historical Society and the Oklahoma Historical Society, archiving materials from the Oklahoma City Bombing. From there, Ms. Prince archived the collection of Tom Lovell at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. She spent 18 months as a Humanities Librarian at the University of Texas-El Paso. She became a Certified Archivist in 2003. Returning to Oklahoma in 2004, she became the University Archivist/Librarian at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma. In 2008, Ms. Prince became the Archivist for the Oklahoma Higher Education Heritage Society, where she collected and archived materials tracing the history of higher education in Oklahoma and conducted workshops teaching Oklahoma's university librarians how to collect, archive and maintain their university historical collections. Ms. Prince served as President of the Oklahoma Conservation Congress from 2005 to 2013 and on the gubernatorial appointed Board of the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board from 2006 to 2014. She retired in 2014.

Dr. Brad Robison (Retired) was raised in Oklahoma City. After graduating John Marshall High School, he attended Oklahoma State University and received a BA Degree in American History. Post graduate work included an MLS Degree from the University of Oklahoma; an MA Degree in American History from the University of Central Oklahoma and the Doctoral Degree in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University. Brad's love for the preservation and study of history afforded him a variety of positions throughout his career. He served as an Assistant Archivist for the State Archives of Oklahoma; Library Director for Oklahoma Christian University; Archivist for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and finally the Director for the Lawson Terrorism Center for the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism. Brad was an

active member of the Society of American Archivists; the Society of Southwest Archivists; the American Library Association; the Oklahoma Library Association; and the Special Libraries Association. He has served for a number of years on the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board and authored a book titled, *If the Fence Could Talk*. The book was based on his work at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Archives and tells the story of items left on the fence surrounding the site of the Oklahoma City bombing. Currently, Brad is retired and serves on a variety of boards dealing with higher education.

Gerrienne “Gerri” Schaad is the Archivist and Building Manager at the McKay Archives, Florida Southern College. The McKay Archives collects the history of the 136-year-old institution as well as the history of the Citrus Industry in Florida. Previously she was the Director of the Dickinson Research Center at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Schaad served as president of the Academy of Certified Archivists (2021-2022), and is on the Board of the Foundation of the Society of American Archivists. Schaad holds a master’s degree in library and information science from the University of South Florida and is a Certified Archivist. She has been active on the boards of the Society of Southwest Archivists, the Society of Florida Archivists, the Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the American Library Association, and is a founding member of several community archival associations in Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida.

Amy Stephens became the Executive Director at the Edmond Historical Society & Museum in 2019. She previously worked as Education Supervisor at the Oklahoma City Zoo for 20 years, has a varied background in working with visitors, history and animals.

Amy became the zoo's unofficial historian in 2004 when she created the Oklahoma City Zoo Historical archive. She then oversaw the renovation of a 1933 CCC bathhouse building at the Zoo, which became the Patricia and Byron J. Gambulos ZooZeum in 2011. The ZooZeum was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. During her time as museum curator, the ZooZeum won many awards for excellence in exhibitory. Amy holds a B.S. E. in Elementary Education and a minor in history from Oklahoma Christian University and a master's in library Instructional Media from UCO.

Sherri Vance (Retired) brings to her consulting the same enthusiasm and dedication that she brought to her thirty years as a museum professional. Her experience as curator of education has given her an in-depth understanding of all the components necessary to the daily operation of non-profit organizations. For the past ten years, she has concentrated on strategic planning, exhibition and program development, museum/community partnerships, artefact management, and fundraising for organizations that are beginning, building or reinventing themselves.

William "Bill" D. Welge (Retired) is originally from San Antonio, Texas. He moved to Oklahoma in 1966. He graduated with his Bachelors in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Oklahoma in May 1976 and a Masters in Southwestern Studies at the Central State University (now UCO) in 1988 graduating with honours. He began working with the Oklahoma Historical Society in April of 1977 where he completed a nearly 40-year career with the institution, serving as Director of the Research Division, and Director of the Office of American Indian Culture and Preservation which he mostly retired from in July 2016. He was the first Academy of Certified Archivist in the state

and helped to push that accreditation as a standard for state employees. As of 2024, he has fully retired and relocated to Texas to care for his mother.

Nicole Willard (Retired) was the Assistant Executive Director of the Max Chambers Library at the University of Central Oklahoma. In her position, she directs the Archives & Special Collections, Library Advancement & Communications and Library Assessment and Strategic Planning. Ms. Willard also served as an adjunct faculty member in UCO's History and Geography Department teaching courses that support the Museum Studies Program. She holds a master's degree in history with a minor in Geography from the University of Central Oklahoma and became a Certified Archivist in 2008. She served two terms on the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board helping many Oklahoma institutions preserve their valuable historical records. Ms. Willard has recently served as Commissioner and Chair of the Oklahoma State Archives & Records Commission. Preserving the past for future generations is her passion. She provided strategic direction and priorities for the Archives and Special Collections. She ensured intellectual and physical control of university archives and special collections and promotes use and understanding of the materials held at the repository. Ms. Willard forged ties with faculty members creating opportunities for them to engage with collections materials. She conducted assessment and coordinated long range planning across all Library Departments. Ms. Willard administered the development of outreach programs promoting Library events and activities. Having directed fundraising activities, she built relationships with potential donors and University Alumni.

Chad Williams is the Director of the Research Division at the Oklahoma Historical Society. He was born in Midwest City, Oklahoma. He has been instrumental in the

development of the OHS online research catalogue which includes a variety of digitized records. Prior to working full time in the Research Division, he volunteered for three years and wrote his master's thesis on "Digitization in the Archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society". Mr. Williams OHS career began in the newspaper department where he worked in all aspects of newspaper preservation and public service. In 2001, he served as Manuscript Archivist until being promoted to deputy director and then director. Mr. Williams studied at the University of Oklahoma where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and Public Administration and master's in public administration.

These twenty-five individuals represent an occurrence of archival practice within in the state of Oklahoma which spans generational ages, technological advances, different political and administrative leaderships. They represent a resilient workforce which organises through grassroots means in order to network, support, and advocate for the profession within Oklahoma. They represent changing history and capture Oklahoma's unique challenges and successes, while learning from and aligning with the larger archival profession in the United States. They represent a first step for Oklahoma practitioners to learn from those who have gone before and are currently housed in repositories around the many divides of Oklahoma history. To turn back to Cook, this is Oklahoma's archival Prologue in Postmodern culture, a beginning point from which we can learn and study, both now and in the future.

Oklahoma and Archivists: Connecting the Dots

Participants were first asked how they began their careers in archives both in Oklahoma and in other states. Career and professional identification were put at the start

of the interviews to encourage participants to begin the action of remembering, ‘because remembering is a way of doing things, not only with words, but with our minds; in remembering or recollecting we are exercising our memory, which is a kind of action.’⁶

A second motive in asking this question first was to create a comfortable environment for the participants; ‘jumping right into the main question is not the best approach [...] build up to the climactic questions by establishing the historical setting and making the interviewee more comfortable with the process.’⁷ Thus, talking about career beginnings, especially in Oklahoma, allowed a formation of the historical career of the participants to be accessed from parts of the brain associated with memory, as well as provided comfort in establishing the researcher and interviewee relationship.

When talking about their entry into Oklahoma, contributors developed several narratives. One interview subject talked of being a billeting officer at the Altus Air Force base while applying to be a historian at Sheppard Air Force base, only to be placed back in a temporary position at Altus due to the current historian's health. Crowder said, ‘well the poor man had heard that somebody was taking over his job and had a second heart attack and died. So I tell people the quickest way to the top is over dead bodies. [Laughter].’⁸ While most of the rest of the participants’ responses are not quite as colourful, there was a definite point in time that sparked their interest in the career path they ultimately ended up choosing. Hoffner says for her, it started as an undergrad with a visit to OU’s Western History Collection:

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Memory and Forgetting’ in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, Richard Kearney, Mark Dooley, eds., New York: Routledge, 1999, pp. 5-11, p.1.

⁷ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*. 3rd edn., New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.80.

⁸ James L. Crowder, interview by JJ Compton, 21 January 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-17, p.5.

[A] list had been compiled by someone and it was essentially a list of all of the women's collections [...] And it just really struck me seeing that because I'd never seen [...] women's collections put together all in one place. And the fact that it struck me was both troubling and exciting [...] really the first thinking about appraisal before I really knew what archival appraisal was and being excited about learning more about that.⁹

Johnson describes his own serendipitous finding of archival materials in his Information Technology (IT) job:

As strange as it seems, I was hired as a database specialist [...] I found this room that was just unoccupied and started just rummaging around in there. There were shoeboxes full of photos and you know all kinds of old books and all that. And I just, it just kind of clicked with me because you know I was, I had the history background anyway [...] I wanted to share what was in there and help my colleagues and help the public understand what was in there.¹⁰

Schaad says she came to the profession 'after an internship at the Ringling Museum in the circus and fell in love with photography. I was working with 19th-century glass plate photographs [...] it was just so much fun and learning on the job and taking courses because I knew I really wanted to get a job in archives.'¹¹ The common theme is intellectual curiosity – seeing a need and choosing to fulfil it – to show archival and history work's value to others in the organisation, all the while truly enjoying that work experience. Intellectual curiosity correlates to the quantitative data, which shows that people are coming to the archival profession from many different areas based on their college major degrees alone.¹² Coupled with intellectual curiosity is the experiential learning that comes through internships, volunteering, and/or coursework, which helped to cement these individuals into the archival profession. Thus, most Oklahoma archivists

⁹ Bailey Hoffner, interview by JJ Compton, 29 July 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-15, p.1.

¹⁰ Larry 'Buddy' Johnson, interview by JJ Compton, 1 March 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-15, p.3.

¹¹ Gerrienne Schaad, interview by JJ Compton, 26 May 2019, in Tucson, Arizona, transcript, pp.1-14, p.1.

¹² See Chapter 3 on qualitative data findings.

came to the profession through many varied pathways, but all stayed because of their perception of the importance of the work and the personal intellectual curiosity it generated.

A question that was asked toward the beginning of the interview to get subjects comfortable talking about themselves was to recall a good or bad memorable experience during their career. Sharing experiences also offered them an avenue to highlight their careers or vent about their careers as a way to establish a professional rapport with a peer. However, this question was also posited to understand how professional archivists position themselves within the larger profession. A case study of one Oklahoma City Bombing survivor highlights the idea of being both in and outside of public memory when they share, ‘As I reflect on the 20 years since the Murrah building bombing, it becomes apparent that the connection between my individual memories and the more public memorial culture is at times complementary and at times perplexing, yet in any case dynamic.’¹³ While archival career experiences are drastically different, the OKC Bombing survivor’s description of complementary, perplexing, and dynamic relationships with public memory versus private memory is something that all archivists acknowledge as a job side effect. They experience and know the often unseen stories of the collections, donors, and institutional intricacies as an insider, all while telling contextualised public memory historical accounts to the outside world. This navigation will be further addressed in a later question, which asks how archivists see and address the idea of being neutral and/or biased.

¹³ Jason Williamson, ‘A Survivor’s Perspective on Memory and Memorial Culture: Recollections on the 20th Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing*’ *Social Science Quarterly* 97, 1 (March 2016), pp.101-104, p.104. <[doi: 10.1111/ssqu.12257](https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12257)> [accessed 10 October 2018]

One of the early career archivists talked about not being afraid of technological advances and the push to embrace them, a sentiment echoed by a fellow early career colleague who has since moved out of state. Hoffner says that getting collections standardised for better data migration in the future was both a technological hurdle and achievement in her work.¹⁴ She goes further to describe how once she overcome this technological obstacle it allowed her to 'push other archivists around me to gain that sense of control' as well.¹⁵ She considered this a memorable experience in her early career, demonstrating the professional adherence of working to preserve and make available concrete yet malleable data for the next archivist to have available. While late-career and retirees mentioned primarily paper-based preservation, mid-career and early-career professionals see the need for both analogue and digital, a theme that will be addressed later in this chapter.

The realities of Oklahoma's economic approach to the LAM field provoked a range of reflections. Specifically, individuals were queried on what they thought made Oklahoma different from other states in historical preservation work. Tangentially, the theme of understaffing and underfunding occurred in the answers provided by the archivists. Many contributors mentioned receiving grants or additional staffing as a memorable experience. Baroff mentions the museum had received a 'large grant to redo our gallery from the Reynolds Foundation.'¹⁶ Jan Davis, Oklahoma Department of Libraries Archivist, described the combining of her department with another, staff cuts, and increased workload as memorable. Davis remembered that 'in 2002, I believe there

¹⁴ Hoffner, Interview, p.6.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Baroff, p.5

were fifteen people working in archives and records management and it was actually two divisions, it was records management and archives. Now there are a total of six of us. So we've been reduced by more than half and the workload has not changed.'¹⁷ One retiree sums up her experience saying, 'you have those people who see the value in this and people who don't.'¹⁸ As a profession archivists have to explain to people the value of having archives – whether researchers, board members, or donors – and be willing to tell the difficult stories of budget and staffing reductions. Part of the career responsibilities in Oklahoma is to advocate for our institutions, while at the same time seeking external funding sources to maintain the same level of work.

Still others circled back to the intellectual curiosity that had led them to the profession in the first place. Schaad describes working with Western artists' personal papers, as well as the artists themselves. She describes the day-to-day work of an archivist's interactions with donors saying, 'It was so wonderful to meet these Western artists and learn more about their art and learn more about their craft.'¹⁹ Others became so close with their donors and history subjects in the process of creation of special projects – having travelled to the donor's residence and created a truly unique relationship with them – that they in essence, 'became a member of the Tinker family'²⁰ Bill Welge describes a relationship fostered over many decades in the following story:

But I developed a relationship in 1987 with a Kiowa gentleman by the name of Parker McKenzie. And Parker McKenzie was a treasure...he had been used by many individuals from this Bureau of American Ethnology and the Smithsonian and University of Oklahoma anthropology department and linguistics area because he was one of the few individuals who thoroughly knew the Kiowa language. And had made it a life's work in committing it to

¹⁷ Davis, p.2.

¹⁸ Bost, p.8.

¹⁹ Schaad, p.3.

²⁰ Crowder, p.10.

paper...And when I met him at the Kiowa elder center, or the CEC as they call it, in Carnegie he said, well I already have about a dozen correspondents now. I don't know if I could work in another. And I said, well, ok. But I left my card. And then I got back, I wrote him a letter. I'd gotten his address and wrote him a letter thanking him for meeting with me. And from that point on until the day he died we had a weekly correspondence, almost two weekly, bi-weekly correspondence. When we were together it was Parker and Bill. But when we were writing to each other it was Mr. Welge and Mr. McKenzie...One time I was down there interviewing him [in 1994 or 1995] and Chester Cowen was with me, the photo archivist, and Parker said, you know I've got about 300 negatives under my bed here. He pulls out this shoe box and they were like little, little two, two by three black and white negatives. He said this was pictures my, my wife Nettie took while we were at the Phoenix Indian School back in nineteen oh five. And I, really?! And so we, we took 'em and we printed 'em up, and we gave him a set. And he let us keep the original negatives and we made a set for ourselves...Anyway we were just enthralled because, you know, they were just priceless. You don't always get that kind of collection and, but you develop, I mean Parker was not just a patron to me. We were friends, good friends and our correspondence and we could joke.²¹

Welge's lengthy recollection of developing and fostering a relationship over decades ultimately led to the mutually beneficial digitisation of photos which came to both Dr. McKenzie and the Oklahoma Historical Society. While the collections are important, Welge says the items pale in comparison to the friendship and understanding he personally received as a side effect of the work he does. Thus, in the drive to learn the subject matter in their care, archivists are led to learn about the people they come into contact with as well, often forming lifelong relationships and friendships with donors.

Yet others described that moment of observing a fortuitous discovery occur for the researchers they were helping. Harris worked with middle school and high school students promoting National History Day in his previous role at the Oklahoma Historical Society. He describes watching 'them having those aha moments when they're holding the documents in an archive and it being something that was cool to them' was extremely

²¹ Welge, pp.17-18.

memorable.²² Peters recalls the digitisation of the collections finding aids as being an ultimate tool for better access for researchers. During digitisation and conversion, Peters says it became very difficult for both those interested in the materials outside the collections and those working on them within. He states:

By that point, we were probably up to over 900 collections and it's just hard to manage all that, keeping track of. And so, you know, a researcher coming in one day, if they got the right person, might get to the right collection they needed to see; if they came in on the wrong day and the person who was familiar with that collection wasn't there, the chances of them finding that information that would be pertinent to what they were looking for is, was nil.²³

Connecting people with the information they seek is very rewarding to most who enter information service careers like libraries, archives, and museums. But it also becomes disheartening when archivists realise the help they could provide if only they had better resources, especially in relation to staffing levels and funding opportunities in repositories.

For many contributors, the question, 'What do you hope others in the future will remember about the work you did during your career? What do you hope your legacy on the state will be?' was a very personal and introspective question. In fact, the process of looking back caused one archivist to say, 'I don't really like talking about myself,' and another opened his response with, 'I'm not important.'²⁴ The idea of introspection in the workplace is a field which is garnering a lot of research. For instance, one management study looked at the idea of personality studies, those using extroversion and introversion, in workplace assessment of employees. Blevins, Stackhouse, and Dionne state:

'Specifically, traits such as introspection, independence and solitude may have value in

²² Harris, p.2.

²³ Peters, p.4.

²⁴ Johnson, p.7; Crowder, p.14.

the workplace, but are not readily assessed with existing scales.²⁵ The authors of the study go on to argue that introversion should not be perceived as a negative but rather as something that should be unlocked across ‘a host of different roles’ within the organisation.²⁶ The personality of each participant is a factor in why, when asked to practise self-reflection in an oral history interview, many archivists were hesitant or reluctant, having practised in organisations which used scales that valued extroversion higher than introversion. However, after a little reflection and patience from the researcher, they gave thoughtful and hopeful answers. As might be expected, early-career archivists viewed their legacy very differently than late-career professionals. Some of the early careers said things like ‘make as much of our collections accessible online as possible’ or being able to ‘tell stories in different ways or you know take oblique angles on stuff or interpret things maybe from a different lens than [...] a classically trained historian’ and even ‘I hope my work in the field will lead to [...] really rapid updating of finding aids from various formats so PDF, Word docs, spreadsheet, all kinds of stuff that you know exists currently.’²⁷ Thus, the early and early-mid career archivists focused on things like digitisation, accessibility, and telling history in new and interesting ways for the next generation.

The late-career archivists had more experiences to examine, many of these being highlighted in the question asking about memorable experiences. But memorable experiences, whether good or bad, are not often what archivists want their professional

²⁵ Dane P. Blevins, Madelynn R. D. Stackhouse, and Shelley D. Dionne, ‘Righting the balance: Understanding introverts (and extraverts) in the workplace’ *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 24 (2022): pp.78-98, p.83 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12268>>

²⁶ Ibid, p.88.

²⁷ Barlow, p.4; Johnson, p.7; Hoffner, Interview, p.6.

legacy to be. Many of the answers revolved around the dynamics of professional relationships including ‘carry[ing] on that tradition of teaching the younger’ professionals, being able to ‘hand off the ball to the next person that comes after us’ and ‘connections to people [...] [I want others to say] she mentored me and she introduced me to people.’²⁸ Still others centred on the practical work of archives from, ‘getting the material that was brought in’ to ‘the biggest thing [is what] I’ve really done with the collection.’²⁹ One even joked that, ‘if the archives ever go away or get lost don’t tell me. [Laughter] I would have a stroke.’³⁰ The key feature of a good legacy late career archivists and retirees all identified is best summed up by this simple statement: ‘I would hope [...] that people would say that what little I’ve done has moved us forward, has enlightened us, has educated those moving forward. And that I was a true voice, a true voice for those who came before me and a voice of light for those who come after me.’³¹ No matter how Oklahoma's history does and does not remember these individuals, may we all seek to be a voice and light to those who come after us in whatever LAM field we occupy.

The Realities of the Oklahoma Archival Workforce

It should be noted that not all participants were born and raised in Oklahoma. While not a specific IRB-approved question, this information came out organically in the course of the interviews. Birth location and residence are important because they help establish Oklahoma archivists as their own socio-subcultural group with the larger United

²⁸ Bost, p.9; Davis, p.3; Schaad, p.6.

²⁹ Lovett, p.7; Baroff, p.7.

³⁰ Crowder, p.15.

³¹ Louderback, p.6.

States workforce. The organically reported answering of this question in the qualitative section of the data indicates a sense that being generational Oklahomans or transplants to Oklahoma were and are a part of archivists' identity.

For comparison, let us examine the neighbouring state to the south, Texas. Texans have long held their state pride and citizenship as pivotal characteristics of identity. In a study of 4,000 Texans, one of seven options provided included 'Die-hard Texans – Very proud to be Texan and proud of their state. These residents have an us-against-the-world mindset and are protective of Texas culture.'³² This 'diehard Texan' self-identity made up nine percent, or three hundred sixty, of the total respondents.³³ Oklahoma is very different from Texas in this measurement of identity. A First American professor from the University of Oklahoma describes the Oklahoma identity in the following way:

Ours is a rootedness linked through memory and story to a collective identity, an Oklahoma identity marked by a complex and clashing union of territories, peoples, and contested memories. It's a challenging story, but I don't know how we can understand our state — O-K-L-A-H-O-M-A — without seeing it and ourselves clearly, resisting any urge to cover up painful scars with celebration, symbols, and song.³⁴

³² See Light Townsend Cummins and Mary L. Scheer, *Texan Identities: Moving beyond Myth, Memory, and Fallacy in Texas History* (Denton: UNT Press, 2016) as an example of moving beyond some of the myths. The book argues that 'historians seek to address new subject areas even as they continue to re-interpret traditional topics' (p.x) and that the traditional mythology, memory and identity of Texas does not represent the entirety of the state as 'more than half of the almost 28 million Texans in the state today are Asian, African American, and overwhelmingly Hispanic.' (p.ix); Claire Kowalick, 'Study shows Texan identity about more than geography' *Wichita Falls Times Record News* 27 April 2021. <<https://www.timesrecordnews.com/story/news/2021/04/27/threads-of-texas-study-texan-identity-more-than-geography-history/4859259001/>> [accessed 27 August 2022] Even with the growing literature arguing that the identity of Texas is changing, it is not reflected in the reporting of news within some geographic regions.

³³ Threads of Texas, 'Texas: a Story of an Enduring Identity in a Changing State,' *Threads of Texas* website <<https://threadsoftexas.us/media/y33fmukq/mic-threadsoftexas-english-june2021.pdf>> [accessed 27 August 2022]

³⁴ Amanda Cobb-Greetham, 'Viewpoint: Embracing complexity is key to understanding Oklahoman identity,' *The Oklahoman*, 14 November 2021 <<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/opinion/2021/11/14/embracing-complexity-key-understanding-oklahoman-identity/6379268001/>> [accessed 13 August 2023]

The complexity of a state, its people, and its memory are what makes Oklahoma distinctive.

The ideas mentioned by Cobb-Greetham, of bringing painful scars out into the open, wrestling with them, and examining all sides of historical events, continue to occur in history, film, and literature. One example of wrestling with identity as a native and First American Oklahoman with a hard history is seen through the writings of Dunbar-Ortiz. She talks of the divergence of official history and recollected history when she writes:

My father portrayed the Green Corn Rebellion as a great moment of heroism, a moment of unity, betrayed by the “electric-light city” Socialists, who scorned it. Of course, nothing about Wobblies and Socialists appeared in my US or Oklahoma history textbooks (and very little appears in Oklahoma textbooks even now), so I began to doubt my father’s stories, especially about the Green Corn Rebellion.³⁵

This is a pivotal moment in her personal history as well as in Oklahoma’s political landscape, in trying to decide who to believe and what is right. Ultimately, the events of the Green Corn Rebellion are recounted by history as fuelled by the economic disparities and cultural feelings surrounding World War I.³⁶ Dunbar-Ortiz’s father’s story existed through narrative and memory but was questioned by those who were closest to the participants involved in it.³⁷ Only when hard history is wrestled with can we as the culture of Oklahoma, begin to truly understand who we are and where we come from.

³⁵ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie*, New York: Verson, 1997, p.15.

³⁶ For a more complete picture of the rebellion including its ties to the Socialist Party, see Nigel Anthony Sellars, ‘Green Corn Rebellion,’ *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.
<<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=GR022>>

³⁷ More on the Green Corn Rebellion can be found here: Nigel Anthony Sellars, ‘Green Corn Rebellion,’ *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*,
<<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=GR022>> [accessed 26 July 2023]

Oklahoma's stories are often difficult and Oklahoma history is highly diverse. Defining Oklahoma archivists as their own demographic group within the larger Oklahoma culture provides a framework to understand their identity collectively. For as one participant detailed:

My paternal grandmother, her mother came in one of the Land Runs, I believe. I know that I could qualify to be one of the territorial families but I haven't applied. Because I have records that shows that she was in Custer County before statehood...they just were dirt farmers, you know, in western Oklahoma.³⁸

When generational history can be recalled in a one-hour oral history interview, the connection to the land of Oklahoma and its people is evident. Lovett states, 'I grew up right outside of Fort Smith in eastern Oklahoma. Our second house, which was the one that my mother lived in until she was 90, was probably about 200 meters from the Arkansas line and I graduated from Spiro High School.'³⁹ Within 'spitting distance' of Arkansas is how many Southerners would describe Lovett's proximity to the neighbouring state. However, he still self-identifies Oklahoma as his natural-born residence and home.

Other participants who reported belonging to Oklahoma as place of origin, include Green, who was, 'born in Norman and went to school there. My family moved away to Arizona for three years as a child. And then I came back and graduated high school from Norman High.'⁴⁰ Robison is also considered an Oklahoma, although technically he was, 'born in Texas and moved to OKC when I was 6 months old.'⁴¹ Oklahomans from birth include Harris, Barlow, Henry, Hoffner, Williams, Prince,

³⁸ Jeanne Prince, interview by JJ Compton, 31 March 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-10, p.4.

³⁹ John Lovett, interview by JJ Compton, 28 April 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-15, p.3.

⁴⁰ Jennifer (Day) Green, interview by JJ Compton, 10 April 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-10, p.1.

⁴¹ Brad Robison, email to the author, 6 August 2022.

Pittman, Milligan, and Johnson, the latter stating, ‘my original Oklahoma ancestors came in the Cherokee Strip opening or outlet I guess. That was in 1893.’⁴² Davis proudly declares, ‘I’m a lifelong Oklahoman. I’ve never lived outside the state [and] my entire working career has been in Oklahoma.’⁴³ Thus, of the twenty-five participants, thirteen are considered natural born Oklahomans or have lived the majority of their early life within the borders of the state. Birth and childhood residence are then key identity traits for Oklahoma archivists in so far as claiming their place within the larger culture of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma’s history stretches far before statehood in 1907 to a time when the First Americans resided on the land. Other Indigenous tribes were forcibly removed from other areas of the United States and relocated to Oklahoma in the early to mid-1800s. Each tribe then established their own tribal government and operations. One interviewee pointed out how complex tribal governances and traditions are when she states:

the biggest difference is the American Indian population here. So it’s not different in every state, but sort of, so the tribal governments have different rules about their historical documents and how things are handled, like when we put, I believe it was Choctaw exhibit artifact, the tribal members had to come and put them in because there were still gendered items that you could not touch based on your gender.⁴⁴

⁴² Harris, p.1; Mattie Barlow, interview by JJ Compton, 14 August 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-12, p.2; Lisa Henry, interview by JJ Compton, 20 July 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-18, p.3; Bailey Hoffner, email to the author dated 14 January 2021; Chad Williams, interview by JJ Compton, 16 March 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-15, p.3; Jeanne Prince, interview by JJ Compton, 31 March 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-10, p.4; Kitty Pittman, interview by JJ Compton, 9 January 2020, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-10, p.4; Sarah Milligan, interview by JJ Compton, 4 September 2019, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-21, p.4; Johnson, p.1.

⁴³ Jan Davis, interview by JJ Compton, 1 October 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-18, p.1.

⁴⁴ Kate Blalack, interview by JJ Compton, 16 March 2020, via phone due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-11, p.5.

Another participant who is part of the Haudenosaunee, Iroquois, from the Mohawk nation explained it this way:

...there are many indigenous peoples who have culturally tied rules to what information is made available, when it is made available. You don't tell a particular story in the spring if it's a winter story and who can tell and who can hear that story. Whether you are male or female and so unfortunately from just like an anthropological or archaeological standpoint sometimes and it may not necessarily be intentional but sometimes because of the ignorance or not having that knowledge mistakes are made or stories and history is not appropriate nor is it true.⁴⁵

The customs and traditions of First Americans differ within each tribe and tribal government. Necessary partnerships must be created with LAM communities to rely upon the tribes to be able to display artefacts, learn which oral traditions are public and can be made available, and what traditions must remain within the tribal heritage not to be revealed to non-members of their community. This is why the Society of American Archivists' adoption of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM) in August of 2018 needs to be examined, endorsed, and adopted practice by every archivist working in Oklahoma.⁴⁶ Oklahoma archivists need to be aware of Oklahoma's Indigenous and relocated people's histories. Even with its complexity, Oklahomans can be defined as a group of people like no other, and archivists working with the Oklahoma documents, voices, and people are a unique socio-subcultural group working to preserve the nature of the stories Oklahoma tells about itself.

Not all archivists are generational or natural-born Oklahomans. For example, Crowder's family moved to Oklahoma from Texas when he was 16, and fellow Texas

⁴⁵ Louderback, transcript, p.5.

⁴⁶ Society of American Archivists, 'Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,' *SAA website* Adopted/Endorsed August 2018 <https://www2.archivists.org/standards/protocols-for-native-american-archival-materials> [accessed 2 January 2023]

transplant Bost says, ‘I was born and raised in southeast Texas just off the Gulf Coast.’⁴⁷ Baroff states she’s ‘originally from the East Coast [...] from New Jersey.’⁴⁸ Place answered by situating her birth in the greater historical events of the United States: ‘I was born in 1957 in Little Rock, just in the midst of the Little Rock Nine.’⁴⁹ Schaad is a Floridian again, while Louderback is also an East Coast transplant whose journey was motivated by academic endeavours. Louderback recounts:

I came because Rennard Strickland was here so I was [...] I came here to hopefully meet the man, study under him and possibly learn from him. As soon as I got here he left [laughter] [...] through my studies I began learning a little bit more about the rich history of Oklahoma and because I’m, although I’m Native, it’s different on the East Coast than to be Oklahoma Indian, that interested me and then I met my husband and there you are.⁵⁰

Willard is, ‘originally from the St. Louis area.’⁵¹ Blalack had a couple of childhood relocations: ‘I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee and I lived there till I was four. I lived in Chicago until I was 14. And then my father moved us here to Oklahoma.’⁵² Vance moved with her family to Oklahoma in 1989.⁵³ Peters may not be from Oklahoma, but his father was and, ‘we moved here, though, when I was 16. So I actually graduated from high school in Oklahoma.’⁵⁴ Thus, of the twenty-five interviews, five are transplants from Texas, two from the East Coast, one from Iowa, one from the Chicago area, one from St.

⁴⁷ Crowder, p.8; Bost, p.2.

⁴⁸ Deborah Baroff, interview by JJ Compton, 23 October 2019, in Lawton, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-18, p.1.

⁴⁹ Michelle Place, interview by JJ Compton, 16 March 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-16, p.1.

⁵⁰ Schaad, p.1; Pamela Louderback, interview by JJ Compton, 20 January 2019, in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-13, p.3.

⁵¹ Nicole Willard, interview by JJ Compton, 30 March 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-22, p.1.

⁵² Kate Blalack, interview by JJ Compton, 21 April 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, pp.1-11, p.1.

⁵³ Sherri Vance, interview by JJ Compton, 23 February 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-9, p.2.

⁵⁴ David Peters, interview by JJ Compton, 22 January 2020, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-22, p.2.

Louis, one from Arkansas, and one a Floridian with a brief career stint inside the state.⁵⁵ Since Texas and Arkansas share a lot of geographic traits with Oklahoma, this leaves only six of the twenty-five archivists as true transplants to the region. Thus, understanding Oklahoma is the first step in understanding Oklahoma's archivists.

The argument for archivists of Oklahoma to be identified as their own socio-subcultural group becomes apparent through coverage in Chapter 1's discussion of the discipline of ethnography to determine the placement of a community or group. Bastian's explanation of the archivist's positionality further demonstrates the creations of archivists as their own group when she says, 'The existence of inherent relationships between historical records and the communities that create them is implicit in the very existence of archival collections.'⁵⁶ Oklahoman anthropologists Hill and Stein argue, 'One cannot transcend an identity one does not first profoundly know.'⁵⁷ Archivists have typically been seen as the curators and keepers of the records, but within a state so 'new' like Oklahoma, arguing that Oklahoma archivists are part of the community of creation for the records is pertinent, especially when many identify as generational Oklahomans with ancestral ties to the land before the state became part of the larger United States.

⁵⁵ Besides those mentioned in the above paragraph, the following participants interviews also revealed a move from Texas: Amy Stephens, interview by JJ Compton, 24 October 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-17, p.6; Bill Welge, interview by JJ Compton, 23 March 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-22, p.1.

⁵⁶ Jeannette Allis Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2003, p.5.

⁵⁷ *The Culture of Oklahoma*, p.229.

Contextualising and Interpreting Oklahoma's History

Beyond keepers of the historical record, archivists and LAM professionals have 'traditionally told the story of society that the society has told itself, but increasingly today, they are interpreting their collections in ways that challenge that story and encourage society to re-evaluate its history and identity.'⁵⁸ One participant, Johnson, described his part in making available an often controversial work that documents Oklahoma City's social and political mid-twentieth-century history. Johnson annotated the work to make it more coherent to readers today and to contextualise it in the wider history of Oklahoma City. The preface of the book says, 'I believe it's fitting that I took on the role of reviving *Satan* because my professional ancestors in the Local History Department of the Carnegie Library played such a large part in the success of the original as noted by McRill in his acknowledgements.'⁵⁹ This is the continual work of Oklahoma archivists and LAM professionals; realising the work that has gone before them and making it available for future generations, despite how society views or ignores the work done by them. Even though the larger Oklahoma community may perceive the archival network as a storehouse of information, it is part of the Oklahoma community. The archivists' partner with and participate in local organisations, events, and activities; they must be recognised within each community as adding value through their workforce experiences and oral histories. Archivists' voices reflect the work done by their predecessors, their knowledge is integral to continuing the work of capturing the historical record for Oklahoma, with all its complexity and controversy.

⁵⁸ Stauffer, p.3.

⁵⁹ Albert McRill, *And Satan Came Also: An Inside Story of a City's Social and Political History*, Revised and Annotated by Larry Johnson, Oklahoma City: Full Circle Press, 2014, p.xiv.

The View of Theory Versus Practice Among Archivists

Examining theory versus practice within Oklahoma archival professionals is embedded in the question, ‘Do you know about the theoretical concept of “the archive” versus archives? If so, what are your thoughts on it?’ Many archivists in forums and blogs, and even in passing at conferences, are tired of hearing of the theoretical nature of archives from the oft-quoted scholars like Derrida and Trouillot. Instead, Oklahoma archivists choose to focus on the practical applications of the day-to-day work such as Meissner and Greene’s MPLP or the handling of Indigenous archival materials in their own collections through the adoption of the Native American Protocols.⁶⁰ Thus this question was asked as an indication of the participant’s familiarity with archival theory versus archival practice.

In early oral history interviews, I began by not prompting or explaining the difference between the two. Upon encountering many participants unfamiliarity with the theoretical concept of the archive, I began to pose the question with a brief explanation in later interviews. One interviewee did not reach that part of the questionnaire.⁶¹ Of the twenty-four contributors asked the question, fifteen admitted they had no idea what it was, one even stating, ‘theory was not my highest, my strong suit. I was pretty much the workhorse,’ choosing to emphasise instead the practical application of being an

⁶⁰ Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner ‘More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,’ *American Archivist*. 68 (2005): pp.208-263. <<http://www.archivists.org/prof-education/pre-readings/IMPLP/AA68.2.MeissnerGreene.pdf>> [accessed 7 December 2019]; For a comprehensive list of readings and case studies, as well as an overview of the history of the adoption of the protocols, see <<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/native-american-archives-section/protocols-for-native-american-archival-materials-information-and-resources-page>> [accessed 13 January 2021]

⁶¹ A follow up was supposed to be scheduled but the COVID-19 lockdown derailed that plan.

archivist.⁶² This pattern can also be seen across the entirety of the interviews, so much so that I began caging the question in light of this being ‘part of my lit review’ in order to make the participants feel more comfortable with their lack of theoretical knowledge.

Of the five who asked for more explanation, each answered correctly on the theoretical concept, but with caveats like, the ‘way I interpret’ it is, or ‘I can tell you what I think [it is] [...] from my studies.’⁶³ One interviewee answered it in an entirely different direction from where I thought most participants would end up. They interpreted the theoretical archive as the ideal archive, saying a ‘theoretical archive would be a whole lot different than what I’ve got.’⁶⁴ A very relatable answer was given in the following quote: ‘I would not be intelligent on this at all but I think this is an interesting question because it’s this whole thing about what constitutes an archive right?’⁶⁵ One summed up her thoughts on the theory this way: ‘But then the next step from that is how do we record all that stuff that’s in our brain? How do we do it permanently? That’s the challenge.’⁶⁶ The challenge of capturing all the archivist’s information stored in their brain is what began my own query of how best to bridge this gap and knowledge loss for Oklahoma’s history before all the current archivists have retired and moved on. My solution was to take oral history from late career and retired archival professionals. While these oral history interviews will still leave gaps in the collective memory, they will fill in a few processes for the next generation to interpret as they will. But for the moment, the fact is that within

⁶² Bost, p.12.

⁶³ Davis, p.3; Hoffner, Interview, p.8.

⁶⁴ Henry, p.10.

⁶⁵ Milligan, p.13

⁶⁶ Place, p.13.

Oklahoma at least, the practising archivists pay more attention to the day-to-day realities of doing archival work rather than the theoretical concepts presented in the literature.

Political Pressures and Grassroots Organising: Archival Survival Instincts in Oklahoma

Oklahoma is a relatively new part of the United States of America. It became the 46th state to enter on 16 November 1907, fifteen months to the day after, ‘President Roosevelt signed the Oklahoma Enabling Act, which provided for the writing of a constitution for a state to be formed from the merging of Indian and Oklahoma territories.’⁶⁷ Joining the contiguous United States in the twentieth century meant Oklahoma was one of the last states to join the Union. Harris describes it saying, ‘we’re a very, very young state. Oklahoma’s written record is fairly short lived compared to large sections of the nation. Because it is been fairly short lived, we have a pretty detailed look at the history of the state from removal through contemporary history.’⁶⁸ Johnson explains it in a comparison with one of the thirteen original colonies, claiming that is someone found something in Boston in their attic, they’d reach out; but here in Oklahoma, ‘part of the difficulty of doing what we do here is that we’re so new that there’s still a lot of people who remember a lot of this stuff. Or their parents did and they have all these stories and they don’t think of it as history [...] I mean if you live through it, it’s not really history.’⁶⁹ It is the disconnection of residents believing Oklahoma is still

⁶⁷ Linda D. Wilson, ‘Statehood Movement,’ *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=ST025>> [accessed 12 January 2021]

⁶⁸ Harris, p.2.

⁶⁹ Johnson, p.6.

new, as well as the combination of two distinct territories being made into one state that limits residents' belief in the need for historical preservation. This is a factor that needs to be considered in the responses of all the interviewees.

Each interviewee was asked how they came to be involved with the project: through the quantitative survey, through the distribution of their archival organisational memberships, or through a connection with the researcher doing the project. This question was asked in order to know how to begin each interview. If certain follow-up questions needed to be asked, or if some backtracking needed to occur in order to get comparable data. From the quantitative survey of the twenty-five participants, eighteen included their names, which made their affirmative answers easier to verify. From my notes, I have three respondents who were already retired and were contacted separately; this was done through networking events, phone calls, or email. For these retirees, I began each interview with some of the quantitative questions, backtracking a bit to have consistent data collection for comparison's sake. An example of the backtracking process is demonstrated in this conversation with Kay Bost, one of the retired archivist's contacted off-list. She admitted, 'If I did [participate in the survey] I don't remember. [Laughter] Memory, the memory ain't what it used to be. And I've been retired for three years now, well, coming up on four.'⁷⁰ This left four interviewees still needed for this thesis to meet the minimum pool of respondents. Place was a participant whom I contacted on a referral from an academic colleague, Dr. Jody Jones. The other three participants were also contacted directly, as a prior relationship was built with them through archival associations, partnerships, conferences, and workshops. These last three

⁷⁰ Kay Bost, interview by JJ Compton, 9 March 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-18, p.1.

are still currently practising archival professionals within the state. This is important to note because if the grassroots organising had not taken place prior to the 2017 formation of the Oklahoma Archivists Association, I might not have had the opportunity or knowledge to contact other professionals off the membership lists.

One of the twenty-five oral history interview participants said she took the quantitative survey but chose not to leave her name in the response. However, because of the stage of career she is at and some of her answers, the data can be lined up to confirm her identity and the fact she did fill out the quantitative survey. Thus, of the twenty-five qualitative participants, nineteen participated in the quantitative survey as well. The data they provided in the quantitative responses are then utilised in the thematic qualitative groupings. The other six respondents were asked some of the quantitative questions to be able to compare to the nineteen for similarities and differences. Thus, a high participation rate is recorded for persons who participated in the quantitative survey and the qualitative oral histories.

Participation, both quantitatively and qualitatively, is a key determinant of this thesis in order to fully capture the nature of the work archivists do through a mixed methodological approach. Millar states quite emphatically that, in the information age, ‘Access to reliable and authentic sources of proof is critically important to democracy, human rights, and our sense of who we are and where we have come from.’⁷¹ The importance of the archivist to the democratic system in America is detailed in Chapter 1, but Millar points out that not only is it valuable to society as a whole but to archivists as well, helping us evaluate better who we have been, are, and will be in the future. She

⁷¹ Laura A. Millar, *A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age* Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman/Society of American Archivists, 2019, p.128

says, ‘A life worth living *is* a life examined. Evidence helps us conduct that psychological and spiritual introspection with honesty and integrity.’⁷² Those who chose to participate both in the quantitative survey and even more so in qualitative oral history interviews allowed themselves to be examined through their memory and stories. Their voices are captured in a specific historical moment to be examined now and into the future.

Opinions and personal experiences are key to learning how Oklahoma archivists self-identify. Asking archivists their thoughts on how Oklahoma compares to other states in its approach to historical preservation and keeping the collective memory sought to determine if individuals had ever worked outside the state or if they had collaborated, trained, or networked with other archival professionals beyond the borders of Oklahoma. If so, I wanted their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of Oklahoma’s archival workforce compared to their non-Oklahoma experiences. I approached this idea from an outsider/insider point of view, allowing the participants to share freely. The participants did not disappoint. As a reminder, Chapter 3’s quantitative data revealed that out of the forty-three respondents, 29.3% had been furloughed in an archival job and 12.2% had had hours reduced in 2018. To further lay the historical precedent for this question, in a 2002 newspaper interview,

Bob Blackburn, executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, presented a good example of how a budget cut of \$499,475 can impact a smaller agency. ‘It’s devastating,’ he said. As Blackburn pointed out, the cuts announced Tuesday follow on the heels of reductions last year and an already-reduced budget for the current fiscal year. ‘This was the third wave,’ he said. Blackburn said that the historical society has cut out travel, equipment purchases and pretty much everything else that could be reduced, and then some. ‘All of our cushion is gone,’ he said. The agency has let four people go and is not filling a dozen vacancies. ‘We are down 16 staff members,’ Blackburn said. With about 95

⁷² Ibid, p.128; emphasis is recorded in the original text, not by this author.

percent of the society's budget taken up by personnel costs, he said, the \$499,000 could mean another 15 positions lost. 'It gets down to personnel very quickly,' he said.⁷³

While this 2002 article is a bit dated, more recent headlines include the 2016 'Historical Society declares two days of furlough' or the 2019 closing announcement 'OU plans to close American Organ Institute.'⁷⁴ When the COVID-19 lockdown began in Oklahoma in March 2020, many archivists wondered if their jobs would still be around post-pandemic, something we have yet to see as we're coming out of it at this time of this writing. Thus, while a seemingly politicised question, these economic pressures are a reality for those working as archivists in state-funded institutions.

Despite this reality, the question was worded in such a way that funding was not a prompt in the interview. However, many archivists identified funding as a substantial difference between Oklahoma and other states. This is due to the fact that as early as the mid-1980s, archivists began to realise the financial strain on the profession on a national level. Cox writes,

It is no wonder that archivists and others endeavouring to preserve the remnants of the past have such insufficient resources or that some of these professionals view the strain on limited resources already stretched too thin. Archivists, historians, and others dedicated to the preservation of historical documents are swimming against a very strong tide of sentiment that does not support this work.⁷⁵

Nearly three decades later in 2019, Oklahoma archivist Bailey Hoffner discussed her transition out of her position as the American Organ Institute, as the archives was closing.

⁷³ Marie Price, 'Impact of budget cuts to vary among agencies,' *Oklahoma Business News* 11 September 2002: pp.1-3, p.2. [accessed 9 September 2017]

⁷⁴ Journal Record Staff, 'Historical Society declares two days of furlough,' *The Journal Record* 15 March 2016, pp.1-2 [accessed 9 September 2017]; Blake Douglas, 'OU Plans to close American Organ Institute,' *OU Daily* 15 June 2019, <http://www.oudaily.com/news/ou-plans-to-close-american-organ-institute/article_fa029012-8fc7-11e9-830f-3bd0d42d73c2.html> [accessed 5 September 2019]

⁷⁵ Richard J. Cox, *American Archival analysis: the recent development of the archival profession in the United States*, Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990, p.9.

She graciously still agreed to be interviewed on the record, since the interview was scheduled prior to her cutting ties with the AOI. She says,

And a lot of the time the understanding at least here at OU seems to be that at the highest levels of our organization, where a lot of decisions are being made, there is not a clear understanding of the commitment that is being made financially and otherwise to preserve these materials, when the decision is made to say, yes we're going to accept these collections. Yes, we're going to keep them through time [...] that this was a no cost thing [...] That's just not true. So I think there's a real lack of understanding at the University of Oklahoma.⁷⁶

Oklahoma's funding and staffing of archival institutions and repositories through the years is like a roller coaster – sometimes it lifts you high with grants and endowments, other times it feels like your feet have been pulled out from under you as you descend into another dark tunnel, not knowing what is around the next corner. While funding and staffing were prominent issues throughout the interviews, they were not the only thematic differences mentioned repeatedly.

Schaad, who was only briefly employed in Oklahoma as an archivist, says, 'I was disappointed at how few archivists there were and are in Oklahoma, but that might be because much of Oklahoma is Native American land; it's Indian Territory. My apologies if that's still a pejorative term. And so the tribes have their own history.'⁷⁷ She goes on to elaborate on the lack of connection between the state's traditional archival employees and the Native American employees, as well as other groups, where the primary means of archival collection is done through oral narratives, traditional dances, language revitalisation projects, and other non-traditional archival based mediums. Jennifer Green says it this way:

I think Oklahoma is different because we do not have legislation that guides our cultural heritage institutions and our records creators as far as municipal

⁷⁶ Hoffner, Interview, p.5.

⁷⁷ Schaad, p.5.

governments and organizations and all record creators. They really don't have a lot of guidance or assistance on how to manage their records either after or historical.⁷⁸

As mentioned before, the state's ability to continue to employ and retain archivists under constant threat of furlough, understaffing, or worse, is precarious. Repository connections are built through trust, training, and cooperation, where archivists learn on the job to partner with underrepresented groups. This requires time and relationship building and just as these are being developed by the archivist, funding is cut, retirements happen, or people move on. This is one of the reasons Schaad relocated, although on the record she vehemently says one of the contributing factors was 'the damn tornadoes!'⁷⁹ Weather aside, the funding coupled with the loss of community connections and the realities of history not being perceived as history are two very difficult and separate issues facing archivists within the state of Oklahoma.

In addition to asking archivists' opinions on differences between Oklahoma versus other states, opinions on each organisation's culture were also sought. Specifically, archivists were asked what one thing they would change, a question that frequently produced responses related to technology. Archivists who had no say in an organisation felt frustrated and hurt by decisions made without their input and implemented into their jobs and/or people.⁸⁰ Others felt this question was an opportunity to say here's how it has been done, but here is my hope for the future. Many contributors, whether early, mid or late career, discussed the digitisation of materials. Some thoughts

⁷⁸ Green, p.3.

⁷⁹ Schaad, p.12.

⁸⁰ A quick article on leaders and providing voice to employees is J Scott's 'Giving Your Team Members A Voice In Decision-Making: Here Are a Few Tips.' *Leadership Excellence* 36, 9 (September 2019): pp.14-15.

<<http://proxy.oc.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=138661990&site=ehost-live>> [accessed 13 January 2021]

on technological and digitisation issues included, ‘digital, is to put that infrastructure in place’, ‘a better way to handle [equipment] recycling [...] [it] would really make a difference in my ability to maintain all of this old and obsolete legacy equipment,’ legacy equipment often being the only way data can be pulled from legacy media, and one ‘website is being built from the public’s perception of how to use an archive.’⁸¹ While some organisations’ archives struggle to keep up with technological changes, others are doing new and innovative things, migrating data into usable data structures and schemas for the future and really working to bring users into a community-built platform.

While budget, staffing, and technological issues are very important to Oklahoma’s archivists, the most difficult dilemma faced by archivists is in ‘expressing the importance of the archives.’⁸² Archives and archivists, while key in helping establish institutional memory and organisational culture, are routinely faced with budget reductions. However, the return on investment (ROI) of an archive is beyond measure. In the political spectrum, the public loses the avenue of accountability, something Jimerson argues is an essential part of archives. He says, ‘In a democratic society public officials serve the interests of the people and their actions are subject to public scrutiny...Although this principle is often observed in the breach, it provides one of the essential safeguards for the interest.’⁸³ In the United States, the idea of accountability is often umbrellaed under The Rule of Law, a principle interwoven in the democratic system from the days of the Founding Fathers. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* defines the Rule of Law as it applies to accountability like this:

⁸¹ Louderback, p.6; Henry, p.9; Johnson, p.9.

⁸² Barlow, p.4.

⁸³ Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009, p.246.

The most important demand of the Rule of Law is that people in positions of authority should exercise their power within a constraining framework of well-established public norms rather than in an arbitrary, *ad hoc*, or purely discretionary manner on the basis of their own preferences or ideology. It insists that the government should operate within a framework of law in everything it does, and that it should be accountable through law when there is a suggestion of unauthorized action by those in power.⁸⁴

There can be no monetary cost associated with the loss of narratives, stories, and documents passed down from generation-to-generation, and the accountability these materials provide in the checks and balances of society. They can be studied and learned from, interpreted in new and meaningful ways, and ultimately tie employees to a company, people to a community, and generations to their past. As one scholar puts it:

For archives do not simply arrive or emerge fully formed; nor are they innocent of struggles for power in either their creation or their interpretive applications. Though their own origins are often occluded and the exclusions on which they are premised often dimly understood, all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures – pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history.⁸⁵

Archives are not neutral, but they do need people working in them. Funding the work and teaching new professionals, engaging with communities, building relationships, and partnering are all so integral to the work of archives and archivists. The cost-benefit analysis of social capital established by LAMs far outweighs the monetary costs on a spreadsheet calculating a return on investment that can never truly be measured.

Asking career archivists and retirees about things they wish they had known coming into the LAM field and things they now wish they could tell their younger selves proved to be a tricky and double-sided answer for many of the participants. Their answers

⁸⁴ Jeremy Waldron, 'The Rule of Law' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Published 22 June 2016 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rule-of-law/>> [accessed 26 July 2023]

⁸⁵ Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories,' in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. by Antoinette Burton, Durham: Duke UP, 2005, pp.1-24, p.6.

varied in both the positive and negative personal and professional experiences. However, themes like mentorship, change, and documentation emerged, especially from the late and mid-career archivists. These themes are all tied to the idea of the archivists building and keeping relationships, both positive and negative. One archivist said, 'My younger self needed a better way of keeping her mouth shut sometimes,' while another hints similarly they should, 'probably sometimes be a little less stubborn with administration.'⁸⁶ A third person summed up the relationships built and kept in this way: 'love many, trust few, paddle your own canoe.'⁸⁷ A fourth one shared this personal relationship advice she wished she had taken: 'Don't make decisions based on men. Ever.'⁸⁸ Professional and personal relationships are both complicated and rewarding; thus, nurturing them from an earlier point in a career is beneficial in the long run, even if seen as cumbersome at times.

Nonetheless, many mid and late-career archivists also mentioned how much job satisfaction they had over the course of their professional lives. For example, they said things like, 'you really have to love it because we don't get paid what we're worth', 'get into this profession early', 'I've been real happy with what I've been doing', and 'you really picked it right. This is fun.'⁸⁹ The idea that the archival work, while underpaid, was rewarding and challenging, created a true sense of job satisfaction for these professionals is evident in the above comments. Many management gurus and journals have documented over the years how workers with high job satisfaction are often more productive and have a greater sense of well-being than those with little or no job

⁸⁶ Bost, p.14; Lovett, p.12.

⁸⁷ Crowder, p.19.

⁸⁸ Blalack, p.9.

⁸⁹ Harris, p.12; Henry, p.12; Baroff, p.16; Schaad, p.11.

satisfaction.⁹⁰ Some participants wrestled with the theme of job satisfaction more than others, especially those who wanted more opportunities for career advancement and progression, but ultimately, even after a ‘mid-career life crisis,’ Oklahoma archivists found ways to be satisfied professionally within the field.

Early career archivists focused more on the technical and personal aspects of the profession. However, one late-career practitioner mentioned the technical aspects of the job as well. One late career archivist’s advice to younger professionals was to, ‘take all the computer classes available. [Laughter] They won’t kill you.’⁹¹ In comparison, the early career professional mentioned softer technical skills like grant writing, ‘because I need funding for the archives and I need that to come from outside of the institution.’⁹² Both groups mentioned continuing education, which suggests that archivists do not just need training at one point in time but instead need to develop the skills necessary to evolve with the changing nature of information itself. Archivists need continued access to the available funding to get the training and funding for costs associated with technological advances in software, hardware, and programming, to keep up to date with the profession. These learned skills bring both personal achievement and a commitment to the larger institution. One young career archivist even mentioned that having better self-awareness in choosing where to work would have been beneficial because she ended up in a lone arranger position where, ‘over the past few years, I’ve realized how much I miss people.’⁹³ While there are not an exceptionally large number of archival jobs within

⁹⁰ For a comprehensive literature review on job satisfaction, see Brikend Aziri, ‘Job Satisfaction: A Literature Review’ *Management Research and Practice* 3:4 (2011): pp.77-86. <http://www.mrp.ase.ro/no34/f7.pdf> [accessed 13 January 2021]

⁹¹ Davis, p.6.

⁹² Barlow, p.8.

⁹³ Hoffner, Interview, p.12.

Oklahoma, there are those with more staffing than just one person in the repository. Thus, early career archivists tended to focus more on the opportunities for continuing education, a better knowledge of their own personality, and how to better pursue opportunities for external funding as concepts they wish they had known coming into the profession.

The Implications of Professional Upheaval for Oklahoma's Archival Workforce

The idea of archives being neutral and/or objective is not a new idea, even though it is in the forefront of many archival blogs, forums, and conference themes, especially as archives are looking to identify the gaps of diversity in their collections, personnel, and decolonise the language of bias through metadata tags and finding aids.⁹⁴ The conversation surrounding archival bias and neutrality began as early as 1944, theoretical though it may have been at the time. Jacques Derrida said, 'the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event.'⁹⁵ Thus, this French philosopher began a conversation of how to archive based on the biases humans would make in doing the work of archiving, not even taking into account the technical errors of machine learning and AI, which were still the brainchild of science fiction writing.

⁹⁴ See documentary 'Change the Subject' which is a 54-minute documentary film about a group of Dartmouth students who challenged anti-immigrant language in the Library of Congress subject headings, <<https://collections.dartmouth.edu/archive/object/change-subject/change-subject-film>>; the Society of Southwest Archivist offered a virtual workshop and discussion on 29 July 2020.

⁹⁵ Derrida, pp.16-17.

Some archivists were under the control of oppressive systems of government or colonisation. One example of this is, ‘the Uzbek regime’s use of archives to create national myths and legitimize existing power structures finds parallels across the globe...in states seeking to come to terms with the legacy of European imperialism.’⁹⁶ The bias inherent in collecting to support only the state-mandated ideology led to ‘the archive emerg[ing] as a site of contestation as well as comfort throughout the Soviet period.’⁹⁷ These sites of contestation fly in the face of archivists and archives being object and/or neutral despite archivists at the time being taught to be as neutral and objective as possible in preserving records. Thus, the need for continued on-the-job training is apparent as metadata in documents and records is being decolonised from oppressive systems of government and power structures.

Machine computing, human errors through code, the Internet, artificial intelligence, real vs. fake news, social media bots, and all other forms of technological changes are realities in the postmodern twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Because of these advances in technological innovation, a better understanding of archival bias and neutrality began to be articulated:

This connection of event, producer, content and houser all are closely tied to the bias and neutrality archivists perceive within themselves and their profession. In fact, one Canadian archivist dispels the notion of neutrality ‘The notion that archives are neutral places with no vested interests has been undermined by current philosophical and theoretical handlings of the concept of the ‘Archive’; it is now undeniable that archives are spaces of power.’⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Jeff Sahadeo, ‘Without the Past There is No Future: Archives, History, and Authority in Uzbekistan’ in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. by Antoinette Burton, Durham: Duke UP, 2005, pp.45-67, p.49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.50.

⁹⁸ Rodney G.S. Carter, ‘Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence,’ *Archivaria* 61 (2006), pp.215-233, p.216.

Spaces of power, human biases, gaps in collections, silences within archives, all these premises point to the idea that archives and archivists are, in fact, not neutral spaces. But because we are examining professionals across the generations, meaning many learned their archival knowledge at different points, it was necessary to ask their opinion of how they would position themselves in current thought. Oklahoma archivists face their own political pressures within the ever-changing archival community, thus determining their positionality became a goal of this thesis.

From the first interview of a late-career archivist, it was apparent that this myth of neutrality referred to in the literature was not something that archivists trained in that fashion held as a core belief. The first participant stated, 'I don't actually see it as being neutral or objective quite frankly. And again, it gets back to, it depends on who's in power. And that, that plays a part in what we keep and how we archive it.'⁹⁹ Others went on to say things about collecting opposing points of view. One example mentioned by a participant is in collecting both the papers of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher and President George Lynn Cross. This excerpt from *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* explains their historical opposing viewpoints:

On January 14, 1946, [Fisher] applied for admission to the University of Oklahoma, College of Law. After reviewing Fisher's credentials, the university's president, Dr. George Lynn Cross, advised her that there was no academic reason to reject her application for admission, but that Oklahoma statutes prohibited whites and blacks from attending classes together. The laws also made it a misdemeanor to instruct or attend classes comprised of mixed races. Cross would have been fined up to fifty dollars a day, and the white students who attended class with her would have been fined up to twenty dollars a day.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Louderback, p.7.

¹⁰⁰ Melvin C. Hall, 'Fisher, Ada Lois Sipuel,' *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=FI009>> [accessed 5 July 2023]

Collecting opposing viewpoints helps history be told from all people, and not just one side. Archivists correctly identify during their interviews the concepts of ‘subjective material’, the belief that no one, ‘can be neutral or objective[...] that there are prejudices and bias in whatever our cosmology is and whatever we read is called confirmation bias,’ and the idea of inherent biases as, ‘things that we don’t realise.’¹⁰¹ Thus, the majority of Oklahoma practitioners realised on many different levels that the historical ideal of repositories being unbiased and neutral was never the actual practice within their organisation.

Despite this divergence from twentieth-century taught practice, many interviewees also stated that the presentation of records, whether analogue or digital, required archivists to be:

as neutral and objective as we can because like I said they can be this fulcrum or focal point for all the different points of view to, to look at it, you know. Whereas if we interpreted it or told people what they were looking at, we’re going to [...] affect that people’s versions of the story or that we’re taking a side or anything like that.¹⁰²

Yet many retirees also claimed neutrality in documentation, ‘I don’t think the archive should take a stand that holding onto a school is good or bad or tearing down a building is bad. That’s not our job. Our job is to document it was there [...] ours is to keep track of what happened.’¹⁰³ Another archivist put it this way: ‘I’m no longer a neutral based institution worthy of public support and of public confidence in my ability to be a keeper of the sacred rather than an interpreter for them,’ when they began to wander away from the neutral/objective ideal.¹⁰⁴ While still another claimed neutrality and objectivity should

¹⁰¹ Barlow, p.7; Henry, p.11; Crowder, p.18; Hoffner, Interview, p.9.

¹⁰² Johnson, p.7.

¹⁰³ Bost, p.13.

¹⁰⁴ Harris, pp.6-7.

be strived for, but also realising, while not unique to Oklahoma, the difficulties which surround the fact, ‘that if you are a group that has not fared well, there is a certain amount of mistrust and working with people who maybe are not like yourself. If you don’t have a reason to believe that they respect you and respect your story, I’m not sure you feel comfortable transferring your materials to them.’¹⁰⁵ The element of trust is evident in the decades-long relationship established by Bill Welge and Dr. Parker McKenzie, which was discussed earlier in the chapter. It took decades of relationship building and communication before Parker even brought to light the photos taken by his late wife, a trust built over time and mutual understanding. The idea of documenting without interpretation is a great theoretical ideal, but not a practical one. For as we all know, humans are complex creatures bringing their own personal experiences with them into whatever workforce they enter. Thus, archivists believe it is better to preserve history with the notion that it may not be perfect but to contextualise it in the larger picture of history with a presentation and representation of as many points of view as possible.

The most interesting response came from a mid-career archivist who, when asked about the idea of archives being neutral or objective, started clapping. The next part in the transcript is from my response to the clapping: ‘There’s the first time I’ve ever had clapping. Thank you. [She pulls out her “archives are not neutral” coffee mug].’¹⁰⁶ More than just an accessory, her coffee mug brought an in-depth discussion about where archivists approach the objectivity and neutrality idea from, their background and learning clearly helping lay the foundation for their interpretation of this concept. She sums it up best when talking about working with archival materials: ‘I can only assign

¹⁰⁵ Davis, p.6.

¹⁰⁶ Milligan, p.15.

information to something that I'm describing or choosing to accept or not accept based on what [my lived] experiences are at this date. And it's just stupid to think that we're omnipotent.'¹⁰⁷ No one can possibly know all the details surrounding an object. Different experiences of individuals will lead to different interpretations and even different linguistic attachments to the articles themselves. The libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) field realise the multi-faceted experience of people. Thus, Oklahoma archivists acknowledge past biases within their repositories and the myth of neutrality and objectivity, even as they try to repair harmful practices through language data clean-up, data migration, and repatriation of objects.

Other participants mentioned the idea of balance, especially as it related to the diversity of collections. One individual reported, 'I tried to balance the material that came in, both the Anglo, African-American, American Indian.'¹⁰⁸ But if the workforce is not sufficiently diverse to interpret the collections through appropriate cultural lenses, then the collections themselves, while diverse, would still be subject to the lens of the interpreting archivist, who is oftentimes white. Another archivist, in discussing connections to diverse communities, mentioned one of their staff; this staff member is married to a Comanche, which made her able 'to talk to tribal people easier because she knows the people better.'¹⁰⁹ Thus, to create balance within repositories, community connections and diverse personnel are essential.

Many archives have addressed such biases with partnership and collaboration, whether internal or external, but as mentioned before, with a lack of staffing and funding

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Lovett, p.11.

¹⁰⁹ Baroff, p.14.

and the time necessary to build and establish relationships, this often becomes a latent initiative, even though it is a much needed one. As a late-career archival professional, Schaad sums up the reality of being an archivist in the following way: ‘It would be nice if we could be neutral or objective but we’re human and so we bring our biases [...] But I think we also need to, to have those ethics, to have those standards [...] to collect the lesser known stories or the unheard voices.’¹¹⁰ In a separate oral history interview, taken external to this project, Michelle Place talked about her personal conviction to tell the whole history of Oklahoma; she said:

When I became the executive Director [of the Tulsa Historical Society Museum] in 2012, I committed myself personally and also my staff, that we would endeavour to tell the story of 1921 and to make available globally everything that we had in our collection that related to Black Wall Street, Greenwood. The race massacre all, all of those things.¹¹¹

Her point of view differed from many of the respondents in that Place leaned into the fact that this biased view of Oklahoma history, which left out Black Wall Street and Greenwood, needed to be brought to the forefront of historical teaching in the state. Oklahoma archivists, through their own personal convictions, are helping Oklahomans to wrestle with the hard history of our state, even as political opinions differ.

In order to understand the political differences of opinion, it is important to understand the public documents and statements released by Oklahoma’s political leaders in comparison with Place. In 2001, the Tulsa Race Riot Commission released their final report ‘pursuant to House Joint Resolution 1035 (1997),’ in which they studied the Tulsa Race Massacre from the points of view of historians, survivors and archaeological

¹¹⁰ Schaad, p.9.

¹¹¹ Parker Johnson, ‘Interview with Michelle Place’, *Tulsa Community College* website, 2021, Transcript, pp.1-15, p.4 <<https://www.tulsacc.edu/sites/default/files/documents/michelle-place-tcc-21-voices-interview-transcript.pdf>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

remains.¹¹² The commission studied reparations and made recommendations understanding that these may or may not be enacted by the City of Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma. Taking the time to study and learn and wrestle with this history is in stark contrast to what is happening today at the state level politically. Just two decades after the commission's report, the current head of the State Department of Education, Ryan Walters, commented at an open meeting on the Tulsa Race Massacre. His comments were reported beyond the state and national media outlets, as *The Guardian* reported in summer 2023,

The state official in charge of Oklahoma's schools is facing calls for impeachment, after he said teachers should tell students that the Tulsa race massacre was not racially motivated. In a public forum on Thursday, Ryan Walters, Oklahoma's state superintendent of public instruction, said teachers could cover the 1921 massacre, in which white Tulsans murdered an estimated 300 Black people, but teachers should not "say that the skin color determined it".¹¹³

The examination of bias, both personally and internal to the state of Oklahoma needs to be done to ensure that occurrences like this do not happen in public instruction.

Oklahomans must learn both the good and bad sides of their state's history so that the citizens are properly informed in their democratic society, and so they can learn and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

To come back to Place's personal conviction and the job satisfaction archivists obtain throughout their careers, such satisfaction often comes through personal and professional relationships built over time. As the 2002 author of *Riot and Remembrance*,

¹¹² Frank Keating, Larry Adair, Stratton Taylor, Susan Savage, and members of the Tulsa City Council, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, 28 February, 2001 <<https://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf>> [accessed 21 October 2023]

¹¹³ Adam Gabbat, 'Outrage as Republican says 1921 Tulsa massacre not motivated by race,' *The Guardian* 8 July 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jul/08/oklahoma-republican-tulsa-race-massacre>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

James S. Hirsch, states in his acknowledgements, ‘Lori Curtis and Gina Minks at the McFarlin Library’s Special Collections Division at the University of Tulsa were unfailingly helpful.’¹¹⁴ These LAM workers were just doing their job, but in a way that allowed history to be discoverable and told accurately for posterity, instead of being hidden away. While some will call this evolving work of bringing to light the hard aspects of history woke, professionals in LAM and oral history industries prefer to call it what it really is, ‘a commitment to social justice, to righting wrongs, to listening deeply to human expressions of vulnerability, creativity, perseverance, celebration, wonderment, the impacts of being wounded, colonized, and dehumanized, and to use the history as a witness, as educator, and as a portal for empowerment.’¹¹⁵ Like most professions, the theory and practice vary, as well as the beliefs of neutrality and objectivity, but archivists keep learning because once we know better, we can do better.

Historical research has been changed by the emergence of digital humanities and the importance of primary research skills in an era of decreased media literacy. The idea to question participants on the changing scholarly examination of the historical record arose out of an *Archival Science* article positing the idea of originality and identity with archives themselves, especially through the digitisation, migration, and transcription processes that occur when records move.¹¹⁶ Archivists were asked their thoughts on the changing nature of the scholarly record and how different disciplines approach studying it. Jason Lustig examining Jewish archives, puts it this way:

¹¹⁴ James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: America’s Worst Race Riot and Its Legacy* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002, p.342.

¹¹⁵ Thalia M. Mulvihill and Raji Swaminathan, ‘Methodological and Pedagogical Opportunities for Oral History,’ in *Oral History and Qualitative Methodologies: Educational Research for Social Justice* New York: Routledge, 2022, pp.253-263, p.263.

¹¹⁶ Geoffrey Yeo, “‘Nothing is the same as something else’: Significant properties and notions of identity and originality,’ *Archival Science*. 10:2 (June 2010): pp.85-116. <doi: [10.1007/s10502-010-9119-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-010-9119-9)>

...that is to say, the scholarly archival turn actually turns on its head assumptions about the trajectory from historical events to their documentation. If archives do not just contain history's sources but are the subject of its inquiry, we can reposition archives not only as the objects of history but also as its active subjects, driving historical change and transformation.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, this scholar did not publish until 2022, so his wording was unable to be used in the interviews, despite this being the intent. Thus, this complex question almost always was left open-ended to be able to see where each interview subject would take their answer. However, in one interview, the question was framed into historiography and contextualisation more so than identity itself. This was due to the previous discussion that had already led us to this place in the interview. Of the twenty-five participants, two did not answer, one from researcher oversight and one from second interview cancellation due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Of the twenty-three that were asked the question, fifteen addressed the topic, while nine either requested more information, had felt they had already covered it, or chose not to comment on it.

From those who addressed the idea, one talked about diversity and inclusion both in the records kept and the composition of the governing board, another talked about linguistic and artistic examination of records, and one about the elite making up the majority of historical materials from previous generations as opposed to the plethora of information available now. Three respondents hinted back to the previous question on neutrality and bias saying that we have to, 'understand that the perspective from which [the document] is written is going to shape it no matter what,' with a second individual elaborating on that idea saying the source needed to be considered, 'if we examine things closely, from many different angles, I think we're better able to understand thought

¹¹⁷ Lustig, *A Time to Gather*, p.16.

processes and decisions. So I think it's a good idea.'¹¹⁸ Another two talked about the loss of control and stability with records. One stated essentially that the electronic record was inevitably the direction archives were headed while another worried that with so many fields creating records, they have forgotten about the basics of record creation bringing the conversation back to when historiography is being taught outside the field of history, there needs to be a focus more on the document or record itself.¹¹⁹ All these answers can be summed up in the varied ways archivists and archives wrestle with the nature of truth and identity. One archivist who answered the question on record, said it best:

So here in America, it was white land-owning men donating their collections, and so what's then accepted this truth is only what we received through that lens. That's really problematic. And really that's at the heart of what has always gotten me the most excited about, about archives. And so I would say the movement to examine the nature of the historical record is the reason I'm here.¹²⁰

The best and worst parts of a job are the most rewarding and difficult endeavours to articulate. Oklahoma's archivists are at a unique point in time where wrestling with hard history is both a rewarding and difficult part of their careers. Yes, they recognise the necessity and validity of examining themselves, their practices, their value, and their motivations as key to moving the profession forward. This thesis then serves as a first step in the process, showing that Oklahoma archivists are approaching the task with resilience through an attitude of intersectionality, vigilance, and knowledge despite understaffing, underfunding, and overwork.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, technology is vast and evolving, sometimes fickle in its ability for permanence but a tool which archivists have embraced

¹¹⁸ Baroff, pp.16-17; Louderback, p.9.

¹¹⁹ Henry, pp.12-13; Harris, p.8; Davis, p.7; Crowder, p.19; Schaad, p.12.

¹²⁰ Hoffner, Interview, p.13.

through many trials, errors, and successes. The advent of DAS curriculum and certification for archivists mentioned in Chapter 3 is just a first step in addressing how technology is and will continue to change the day-to-day activities of the profession. With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) in the existence of economic free markets, the need for archivists of introspection and integrity becomes profound. Peterson puts it this way: ‘If the monofocus on digitising eviscerates description and reference staff, this will create a situation in which academic users are not given the tools and archival support to do their research. In the long run society will suffer.’¹²¹ In order to best serve the end users in the LAM field – the general public – Oklahoma staffing levels must be funded and employees must be retained or Oklahoma will pay the cost.

The last question asked during the oral history interviews was added after the IRB/Ethics Review approval. Knowing how archivists perceive current events is a factor in better understanding how they feel about the future of digital repositories and digital archiving. The addendum question, a current event at the time of asking, arose out of an announcement posted on blogs and social media that President Obama would not have a traditional Presidential Library as established in the 1950s legislation and was working with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to create a new paradigm.¹²² Thus, asking participants their thoughts on the President Obama Digital Research Center allowed data to be captured on archivists' thoughts of changing technological practices, collections, and shifts within the larger archival profession. The

¹²¹ Trudy Huskamp Peterson, ‘Managing Turbulence’ in Milena Dobreva, ed., *Digital Archives: Management, Use and Access*, London: Facet Publishing, 2018, pp.23-38, p.35.

¹²² The announcement can be found here <<https://www.obama.org/updates/obama-foundation-nara-announce-new-details-obama-presidential-center-structure-operations/>> and NARA’s response to it here <<https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/information-about-new-model-for-obama-presidential-library>>

announcement was made in May of 2017, but a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was not released by NARA until February of 2019. During this time lapse, I submitted and received my Ethics Review/IRB approval, in December of 2017. Thus, oral approval was given to proceed to ask this question within the oral interviews, since it was considered more of a current event discussion during the interview. Therefore the late inclusion of a current event question also provides insight into how closely Oklahoma's archivists were paying attention to the national level profession occurrences and decisions.

To begin with, of the twenty-five oral history participants, two were not asked the question, because the MOU had not been signed nor had the question obtained oral approval to be added. Both of these interviews which did not ask about the President Obama Digital Research Center were conducted in January 2019. Of the remaining twenty-three, thirteen had not heard anything about the digital research centre, eight said they had heard of it but only a little bit and asked for more information, and two said they had heard of it and read about it. More information at the time of each interview was provided to the participants to get their thoughts on this paradigmatic shift of Presidential Libraries in the United States.

Initially, there were mixed feelings among the respondents. The positive sentiments include things like 'I think it's a good idea to go digital. It is hard for people to get, you know, to get to their research place', 'I really like the idea of it being more digital. That's the world that we live in now', 'I think it is absolutely the way of the future', 'in some way this seems fitting to me', 'the greater the access, the greater the usefulness period', 'Electronic records don't have to be in one place; they can be

accessed anywhere,’ and ‘I don’t think it scares me like [...] it’s probably like scaring a lot of people.’¹²³ The nature of the records that Obama created and utilised during his presidential tenure, as well as the greater access a digital research centre provides, were the positive elements of this new paradigm which the archivists identified.

In comparison, the negative elements of a digital research centre versus a traditional Presidential library included thoughts on the loss of physical space, the idea that the power to change from a library to a research centre should reside with the people to whom the President is accountable, and the amount of digital storage space needed alongside its ongoing storage costs. One archivist made this valid point: ‘Well and if it’s all digital, it’s stored somewhere right?’¹²⁴ The realisation that an information professional would still need to be available to help navigate digital collections was a pointed negative brought to light.¹²⁵ In particular, this last item was addressed with wry humour when one interview subject said: ‘I sometimes need help finding the cat food in Wal-Mart.’¹²⁶ As we have recently seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone person needs help in navigating various forms for technology and digital research. Those aided during the pandemic include college professors with Learning Management Systems, K-12 students with digital media skills, ‘experts’ on Facebook posting ‘authoritative’ information about vaccines and politics, lawyers removing Zoom chat filters, the elderly trying to navigate digital booking systems for vaccine appointments, and grandchildren FaceTime reading with grandparents. Technology permeates every

¹²³ Baroff, p.18; Barlow, p.10; Henry, p.15, Jonson, p.13; Harris, p.8; Schaad, p.14; Hoffner, Interview, p.14.

¹²⁴ Vance, p.8.

¹²⁵ Bost, p.17; Lovett, p.14; Johnson, p.13; Henry, p.15, Davis, pp.7-8.

¹²⁶ Davis, p.8.

area of life, not just archives. The Obama Presidential Library shift to a digital research centre was timely in helping NARA set up policies and procedures when no global pandemic was on the horizon. We have now returned to a changed post-pandemic world. We will see what the future holds for professionals aiding in technological navigation tools as well as storing and accessing presidential papers.

Conclusion

Encouraging discovery while seeking outsider funding and alongside insider budget and staffing shortages sums up one of the main collective memorable experiences of archivists. The quote, ‘Google will bring you back, you know, a hundred thousand answers. A librarian will bring you back the right one,’ from literary author Neil Gaiman is often cited as why librarians are important but the full interview paints a larger picture of libraries, including archives, in society.¹²⁷ One social infrastructure researcher, Klinenberg, paints the bleak picture of funding neglect in public policy for ‘libraries are not the kinds of institutions that most social scientists, policymakers, and community leaders usually bring up when they discuss social capital and how to build it [...] the library is among the most critical forms of social infrastructure that we have. It’s also one of the most undervalued.’¹²⁸ In order to make libraries, archives, and museums a continued place of encounter and discovery, the professionals themselves, along with the larger public, must advocate for funding and be recognised as sources of democratic

¹²⁷ Indianapolis Public Library, *Neil Gaiman on Libraries*, online video recording, *YouTube*, 19 April 2010 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH-sR1uCO6g&feature=emb_logo> [accessed 13 January 2021]

¹²⁸ Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (New York: Crown, 2018), p.32.

social capital that are needed, encouraged, and supported by elected officials. However, as the data has shown, advocacy is not something that Oklahoma archivists do well.

The idea of painting a holistic picture of archival professionals in Oklahoma as a case study for other states to examine in order to better address things like workforce transitions, institutional memory and organisational culture, and understanding staffing and funding levels in a fiscally conservative state began out of a desire to learn more about my own chosen profession and career. Again, as many within the state are lone arrangers, myself included, we oftentimes feel isolated and excluded from many of the larger institutional decisions being implemented upon us. Gathering these stories together and listening to the hardships and hopes of those who work with Oklahoma's historic records on a daily basis, provided a context not only for myself, but hopefully for a generation coming behind me to see that as quirky and quiet as we often are, we're also passionate about our career choices and acknowledge the challenges that come with remaining true to the profession. For as Harlow and Bailey recall in their experiences with the 2018 Oklahoma teacher walkout, 'oral history can transform those who narrate, participate, or bear witness.'¹²⁹ I bear witness so others can see the adaptability or not of generations of archivists and have come to realise the changing nature of the information professional in the digital landscape with all that it entails. LAMs bring extensive professional expertise, while community partnerships can strengthen and enrich collections. Labour endures despite the political pressures often faced within Oklahoma's borders. And maybe even the state as a whole will realise the important and necessary role these individuals play in Oklahoma's infrastructure, creating bridges between

¹²⁹ Harlow and Bailey, 'A Call to Action', p.87.

different and diverse communities, collecting stories, photos, and documents from the past for the future, and providing access to all.

Chapter 5

Bolstering Oklahoma's Archival Communities

Introduction

The role of archives in a democratic society is to work against the emergence of an easily controlled masses of people by helping to better inform them. Gerrienne Schaad, who understands archives as sites of information, describes Oklahoma's relationship with archives thus: 'They really don't, in my opinion, the state of Oklahoma does not consider archival records an asset.'¹ Despite the fact that archivists feel undervalued, they continue to push back against misinformation. The technological advancements of the 21st century have allowed the work of archivists to be instrumental in an informed society in a multitude of ways. Archivists educate beyond the traditional stories told by the winners, provide fact-checking for inaccuracies, recover those materials deemed historically relevant to current and future society, and digitise and make accessible mountains of materials for the public to view. They also network with groups – educating and informing in the methods of doing archival work – thereby improving the democratic process in a manner that prevents the dystopian worlds of Huxley and Orwell from coming to fruition.

The concept of a misunderstood and often overlooked workforce is addressed by McCallon and Tucker's identification of Wiener's hypothetical idea of transparency. They specifically address the academic library in the United States, but I believe this idea is also relevant to Oklahoma's archivists, when McCallon and Tucker write that

¹ Schaad, p.7.

transparency is, ‘when an entity, taken for granted and not well understood, is relatively invisible.’² No longer do Oklahoma’s archivists need to be categorised as a career which is often misunderstood by the public or exist in the state of invisibility. Those doing the work to uphold the state’s democracy despite overwhelming hurdles are an important facet of society that needs to be brought to the forefront instead of placed only within certain situational groupings. With the 21st century’s call for more information and archival materials online at the tips of our fingers, with the pressures of mass and social media creating dystopian situations, the LAM profession has become even more important. The LAM field in Oklahoma is beginning to advocate for and about the work they do through grassroots organising so they can better inform the citizenry in what and how the work is done, to uphold the democratic principles of the United States, and to ensure that the work continues.

This chapter aims to interpret the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data in a more thematic manner than just the ordered responses to the questions in both the online survey and the sit-down oral history interviews. Doing so will allow the mixed methodological interpretation mentioned in Chapter 2 to further support the argumentative themes utilised of identity through ‘validation and generalisation, causal inferences and a double perspective’ as well as focus ‘on the identification of plots and subplots in the stories and on integrating them into themes.’³ This mixed methodological identity construction through thematic analysis allows Oklahoma archivists to be unique – their own socio-subcultural group, to be valued as a state-wide profession, and to prove

² Mark L. McCallon and John Mark Tucker, ‘From the Bequest of John Harvard to the Dream of Alexandria: Historiography of the Academic Library in the United States, 1638-2015.’ in *The Academic Library in the United States: Historical Perspectives*, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2022, p.15.

³ Monrad, *Acta Sociologica*, p.356; Hall, *Mixing Methods in Social Research*, p.181.

the important role they play in both institutional memory and organisational culture. As a profession which assesses itself nationally – albeit it is arguable how well this is done – smaller geographic locations often go unexamined. Archivists prove their value as essential to fill in order to lessen both cultural and institutional gaps created during workforce transitions. This is done by utilising oral history to study Oklahoma archivists’ grassroots organising which situates them firmly as their own group to be studied, a smaller populace, which encounters the state’s history on a different level through workforce transitions related to memory and identity. When paired with accounts of the practices and procedures of newly hired professionals within the same field, this will create a more cohesive narrative of what it means to have been and to be an Oklahoma archivist.

The two lenses chosen to connect the work of the archivist to the history presented in the literature are those of institutional memory and organisational culture. The two ideas encapsulate the role and importance of archivists to their larger institutions both in traditional print and/or artefact preservation, but also in the memory of the institution as well. Linde describes the magnitude memory plays within an organisation as, ‘the central element of the institution’s memory: the parts of the past that are so important that they are always included.’⁴ She observed this while doing a longitudinal study embedded in an insurance company. In order to obtain a complete picture of archivists as individuals but also as part of the whole profession within the state of Oklahoma, institutional memory cannot be the only lens through which they are examined. Gómez describes the nature of documents to organisational culture saying,

⁴ Linde, *Working the Past*, p.95.

‘Archives are fully part of the history of written culture... [They] include all the testimonies, practices, representations and agents involved in the different stages of the writing process, namely the production, reception and preservation of written documents.’⁵ Thus, by taking a two-definition approach to examining archival workers in Oklahoma, we can understand not only the roles they play within their singular institutions but also the role they play in helping to preserve the larger culture of the state through print, narrative, artefacts, and other mediums. In doing so, archivists leave traces of Oklahoma’s history to be studied, examined, told, interpreted, and printed in the minds of future generations. This dual definition approach places the archivists within the libraries, archives, and museum (LAM) industry, thus firmly situating their place in both the workforce and as a subcultural group within the larger culture of Oklahoma’s people.

Archives & Democratic Governance

The most important question on the broadest scale is why archives and archivists work to make information available. The notion of a democratic society has come up multiple times, but a better understanding of what is composed within democratic governance might fit here best. The United States has the 1967 Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, the function of which is: ‘to ensure informed citizens, vital to the functioning of a democratic society.’⁶ The Founding Fathers believed that having informed, i.e. educated, voters was essential to create a government by the people and for the people.⁷

⁵ Gómez, *European History Quarterly*, p.546.

⁶ United States Department of Justice, ‘Freedom of Information Act’ 5 U.S.C. § 552 (2018) <<https://www.foia.gov/>>

⁷ At the time it meant white men, but with constitutional amendments has evolved to include women and all races, classes, and genders of people.

Democracy's cornerstone in the United States is having voters who know the issues for which they are voting, the candidates on the ballot, and the ideals for which they stand, oftentimes both politically and personally, therefore making an informed choice at the polling place.

Technology necessitated the FOI Act be strengthened in 2016 to include access to records digitally, allowing citizens access to digital materials from publicly funded representatives and entities.⁸ Even though there are nine exemptions which fall under the act, the purpose remains the same: an informed citizenry. This is on a national level though, and states have their own Open Records or Open Information standards, policies and procedures. One UCLA law review sums it up best: 'America's public records laws are simultaneously well known and obscure' but their ultimate goal is to let the public 'know *what their government is up to* [author emphasis].'⁹ Oklahoma was added to the Union in 1907 when it was granted statehood despite its existence as two separate territories before that time. Thus, it falls under the 1967 Act and its 2016 revisions.

The 'Oklahoma Open Records Act' was not legislated until 1985, and its last amendment was in 1997. Therefore, the digital access update in the national act in 2016 had yet to trickle down into the state legislative process.¹⁰ The only recorded digital records management consideration in the state of Oklahoma came from an official opinion in 2009 by then Attorney General Drew Edmondson. In regards to a request by

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Claudia Polsky, 'Open Records, Shattered Labs: Ending Political Harassment of Public University Researcher,' *UCLA Law Review*, 66, 1 (Jan. 2019): pp.208-293; p.219; 221 <<https://www.uclalawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/securepdfs/2018/12/66.1.4-Polsky.pdf>> [accessed 15 July 2022] Emphasis by author.

¹⁰ <<https://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/DeliverDocument.asp?CiteID=80288>>

Oklahoma Department of Libraries then Director, Susan McVey, Edmondson said the following about technology and open records:

Electronic communications that qualify as "records" are subject to the Open Records Act and Records Management Act. Moreover, to conclude otherwise would allow public officials and employees to circumvent the open records laws simply by using privately owned personal electronic communication devices to conduct public business.¹¹

While cases like the Oklahoma Publishing Company requesting birth dates of all public employees garnered an exemption in 2011 by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, they concluded, ‘openness in government is essential to the functioning of a democracy. The greatest threat to privacy comes from [a] government in secret.’¹² Thus, the idea of open records being vital and essential to an informed citizenry is something that Oklahoma legislative bodies have embraced in theory, though perhaps not in practice, as evidenced by the funding of both workers and budgets needed to open records fully.

Researchers beyond Oklahoma and the United States realise the importance of open records in a democratic society. A thesis published in 2013 by University College London scholar Elaine Penn argued that ‘Freedom of information legislation has also contributed to a growing sense of awareness by the general public about the value and potential power of archives.’¹³ The lens of axiology, which focuses on the philosophy of goodness and value, used by Penn indicates that archives are the professional field in the way society adds value to its system of governance. While this author refers to documents, materials, and processes, the people themselves can also be thought of as an

¹¹ *Opinion No. 09-12*, Opinion No. 09-12 (2009) (Ops.Okla.Atty.Gen. May. 13, 2009) <<https://casetext.com/case/opinion-no-10775>>

¹² *Oklahoma Publishing Co. v. Oklahoma*, Oklahoma Supreme Court, 2011 OK 68, ¶ 36 <<https://law.justia.com/cases/oklahoma/supreme-court/2011/463593.html>>

¹³ Elaine Samantha Marston Penn, ‘Exploring Archival Value: An Axiological Approach’ (Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2014), p. 84. <<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1455310/>>

added value to an institution. As information becomes available online, more of the general public will be educated about the nature of what archives are, how they benefit society, what information is contained within them, and what information is now housed locally.

Mexico is also experiencing an opening of archives containing government documents through the Federal Law for Transparency and Access to Information (LFTAIPG in Spanish) which was passed in 2002. An article about the legislation again points to the necessity of open archives to democracy when it says ‘for any democracy, the right to information is a third-generation inalienable human right. In Mexico, its exercise implies a cultural revolution that cannot happen without access to official archives, the place where documents are kept – documents that are, in turn, the pillars of the LFTAIPG.’¹⁴ The citizens of Mexico are looking at the 19th and 20th century archives of Europe, Canada, and the United States, many of which opened or began as being open, as a crucial element to fostering their own informed citizenry in a democratic society. But to point back to the Founding Fathers of the United States and their ideas of a democratic society, words like those of Dr. Benjamin Rush put it best: ‘Freedom can exist only in the society of knowledge. Without learning, men are incapable of knowing their rights, and where learning is confined to a few people, liberty can be neither equal nor universal.’¹⁵ His words emphasise the importance of education and knowledge as cornerstones to liberty and freedom. Legislation associated with opening records, whether

¹⁴ Patricia Galeana, ‘Information, Archives and Democracy,’ *Cross Cutting Issues*, pp.320-323, p.321 <https://fundar.org.mx/mexico/pdf/right_to_know/SEC8%20Patricia%20Galeana.pdf> [accessed 27 December 2022]

¹⁵ Benjamin Rush and Jacob Rush, *Essays, literary, moral & philosophical by Benjamin Rush, M.D. and professor of the institutes of medicine and clinical practice in the University of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia:: Printed by Thomas & Samuel F. Bradford, no. 8, South Front Street, 1798; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, p.201 <<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N25938.0001.001>> [accessed 3 September 2022]

internationally in Mexico or locally in Oklahoma must continue so citizens are educated and informed.

Archivists are integral to making sure that information transfer occurs across political party lines as well. Most recently this is seen in the raid on former President Trump's Mar-a-Lago home.¹⁶ The release of associated documents adheres to the Presidential Records Act (PRA) of 1978 which, 'Establishes public ownership of all Presidential records and defines the term Presidential records.'¹⁷ Archivists at NARA helped to create new policies and procedures to ensure the Presidential Library of Barack Obama which is the first of its kind, according to the website, 'plans are for the Barack Obama Presidential Library to be the first fully digital presidential library.'¹⁸ Through events like these, the larger American public is gaining a better understanding of what archives are and the work 'of the people, for the people, by the people' located within them. The thoughts of Oklahoma's archivists in response to President Obama's new digital research library proposed by NARA were examined in the previous chapter as the event was unfolding, making it almost a real-time response to a paradigmatic shift within the archival profession. This crucial technological shift allows archivists to continue to adhere to the roles and responsibilities a democratic society places on the work they do.

As Penn further states in her 2013 thesis:

¹⁶ Jacqueline Alemany, Josh Dawsey, Tom Hamburger and Ashley Parker, 'National Archives had to retrieve Trump White House records from Mar-a-Lago,' *The Washington Post* 7 February 2022 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/02/07/trump-records-mar-a-lago/>> [accessed 20 August 2022]

¹⁷ National Archives and Records Administration, 'Presidential Records Act (PRA) of 1978' National Archives <<https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/laws/1978-act.html>> [accessed 27 December 2022]

¹⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, 'About Us: Barack Obama Presidential Library' National Archives <<https://www.obamalibrary.gov/about-us>> [accessed 27 December 2022]. This plan, like the rest of the world, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Archivists are still watching to see how this will be done.

Wider society has realized the potential power of archives for public accountability and personal history; this has led to a greater spotlight being cast on the archival profession than ever before. Knowing why archivists keep archives, understanding their appraisal decisions, has become important to the general public and has led to a quest for greater transparency, and greater insight, within the archival profession as a whole.¹⁹

A profession that has often been behind the scenes while unnamed in the forefront of literature and practice, is suddenly in the public news headlines for doing its job and upholding the informational freedoms that the Founding Fathers professed were necessary for public good. Accountability and the following of processes and procedures may be difficult; however, these archivists are professionals who see the principles of freedom, knowledge, democracy, and information access all entwined in their professional code of ethics. Whatever political alliance a person claims, the processes and policies extend beyond them to uphold the principles of the Constitution. Thus, archivists and the work they do is a cornerstone of America's democratic governance and, more locally, Oklahoma's as well.

The nature of the work of archivists is continually something the profession advocates and educates the general public on. Advocacy and education are seen through instances of classified document retrieval across the political spectrum, as well as in the many documents, publications, working groups, and tips and tricks available for professionals through the International Council on Archives website and the Society of American Archivists website.²⁰ The National Archives and Records Administration is

¹⁹ Penn, p.85.

²⁰ Fourteen areas worth of documents are provided in many different language translations by the ICA. 'Awareness raising and advocacy for records and archives,' *International Council on Archives/Conseil International des Archives* website <<https://www.ica.org/en/advocacy-0>> [accessed 8 February 2023]; 'Advocacy,' Society of American Archivists website <<https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy>> [accessed 8 February 2023]

undertaking new strategic goals which include better connecting with citizens through legislative initiatives which ‘also support government-wide initiatives to improve federal customer experience and service equity as represented in the President’s Management Agenda, Executive Order 13985, Executive Order 14058, and the Office of Management and Budget’s A-11 Circular §280.’²¹ The need for archival organisations to not only advocate for themselves but to improve upon their relationships and services with the public can only benefit both the archival stakeholders and the general public.

The Oklahoma State Archives has been advocating for archives through publications and electronic promotion of October as national archives month. They state these efforts as an added value measure on their site: ‘the Oklahoma State Archives recognizes Oklahoma Archives Month as an opportunity to advocate for the value of Oklahoma’s archives.’²² Oklahoma State Archives have been able to make print and electronic information available with the support and sponsorship of organisations such as, ‘the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma Historical Society, and Oklahoma Museums Association with funding provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.’²³ Without cooperation in time, staffing, funding, and resources there would be no avenue available for grassroots networking events to be offered to the state in other archival entities. Despite these named avenues promoting archives nationally and within the state of Oklahoma, there still remains a knowledge gap between the public and their perception

²¹ NARA, ‘National Archives Publishes Customer Research Agenda,’ *NARA* press release 17 January 2023 <<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2023/nr23-16>> [accessed 8 February 2023]

²² Oklahoma Department of Libraries, ‘Oklahoma Archives Month,’ *ODL* Website <<https://oklahoma.gov/libraries/state-government/archives-and-records/oklahoma-archives-month.html>> [accessed 8 February 2023]

²³ *Ibid.*

of the work of archivists and archiving. The oral histories taken during this project provide opportunities to humanise the people within the repositories doing the work, the ones supporting, advocating for them, and amplifying the voices of others. By generally educating and informing the citizenry of Oklahoma, archivists are providing the answer to why there needs to be a necessary resource for archives in state funding budgets in a fiscally conservative government.

Oklahoma archivists play their role well in the establishment of democracy within the state despite its complexity. Their voices are crucial to the work being done in the field, and their relationships and partnerships with the differing communities residing within the Oklahoma borders are what makes them essential to the democratic work of informed citizenry. Bill Welge from OHS describes the building of relationships in the following way:

My very first book was bought in September 1977 and it was by William T. Hagan on the Sac and Fox Indians. And I eventually got to know Bill Hagan very well before he passed away. And. And so that that was another, that's another benefit of having worked here as long as I have, of meeting the authors who have done, the scholarly authors who have done research or graduate students who later became professors in their own right and authors in American Indian history.²⁴

Not only is the work of the archivist to learn about the cultures outside of their own – many of which reside in the state of Oklahoma – but it is meeting the people who are doing their own historical work as Indigenous peoples or scholars, which brings job satisfaction to Welge. The relationship between archivist and researchers is vital to knowing what material is in repositories and how others outside of the archive are interpreting it for future generations.

²⁴ Welge, transcript, p.3

Not only with authors and researchers, but the relationships archivists build over a career with donors and donor families is vital to contextualisation of the information contained with the repository. Dr. James Crowder built a unique relationship with the Tinker family, of Tinker Air Force Base fame, through his work as a historian and archivist with the Air Force. He tells of meeting the widow of General Tinker, who died in 1942 in World War II, after locating some letters and researching in the photographs. In trying to identify places and people, he ultimately called another base history office to try to locate her. When it was found out she was still alive he, ‘flew down there in 1983 and started doing oral histories with her. And we, we adopted each other. And to be quite frank, I became a member of the Tinker family and she knew everything about us [the Crowder family].’²⁵ Both Crowder and Welge have lived out the principles Cox and Wallace say are crucial to archives being entities working toward informed citizenry and the public good: explanation through contextualisation and adherence to archival principles, revealing secrecy, creating and maintaining memory, and building and keeping the trust of the public which are covered in Chapter 1’s section on archives and democracy. In addition to adherence to archival principles, archivists have also fulfilled their role in democratic society as cultural heritage institutions. In defining what a cultural heritage institution is for the LAM profession, Stauffer argues, ‘they serve as cultural centers around which disparate elements of society can unify, representing as they do the values, norms, and identity of that culture... determin[ing] what will be collected and preserved – and what will not.’²⁶ The unique relationships that Oklahoma

²⁵ Crowder, transcript, p.10.

²⁶ Suzanne M. Stauffer, ed., *Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions through the Ages*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, p.3.

archivists, and archivists all over the world, build with donors and donor families, researchers and authors, historians and academic departments, are relationships that cannot be quantified. Ultimately when captured through oral histories, their experiences bring value to the workforce of archival professionals as necessary and needed in capturing, preserving, partnering with, contextualising, and creating their part to play in the historical record of an organisation, institution, and even on a more macro level, a state like that of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Archivists: The Establishment of a Socio-Subcultural Group

As stated in the literature review, part of this project's focus is to look at historical, cultural, and popular definitions of what it means to be an Oklahoman, as well as the financial situation facing the state since the beginning of the 21st century and especially since the economic downturn of 2008. This is done in part so a socio-subcultural group of Oklahoma archivists can be established and studied. Oklahoma is hard for people outside of the state to define it geographically: is it in the Midwest? Is it in the South? Is it North Texas?²⁷ The reality is it is all and none of these geographic labels. Author Rilla Askew correctly identified the term 'America's Heartland,' a popular media label which circulated after the 1995 Murrah Federal Building Bombing.²⁸ The Memorial Commission went on to adopt the 'Oklahoma Standard' as a teaching tool and community empowerment ideal, which brings both pride and sometimes embarrassment

²⁷ Russell Cobb, 'South by Midwest: or, Where is Oklahoma?' *This Land* 14 November 2012 <<https://thislandpress.com/2012/11/14/south-by-midwest-or-where-is-oklahoma/>> [accessed 20 December 2022] the author recounts this debate yet again, much like the Oklahoman article by Richard Mize cited in Chapter 1's literature review.

²⁸ Rilla Askew, 'Most American,' *Voices from the Heartland*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, p.5.

to many residents of the state.²⁹ Events like the Dust Bowl, the Trail of Tears rehousing, the Oil Boom, the Tulsa Race Massacre, the Osage murders, the Oil Bust, and the Penn Square Bank Crash, tornadoes and other weather events are what comes to mind when outsiders are questioned about Oklahoma. One research study of 703 participants even went so far to conclude that ‘even when ostensibly forgotten, the Dust Bowl remains a part of the Oklahoma identity, an identity in which being a stalwart survivor is prized above virtually all else. The accursed Dust Bowl image is thus a guardian of that pioneer self-image that contrasts Oklahomans with all outsiders.’³⁰ All these labels are just a part of Oklahoma's historical events, the documents, memories, and materials of said events which archivists have captured, preserved, contextualised, and created access, which museum professionals have brought to light, which historical societies succeed in displaying for the public, and in which communities endeavour to tell.

How archivists name and place themselves with their local geographical region is pivotal to the capturing and recording of the history within that area. In Chapter 4, the oral history interviews revealed that for an archivist, not only does living within a place during one’s lifetime but also having generational ancestors within the same geographic

²⁹ ‘Oklahoma Standard,’ Oklahoma City National Memorial, <<https://oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/oklahoma-standard/>> [accessed 5 December 2017]. Example of pride ‘Mr. Clinton tied the city’s downtown development and a “breathtaking increase in per capita income” to its adherence to the Oklahoma Standard, though a booming oil and gas industry probably scored an assist.’ Michael Wines, ‘Bill Clinton Leads Tribute on 20th Anniversary of Oklahoma City Bombing,’ *The New York Times* 19 April 2015 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/20/us/oklahoma-city-bombing-20th-anniversary-bill-clinton.html>> [accessed 15 July 2022].

An opinion piece argues the Oklahoma Standard is said but not done: ‘But, and maybe most importantly, it requires actually living up to the Oklahoma Standard of taking care of our neighbours by passing policies that build up communities, reduce childhood trauma, address systemic problems, and make every ZIP code one worth living in.’ Shari Gateley, ‘Point of View: Legislation misses the mark.’ *The Oklahoman* 3 March 2021 <<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/opinion/2021/03/03/point-of-view-legislation-misses-the-mark/334923007/>> [accessed 6 August 2022]

³⁰ Howard F. Stein and Robert F. Hill, eds., ‘The Culture of Oklahoma: A Group Identity and Its Images,’ *The Culture of Oklahoma*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, pp.198-235, p.207. <<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=15281&site=ehost-live>>

area account for how history is viewed and remembered. Whether career or calling, the desire to capture and participate in the local community through archiving and being an archivist is vital to the continuance of the work of being an archivist throughout and during times of political pressure and paradigmatic shifts within the profession.

Oklahoma archivists are part of the larger workforce of archival professionals in the United States, but they also exist as their own socio-subcultural label.

Oklahoma Archivists: Theory vs. Practice

Studying Oklahoma archivists became a project for me because I could not see or recognise myself when examining the literature of the archival field. In the United States, most archival-related case studies, opinions, theory, and practice are written from the archivists working along the coasts – New England, California, and Texas. Other national and international archival organisations have areas that overlap with Oklahoma, but also appear to have greater resources for academic writing. Few, if any, researchers have undertaken to examine Oklahoma’s archival practitioners, whereas many famous scholars have sought to capture the peoples of Oklahoma. Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural heritage institutions have been examined historically in many different ways, but in instances of theory versus practice, technological innovations and their move to more collaborative systems have very little representation in the literature from the archivists performing those duties. Most of the literature includes extensive theories on archival practice or how to implement practical ideas into archival workflows. Thus, the idea of theory versus practice becomes cumbersome and difficult to discern its place in the day-to-day work of the Oklahoma archivist. To Oklahoma LAM employees in the field, when they were questioned about theory versus practice, expressed interest in learning more

but quickly moved to the next topic. Instead, the more reflective questions, for instance, about life accomplishments, were elaborated on more. These theory versus practice thematic questions were posed because of the work of Jeanette Bastian who argues that archives need to move to middle of the debate and not be so side-lined in our arguments when she writes:

Archivists often seem reluctant to stray too far beyond their comfort zones, frequently emphasizing the difference between ‘the archive’ as conceptualized by non-archivists, and ‘real’ archival practice. Interrogating the commonalities between both, however, suggests that, for archivists, embracing ‘the archive’ in all its diversity and latitude could open valuable pathways towards a more inclusive and all-encompassing understanding of the variety of records that communities create and the many ways in which they tell their stories.³¹

Determining where Oklahoma’s archivists land on the theory versus practice spectrum is a key component of determining where the archival landscape of the state needs to be headed, especially as it relates to the organisations within the state that support the LAM industry and workforce.

Going back to the reported data on the theoretical concept of the archives, fifteen of the twenty-four participants admitted they had no concrete grasp of it. The qualitative data showing this lack of knowledge really demonstrates the idea that, instead of being so focused on the accomplishable tasks, Oklahoma’s practising archivists need more educational opportunities in the theoretical concepts presented in the literature, despite the day-to-day realities of doing archival work. An archivist out of Seattle describes why archival thinking has such a disconnection for the practitioner: ‘I had kept my head down and my sleeves rolled up, and I did what I was educated to do: practical, efficient archival

³¹ Jannette A. Bastian, ‘Moving the margins to the middle: reconciling ‘the archive’ with the archives,’ in Riorella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver, eds., *Engaging with Records and Archives: histories and theories*, London: Facet Publishing, 2016, pp.1-21, p. 3-4.

work...I lacked the discipline to make time for considering archival meaning in all its complexity. I was too busy...I thought.’³² The practical and efficient work described by Cline is work well done by Oklahoma’s archivists in the same busy overworked and understaffed environment of their Seattle colleague, thinking they are too busy for archival thinking. But the theoretical and archival thinking done by professionals has to be incorporated into the practices of today’s archival workers both in Oklahoma and in the larger LAM field. All archivists need funded educational opportunities in order to move beyond just doing a job, but to understand why they are doing the work they do. In Oklahoma, this means that the job is helping Oklahoma’s democracy function more fully in a politically conservative landscape. By entering into archival thinking along with the practice of archival doing, Oklahoma’s archivists understand and facilitate the stories of the multifaceted and diverse state which are told.

When the field of archival literature discusses technology, these centre on technological availability, its strengths, and its weaknesses, both theoretically and practically. Archivists argue it remains difficult to stay abreast of the ever-changing theory versus practice debate with the rapid onset of new and useful technology tools, which side-line the debate for job practicalities. One notable exception is the use of technological innovations and their incorporation into collaborative projects is the 2019 publication to come out of the Simmons University’s School of Library and Information Science, which uses Cultural Heritage Informatics to examine convergence in the field.³³

³² Scott Cline, *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021, pp.xv-xvi.

³³ Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard, and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds., *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. The authors go on to say, ‘Another motivation for writing this book is that there are few sources for learning how libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural institutions are integrating new technologies, collaborating with one another, and finding new ways to engage with their users and audiences,’ p. xiii.

As the rapid pivot to digital information continues post COVID-19, many lessons can be learned from the case studies provided in Botticelli, Mahard, and Cloonan's work. However, after engaging with the text, its relatability to Oklahomans is often out of reach, despite the authors' assurance that the book 'reflects the practices of a variety of cultural heritage institutions and organisations, most of which operate in complex and constantly changing environments.'³⁴ The complex and constantly shifting environment of archival work, coupled with the funding and staffing challenges of this state makes Oklahoma archivists their own unique set of organisational professionals. These circumstances are captured in this thesis positioning their unique experiences among the writings of other scholars and practitioners. These oral histories recorded for posterity are Oklahoma case studies in themselves, helping to situate their place in the archival literature while painting a larger picture of the archival profession in Oklahoma. Their voices and recollections will add another complex and varied story to the larger convergence of library, archives, and museums (LAM) literature around the world.

The nature of the examination of the historical record is a question asked of the participants that also came out of the theory versus practice divide. As stated in Chapter 4, asking about the examination of the historical record concludes that archivists and archives are at a paradigm shift. These professionals are wrestling with diversity, equity, and inclusion while other fields examine and study the archival records, preservation measures, and manipulation of data in records within a digital era. Thus, a call has arisen from within the archival profession to examine itself better, both the best and worst parts of the job, and what comprises the most rewarding and most difficult parts of the

³⁴ Ibid, p.xiv.

profession. This thesis is a first measure in assessing the archival workforce as both an insider and outsider within the community being studied.

All the participants discuss digital records as being both daunting and exciting at the same time. The dichotomy of technology within the profession is where the embracing of latitude and diversity mentioned by Bastian becomes a reality and the necessity for the archival profession's examination of itself as pointed out by Gilliland becomes paramount. By moving from a solely practical approach to technology within archival literature, but instead examining the motivation and rationale behind the chosen resource, Oklahoma's archivists will better understand the successes and failures within the organisations and institutions. Qualitative oral history data informs archivists to move forward in embracing changing modalities but also to pause during and after the implementation for reflection. Thus, in the theory versus practice discussion, technological practices decentre the theory behind implementation, but one that needs to be centred again by Oklahoma archivists in reflecting back on post-implementation failures and successes.

The idea of Oklahoma archivists being unable to see themselves within the literature of the profession is problematic. More telling is the loss of their part in the archival profession within survey data collected by the largest national archival professional organisation, the Society of American Archivists. In the A'CENSUS and A'CENSUS II data collection analysis of the profession, the only Oklahoma-specific archival organisation in the survey was the Oklahoma Conservation Congress (OCC), an

entity that may now be defunct as their last recorded tax data is from 2007.³⁵ The last mention of the OCC on the Internet is in a speaker bio section of a flyer from the Oklahoma Higher Education Heritage Society, where one of the four speakers is listed as President of the Oklahoma Conservation Congress.³⁶ While Oklahoma's archivists are also members of regional organisations like the Society of Southwest Archivists, which include Oklahoma in their regional grouping (many varied national organisations which are reported on in full in Chapter 3), the lack of their voices as part of one state in the United States among a larger group is profound. Their experiences in the profession of archivists of the United States is not being captured. Perhaps this is due to the fact most Oklahoma archivists have identified as being on the practice side of the argument versus the theory. Without the transmission of knowledge through institutional memory and organisational culture from archivist to archivist within the socio-subculture of Oklahoma, the state's historical record has gaps in it. Oklahoma will continue to have historical memory loss when the voices of the people working within it to partner, preserve, and make available its history are not told.

Oklahoma: Politics and Funding

³⁵ 'Oklahoma Conservation Congress Oklahoma Chapter in Stillwater, Oklahoma,' *EIN Tax ID.com* <<https://eintaxid.com/company/731150552-oklahoma-conservation-congress-oklahoma-chapter/>> [accessed 17 December 2022]

³⁶ Jan Davis, Chris Paul, Jeanne Prince, and Christina Wolf, 'Moving from Chaos to Organization: Managing your Records Workshop Flyer,' held 20 October 2010 at the Oklahoma History Center <<https://www.ohehs.org/forms/workshop10.pdf>> [accessed 17 December 2022]. Jeanne Prince's speaker bio says she is president. This organisation did not come up in the oral history taken from her which again leads me to believe it is now defunct.

From the critical analysis of the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data collection in the previous chapter, one might think Oklahoma has no respect for its history, as well as a willingness to shoulder the costs in both staffing and budgets needed to preserve it and make it available to the public. This is further demonstrated by the fact that Oklahoma often relies on its lawyers to ensure that transparency in state government occurs, mandating laws after the fact instead of funding positions for archivists and records managers to ensure records are kept, preserved, and opened for access.³⁷ The LAM field is not the only area being underfunded and given no resources; the state legislature also funds the Oklahoma Ethics Commission (OEC). In 2022, the OEC executive director, when asked about why it does not hold Oklahoma's political funding more accountable replied, 'the commission has the authority. It does not have the resources.'³⁸ The underfunding and lack of support appear to be strictly limited to areas with fiscally conservative leaders in control of the state legislature. Workforce fallout from numerous furloughs leads employees to, 'view themselves as no longer necessary to their organisation's survival, damaging their belief that they are valued

³⁷ Sarah Boggs, 'Updated: Town of Jones Sued for Open Records Violations,' *The Jones Journal* 20 December 2021. <<https://jonesjournalok.com/2021/12/20/town-of-jones-sued-for-open-records-violations/>> [accessed 13 August 2022]; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'Statutes and Rules: Open Records Act,' <<https://libraries.ok.gov/law-legislative-reference/library-laws/statutes-open-records/>> [accessed 29 October 2022]

³⁸ Clifton Adcock, 'With weak laws and little enforcement, Oklahoma sees record breaking dark-money spending,' *The Frontier* 6 December 2022 <<https://www.readfrontier.org/stories/with-weak-laws-and-little-enforcement-oklahoma-sees-record-breaking-dark-money-spending/>> [accessed 27 December 2022] They report the function and impact of yet another Oklahoma agency created for accountability which cannot do its job. 'But thanks to a lack of funding from the Legislature, Oklahoma has weak enforcement and some lawmakers have even attempted to head off disclosure requirements for dark money groups in recent years. Despite overseeing tens of millions of dollars in political spending by hundreds of filers, the Oklahoma Ethics Commission has an operational budget of less than \$800,000, and is dependent upon the Legislature for funding. Adding additional information collection requirements would require resources that the Ethics Commission does not have, said Ashley Kemp, executive director of the Oklahoma Ethics Commission.'

within their organisation.’³⁹ And the overwhelming need to fundraise in order to be operational, whether through grants or other endeavours, further exacerbates this damaging belief. One author writes how fundraising in the LAM sector has its own unique considerations, ‘because our missions usually revolve around education, interpretation, and collections care, we must consider how these efforts influence the work we do and, by extension, the asks we make when raising funds.’⁴⁰ However, despite such challenges to their work, archivists, records managers, state historical society employees, museum professionals, and tribal entities members continue to show up and excel in their chosen profession. They perform tasks with the conglomerate of external forces manufacturing and sustaining the precarious circumstances. They do so because they have a passion and love for their communities and want that history to endure. For some, the value and reward of the work they do is in ensuring their culture is taught to the next generation. For others, value is created in finding meaning in their local communities, helping to connect people, and to collect stories. For others, their reward is simply a love of history, knowledge, and Oklahoma. Even though the state political leaders continue to underfund and understaff skilled positions, ways are found to continue the work with volunteers, retirees, local entities, and ‘squishy’ money obtained through grants, capital campaigns, and emergency hires.

For comparison, an examination of the Maine Historical Society’s statewide collaborative, the Maine Memory Network (MNN), is an example of what happens when external funding sources dwindle. From its beginning, the MMN has been primarily

³⁹ Larissa Dalgarno, Peter Cartlidge, Jo Kandola, and Stuart Duff, ‘The impact of the “furlough” scheme on employee engagement,’ *Assessment & Development Matters (ADM)* 13, 1 (Spring 2021): pp.12-16, p.15.

⁴⁰ Jamie Simek, *Beyond the Bake Sale: Fundraising for Local History Organizations*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022, p.225.

funded by seed monies awarded by Maine’s state government and grants, the ‘squishy’ money one Oklahoma archivist mentioned in her interview.⁴¹ Even with large monetary awards, ‘reliance on grants has placed constraints on what can be done to expand the service and ensure its long-term sustainability.’⁴² While Oklahoma archivists still aim to follow the practices, incorporate new theories and paradigms, to preserve according to industry standards, and to enhance workforce transitional sustainability, sometimes it is a ‘lost’ box of photos or torn out editorial from predecessors which gain national attention.⁴³ Oklahomans and those working within and for Oklahoma must remember historically Oklahoma is a state literally pieced together by two distinct territories, one once and still in some cases ruled by tribal laws, Indian Territory, and the other ruled by the vigilante law of the West, Oklahoma Territory. Despite some of the best intentions, history becomes interpreted by those in power or those behind the scenes with powerful connections. These archivists have helped nationally recognised historians bring to light things like the Tulsa Race Massacre, various church histories, and the voices of the everyday person in *Main Street Oklahoma*, as well as numerous tribal histories, languages, and Western Americana events.⁴⁴ Despite these power structures, those

⁴¹ Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard, and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds., *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*, ‘The Maine Memory Network: A Statewide Collaboration,’ by Peter Botticelli and Emeline Dehn-Reynolds, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, pp.31-36, p.33.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ‘Many Tulsans reported the Tribune contained two articles on Rowland. One, a front page story, reported that “Diamond Dick” Rowland assaulted a””17-year-old white elevator girl!” and that the police arrested him. The other piece, on the editorial page, “To Lynch a Negro Tonight,” has been never been verified because no complete copy of this issue has ever been located.’ from ‘The Tulsa Race Massacre: Causes and Catalysts,’ *Oklahoma Historical Society* <<https://www.okhistory.org/learn/trm3>>; see also Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1982 and Scott Ellsworth, *The Ground Breaking: An American City and Its Search for Justice*. New York: Dutton, 2021 for a discussion of a box of photos once shown at a police station, now unable to be located.

⁴⁴ Michelle Place, interview by JJ Compton, 16 March 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-16, p.8. She says, ‘so when you ask, when I’m asked about the culture of this museum, what our mission is, it is to tell all of Tulsa stories. And certainly the race massacre is that.’; Bill Welge, interview by

archivists who seem to be most successful at their chosen career are the long-term employees, the ones who have weathered storms, collected sometimes beyond their institutional scope, and generally know what is in their repositories better than the most skilled researchers or historians.

The University of Oklahoma's Western History Collection, is one of the oldest and most renowned archival repositories in Oklahoma, which according to the OU libraries come into existence in April of 1927.⁴⁵ Long-time employee in Western History Collections, John Lovett describes his career as follows: 'I can say that over my 34 years there I worked in, in every position from a student assistant to a graduate assistant, photographic archivist, the librarian, assistant curator, and then the curator for eight years along with Director, Special Collection and Branch Libraries.'⁴⁶ Lovett was contacted outside of the initial survey and agreed to be an oral history participant because I felt that the lessons he learned and passed on through his oral history are crucial to those of us working in Oklahoma and looking to others who have weathered the political landscape for generations. Beyond Oklahoma's voices, all archivists help because they want the history they know to be told to the everyday person and not just live within the archival walls. Archivists want to reach beyond their repository into the future, making the past known and contextualised so that others may learn and do better. As Maya Angelou

JJ Compton, 23 March 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-22, p.15. In talking of historian Patricia Loughlin, he recalls, 'And as I told Patti I said, we just finished processing the Muriel Wright papers. And Muriel Wright was the longtime editor and publisher, or editor of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. But she was the granddaughter of Allen Wright, the principal chief of the Choctaw Nation. And that interested her. And so she took that because nobody, I mean there'd been articles about Muriel Wright but nothing of substance, in-depth study. She went with that and she was always appreciative of it. And she, in fact, wrote a book on Muriel Alice, Muriel Wright, Alice Marriott, and Angie Debo.'

⁴⁵ OU University Libraries, 'History of the Western History Collections,' The University of Oklahoma Website <<https://libraries.ou.edu/content/history-western-history-collections>>[accessed 27 December 2022]

⁴⁶ John Lovett, interview by JJ Compton 28 April 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-15, p.1

famously said, ‘Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.’⁴⁷ Archivists’ capture, to the best of their ability, both digital and hard copy formats of information, providing access to materials they believe should be known for a functioning democratic society to hold fast to a foundational tenant – an informed public.

Oklahoma: People and Participation

The first steps have already been taken to make archives participatory in places like Australia and South Africa. The United States has been a bit slower to adopt the participatory community archives model, the definition of which has existed since the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁸ The purpose of archival endeavours is to connect people and communities,

by becoming spaces that accommodate multiple voices in multiple modalities and visions - represent a further step in the evolution of archival thinking, one that moves away from formalised hierarchical structures towards a recognition of community archives as a repudiation and disruption of formal definitions.⁴⁹

Disruption occurs in those areas of the United States where formalised systems have evolved. However, Oklahoma has a less structured system of public history satellite institutions embedded in communities along with colleges and universities housing archival repositories and museums, both of which are located around the state.⁵⁰ Making these repositories more participatory would be a first step in deepening community

⁴⁷ <<https://twitter.com/drmayaangelou/status/1028663286512930817?lang=en>> Tweet on August 12, 2018 account @DrMayaAngelou

⁴⁸ Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds. *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, memory and identity*. ‘Introduction’. London: Facet Publishing, 2020 (xix-xxiv), p.xx. The earliest reference can be found in a 1942 library journal wartime article.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. xxi.

⁵⁰ ‘The critical element of participatory archives is sharing of authority and curation between archivist and users who self-identify as stakeholders in the archive’s content.’ Mpho Ngoepe, ‘Archives without archives: a window of opportunity to build inclusive archive in South Africa,’ *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists* 52 (2019) <<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/191336/180506>>

engagement, creating additional inclusivity with contextualisation, and a proof of concept that the work of archivists is necessary to maintain a free and democratic society. The Oklahoma Historical Society began the state-wide work of creating partnerships with its digital *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, a centennial project and decade-long effort which ‘synthesizes decades of scholarship and provides a tool for Oklahomans to use in understanding and broadening knowledge of Oklahoma’s heritage.’⁵¹ More recently, it is Oklahoma State University that continues the work of these types of community partnership endeavours. They partnered in a ‘two-year collaborative project between the Chilocco National Alumni Association (CNAA) and the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University Library,’ to record and tell the stories of the veterans of the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School.⁵² OOHRP created a digital space for this collection to be found more widely by others. In addition, these types of partnerships double – sometimes triple – the amount of staffing needed to successfully implement the project. In a state where funding of archival positions is contingent upon multiple factors, collaborative work increases the staffing proportional to the needs of the project being completed.

By happenstance, one of the younger mid-career archivists who participated in the oral history interviews works at the OOHRP. In describing why she wanted this job and does the work, Milligan said:

I really wanted this job because I could see an opportunity for the next phase of this program needed to be taking it out and building relationships to grow, the documentation work we could do, but all of that is through community trust and

⁵¹ Oklahoma Historical Society, ‘About the Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture’ <<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/encabout>> [accessed 12 December 2022]

⁵² Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, ‘Chilocco Indian Agricultural School Collection,’ *Oklahoma State University Library* <<https://library.okstate.edu/search-and-find/collections/digital-collections/chilocco-indian-agricultural-school-photo-collection/>> [accessed 12 December 2022]

relationship building. And I really like that. Whether it's through archives, community, or geographic communities.⁵³

Being an archivist beyond the building is essential to the sustainability of the archive's place in society, especially in a state where public trust in politicians and their policies is wavering due to attacks on public school teachers, libraries, and education. Archivists need to continue to push for sustainable thinking which 'asks you to put people first, in the most basic of ways. Thinking sustainably is a way to live our values out loud.'⁵⁴ If, as a profession, archivists value the democratic society of the United States, thinking sustainably and beyond the walls of the archive is vital for future generations of archivists in Oklahoma.

Another example of cooperative projects outside of Oklahoma is Cornell University's Rare and Manuscript Collections who have worked both internally and externally to foster collaboration.⁵⁵ One of the workers, 'Sauer emphasizes the need for multidisciplinary teamwork: "What you need is somebody on your team who loves technology, somebody who likes working with collections, somebody who likes working with the public – you need these skills but you don't need to have them all yourself".'⁵⁶ For the Cornell archivists, it is more about how the team is pulled together to work in collaboration on projects. One person alone should not have all the skills required for successful completion of a project. While archivists have successfully navigated

⁵³ Sarah Milligan, interview by JJ Compton, 4 September 2019, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-21, p.12.

⁵⁴ Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, *Sustainable Thinking: Ensuring Your Library's Future in an Uncertain World*. Chicago: ALA, 2018, p.76.

⁵⁵ Peter Botticelli, Martha A. Mahard, and Michéle V. Cloonan, eds., *Libraries Archives and Museums Today: Insights from the Field*, 'Cornell University Library Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections: Exploring New Media in the Archive,' by Peter Botticelli New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, pp.49-60, In describing the perfect collaboration, Botticelli says Cornell met 'the organizational as well as the technical challenges of working with digital assets.' p.51-52.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

technological and workload changes, so have many other industries. Collaborative work endeavours are something Oklahoma archivists must continue to embrace amidst workforce and funding shortages.

Collaborative work projects beyond the repository often bring in community members with their own institutional memory about the events and people. In discussing the *Maison d'Haïti's* collaborative archives project, the author's state: 'Oral history offers a way to understand the people who sustained the organisation and what fuelled their work. It is a form of explanation and a way to document the creation of records that form the archives.'⁵⁷ When those brought in to process collections took oral histories from those that sustained a community organisation, a much deeper contextualised history was created. The *Maison d'Haïti's* collaborative project is just one example of archives loosening control and building bridges within communities to amplify voices and create lasting collections. While some would argue this actually frees up archivists' time, in reality the backlog is so extensive that actually breaking even on preserving, processing, digitising, creating finding aids, and making available what's already in the repository will most likely never happen, even in the best-funded and most staffed archival repositories in the world. This is simply because history is constantly happening and continuing and the work is ever shifting, in types of formats, in conservation and preservation, and in technological advances. Funding and staffing positions are so vital to the continued work of archives and archivists. People need to be in places to partner, collect, and make available information.

⁵⁷ Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds., *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, memory and identity*. 'Maison d'Haïti's collaborative archives project: archiving a community of records' by Désirée Rochat, Kristen Young, Marjorie Villefranche, and Aziz Choudry, London: Facet Publishing, 2020, pp.113-127, p.120.

The call for people and participation also addresses something the LAM sector has been discussing for decades: the need to diversify the profession both with collections and with personnel. An archival series of blog posts out of North Carolina State University point to the SAA code of ethics as the basis for this determination. In discussing archival ethics, NCSU library state their mission as, ‘aim[ing] to encompass intersections of all identities, including race, economic status, gender and sexuality, religion, and politics. Today’s archivists work to increase instances of previously unrepresented and underrepresented people once silenced from the historical record.’⁵⁸ Further, a DEI statement coming out of Cleveland expressly states their reaffirmation of the work in the light of the murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests, concluding with, ‘The Ingalls Library and Museum Archives must be a space welcoming to new voices, new ideas, and new endeavors, to become a locus for engagement within and outside the library and the museum.’⁵⁹ In Oklahoma, there appears to be a great disconnect between the people hired to do DEI work and the archivists in place actually doing the work.

A 2021 study from the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) found what they termed a ‘diversity bloat’ in Oklahoma’s higher education landscape, pointing out that ‘student reports on campus climate are no better – and often worse, especially for minority students – at universities with larger DEI staff levels.’⁶⁰ The study ultimately

⁵⁸ Taylor de Klerk, ‘Ethics in Archives: Diversity, Inclusion, and the Archival Record,’ *NC State Universities Library blog* posted 4 April 2018 <<https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/news/special-collections/ethics-in-archives%3A-diversity-inclusion-and-the-archival-record>> [accessed 29 December 2022]

⁵⁹ Chloe Bragg, ‘DEI Statement for the Ingalls Library and Museum Archives,’ *The Cleveland Museum of Art Blog* posted 2 November 2021 <<https://library.clevelandart.org/blog/dei-statement-ingalls-library-and-museum-archives>> [accessed 29 December 2022]

⁶⁰ Kaitlyn Jasper, ‘Study Finds ‘Diversity’ Bloat at OU, OSU,’ *OCPA website* posted 5 August 2021 <<https://www.ocpathink.org/post/study-finds-diversity-bloat-at-ou-osu>> [accessed 29 December 2022]

concludes, ‘Before more resources are spent on hiring additional personnel and creating more DEI programs, Oklahoma taxpayers, the Legislature, and boards of regents should better examine the actual return on investment of DEI efforts on Oklahoma campuses’⁶¹ The same Legislature allocating funds for new programming and personnel, should examine a reallocation of resources to do the work of DEI instead of creating new and often ineffective programs on campuses. Students want to see their stories and voices reflected back at them through the historical narratives told throughout the campus. In other words, the work archivists have been doing for decades is relevant and needed in Oklahoma’s higher educational institutions.

Despite the DEI being done, the people working within the repositories themselves must be composed and reflective of Oklahoma’s diverse culture. Dr. Pamela Louderback put it this way in her interview: ‘I would like to see more people who are part of the process and part of whatever projects we do to have, have the right perspective. And I would like to see more red faces.’⁶² Having archivists within Oklahoma’s existing repositories who represent diverse experiences and cultures is essential to reflect and orient Oklahoma’s historical record.

Diversity within repository personnel may not be possible due to the historical broken trust created with various groups around the state. One member of the Osage nation captures this broken trust in a horrifically beautiful poem:

The year my mother was born
in Fairfax, Oklahoma
white men were marrying Osage
women and killing them
for their headrights.
My mother was born a year after

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Louderback, transcript, p.6.

The Indian Citizenship Act was passed –
Indians tied to the U.S.
for or against their wills.⁶³

The heritage of broken trust and exploited people, of demolished communities and unspoken experience from fear is why the creation of new repositories is essential in diversifying Oklahoma’s historical record. New institutions representative of this cultural shift include the First Americans Museum where, ‘in one place, visitors experience the collective histories of 39 distinctive First American Nations in Oklahoma today. First Americans Museum shares the cultural diversity, history, and contributions of the First Americans.’⁶⁴ Another such example is Greenwood Rising in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which ‘will educate Oklahomans and Americans about the Race Massacre and its impact on the state and Nation; remember its victims and survivors, and create an environment conducive to fostering sustainable entrepreneurship and heritage tourism within the Greenwood District.’⁶⁵ A third project still in process was funded ‘on December 10, 2019, [when] the citizens of Oklahoma City voted to pass MAPS 4, including \$25 million for the restoration of the Freedom Center building and the creation of a new Clara Luper Civil Rights Center.’⁶⁶ The latter will not necessarily be a museum in the traditional sense; it will function as a space for history to be brought to light, especially through the work of Clara Luper and her work with the Civil Rights Movement in both Oklahoma City and Oklahoma more broadly. Oklahoma archivists need to be ready to embrace these

⁶³ Elise Paschen, ‘Heritage’ in *Living Nations, Living Words: an anthology of First Peoples Poetry*, collected by Joy Harjo, New York: Norton and Co, 2021, p.12.

⁶⁴ First Americans Museum Oklahoma, ‘About Us,’ *FAM website* <<https://famok.org/about-us/>> [accessed 2 January 2023]

⁶⁵ Greenwood Rising, ‘About,’ *Greenwood Rising website*, posted 2021-2022 <<https://www.greenwoodrising.org/about>> [accessed 2 January 2023]

⁶⁶ Freedom Center of Oklahoma City, ‘What We Are Doing,’ *Freedom Center website*, <<https://freedomcenterokc.org/>> [accessed 2 January 2023]

new repositories and institutions. Fully embracing them could be with a transfer of materials to enhance these new organisation's collections, repatriation of artefacts and cultural heritage items long donated to them, and the curation of opportunities for partnership in order that their stories may be brought to the forefront of Oklahoma's history. Often not taught in schools or glanced over in the curriculum, the history now told by these institutions will enrich the historical record of Oklahoma, allowing for all peoples to see themselves reflected in their state's multifaceted history composed of difficulties and strengths, sadness and hope.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Oklahoma archivists wrestle with the idea of neutrality and bias. Their thoughts and opinions point to the fact that DEI must be an ongoing discussion and implementation within repositories despite being spaces of power, human biases, gaps in collections, silences within archives, and the recognition they are not neutral spaces. Instead, archives can become spaces of opposing viewpoints, contextualised stories, mechanisms of partnerships for communities whose voices have been unheard, and spaces where the power is given back to the people. The need for continued conversation will be further demonstrated in the next section which specifically addresses neutrality and bias within the oral history narratives of Oklahoma's archivists. If the funding cannot be reallocated, then why not partner with the archival professionals located on college and university campuses instead of hiring new people, often disconnected from the problems and events within the academic communities they have been hired to make better? As we have seen and heard through their oral histories, Oklahoma's archivists have already been collecting, partnering, building relationships, and documenting. Now is an opportunity for archivists to be an active part of Oklahoma's

academic campuses in adding to better DEI programs state-wide. The work is especially important in Oklahoma because many archival repositories only live within their own academic community, specifically in smaller towns around the state, where the institution helps support the town and vice versa.

Oral History Narrative: Neutrality vs. Bias

The twenty-first century's postmodern stance has pushed the idea of neutrality within archival repositories to the forefront of many articles and blog posts across the profession. A 2010 dissertation out of the University of Glasgow presents a key factor in being a postmodern archivist is the idea that,

Archival postmodernism centres around the notion that the archival duty is simply to preserve evidence as a trustworthy entity in a neutral, objective fashion. For archival postmodernists this cannot be achieved and therefore they have sought to deconstruct and expose the archive as a conservative agent of normalisation that objectifies records and reifies value by acting as a legitimating authority with the power to dispense status and create the historical canon.⁶⁷

Gilliland sums up the plethora of literature and how it relates to the archival teaching profession by saying,

Codes of ethics around the globe exhort archivists to neutrality so that they and their repositories will be trusted by records creators, the general public, and posterity to be impartial in their actions. However, archival neutrality is increasingly viewed as a controversial stance for a profession that is situated in the midst of the politics of memory.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Craig Gauld, *The fantasy of the corroborative and transformative archive: the authority of archival beginnings*, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010, p.24
<<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1511/>>

⁶⁸ Anne J. Gilliland, 'Neutrality, social justice and the obligations of archival education and educators in the twenty-first century' *Archival Science* 11 (2011): pp.193-209, from abstract
<<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-011-9147-0>>

The idea of neutrality is categorically dismissed in the SAA Core Values Statement: ‘We also acknowledge that archivists and archival practices are never neutral.’⁶⁹ Part of the work of this thesis was to determine if this idea of neutrality had shifted over generational employment. Surprisingly, it had not. Milligan, a mid-career archivist had this to say:

And so absolutely archives, they aren’t neutral. They never have been. As much as we try and say, let’s look at this from as objective a piece as we possibly can, there are things that I absolutely just don’t know because of my, all my experiences that make me at this point in my life are going to be different than what they may be ten years from now. And so I can only place value on material. I can only assign information to something that I’m describing or choosing to accept or not accept based on what those experiences are at this date.⁷⁰

Her position of being firmly situated in the profession and a member of Generation X led me to believe this was to be expected. However, when looking at three retired individuals from the Baby Boomer Generation, the exact same phenomenon was encountered in the belief that neutrality was impossible. Prince reported, ‘So I don’t think that any of them can be neutral because of who sponsors ‘em or wherever they are.’⁷¹ Meanwhile Vance states, ‘So I mean so sometimes we have to be neutral. I personally, you know, have things I would like to represent. But I know my board wouldn’t really, you know, and that’s our final voice.’⁷² And lastly Robison states, ‘And I have a feeling that in the past archivists may have had a certain political slant and might have kept, you know, may have kept documents and not kept certain documents. I can’t imagine that. But it, it could have happened.’⁷³ This was pretty consistent across the twenty-five interviews. Thus, the

⁶⁹ SAA Core Values Statement Approved by the SAA Council, February 2005; revised, January 2012 and August 2020 <<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>>

⁷⁰ Milligan, p.15.

⁷¹ Jeanne Prince, interview by JJ Compton, 31 March 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-10, p.8.

⁷² Sherri Vance, interview by JJ Compton, 23 February 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-9, p.6.

⁷³ Brad Robison, interview by JJ Compton 19 May 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-14, p.10.

original idea of neutrality shifting across generational identities was posited, the idea of neutrality in Oklahoma archives was never a reality.

Neutral as defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* is, ‘not engaged on either side.’⁷⁴ Elsewhere it defines bias as, ‘to give a settled and often prejudiced outlook to.’⁷⁵

Oklahoma archivists, like their peers across the United States, have acknowledged that neutrality is a myth in the archival profession. In fact, in the twentieth-century post-World War II era, a mad dash occurred to reconstruct and preserve the resources of a severely oppressed group through community involvement and construction. One scholar argues this construction demonstrates ‘the way Jewish archives served as battlegrounds showcase how archives have never been neutral.’⁷⁶ The standard definitions affect the profession, but each individual applies them in different ways. One retiree applied it specifically to the process of collecting by saying, ‘I may have my own personal views on certain subject matters, but I do not let that interfere with what I see as our role in collecting our state history of all aspects.’⁷⁷ Every person exists with their own experiences and biases whether they want to admit them or not. The SAA Core Values links bias to judgement when they say:

While no element of archival work is unbiased or neutral, archivists still strive to exercise their ethical, professional judgement in the appraisal, acquisition, and processing of materials. Decisions should always be made mindfully, aiming to ensure the preservation, authenticity, diversity, and lasting cultural and historical value of materials.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ ‘Neutral,’ *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online* <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neutral#h1>>

⁷⁵ ‘Bias,’ *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online* <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>>

⁷⁶ Lustig, *A Time to Gather*, p.11.

⁷⁷ Welge, p.10.

⁷⁸ SAA Core Values Statement.

SAA goes even further in addressing best judgment by urging transparency and collaboration with other professional colleagues.

It is important to note that one late-career archivist recounts her time in Oklahoma, saying, ‘I was disappointed at how few archivists there were and are in Oklahoma.’⁷⁹ With bias being an issue requiring collaboration to be addressed, funding archival positions becomes increasingly important if only to network in instances of second opinions on matters of judgement in relation to collections. Oklahoma’s archival landscape has slowly changed in the last ten years as an offhand comment paired with mentorship turned a simple question into an informal organisation, COAL, which evolved into the formal establishment of the Oklahoma Archivists Association in 2017.⁸⁰ In fact, this project came out of the networking opportunities provided by the COAL and OAA groups. I realised that if the stories of older Oklahoma archivists who had been doing the work went uncaptured, a significant segment of Oklahoma’s historical memory would be lost. Therefore, grassroots organising for professionals and personal support is vital to the existence and development of Oklahoma’s archival workforce.

Neutrality and bias are buzzwords in the larger archival conversations across the profession. In Oklahoma, neutrality has been generationally acknowledged as impossible, lining up with what the plethora of recent literature has been affirming. One participant actually joked about the neutrality and bias of being the keeper of records in his oral history. He says:

And one time the commander, I don’t remember what it was, maybe it was my third year pin, had called me up in front of everybody and he said and what advice would you give to the people here? And I said be nice to the historian. We’re the

⁷⁹ Gerriane Schaad, interview by JJ Compton, 26 May 2019, in Tucson, Arizona, transcript, pp.1-14, p.5.

⁸⁰ Jennifer (Day) Green, interview by JJ Compton, 10 April 2020, phone interview due to COVID-19, transcript, pp.1-10, p.4.

ones who determine how you're remembered. [Laughter] Of course they've, since I'm always so cynical, and they just thought it was a joke. It wasn't a joke. [Laughter].⁸¹

All humour aside, the ideas of neutrality and bias from within the archives and the people working within them must be addressed for any institution or organisation to be fully transparent to the public. This is where archivists generally step back and let the interpretation of the materials be done by someone else. Still, they're also the ones adding context to records by handling and processing collections. Bias needs to be identified through collaboration with colleagues and transparency in documentation alongside the process of doing archival work. However, because of the lack of archival professional organisation within the state, bias becomes a larger issue for the state as a whole.

Professional organisations such as OAA and COAL have provided a beginning point for this collaboration to occur, as well as opportunities for grants and continuing educational opportunities. These grassroots organisations are providing a much-needed resource for a state with underfunding in archival organisations as a whole. However, bias in collections and personnel must continue to be addressed and lessened.

Beyond addressing the neutrality myth and personal bias, which better helps the profession, the theme of self-identification for archivists is essential to finding value in the work they do in their vocation and larger place within society. One scholar argues it this way: 'My claim for archival virtue is a call to moral action based on a belief that the instantiation of archival virtues is a form of radical empowerment that imbues the archivist with a desire to act for good itself.'⁸² Oklahoma archivists possess archival virtue as defined by Cline through the actions they have completed over the course of

⁸¹ Crowder, transcript, p.8.

⁸² Cline, p.3

their careers. Dr. Brad Robison saw the hurt and pain of the Murrah Bombing, placing himself in the middle of its preservation efforts as a call to moral action to act for good. Bill Welge saw the LGBTQ+ community's voice missing from the Oklahoma Historical Society's extensive newspaper repository for the state and advocated for the addition of the collection and preservation of *The Gayly Oklahoman*. Michelle Place, with her work at the Tulsa Historical Society, saw the need to protect sensitive materials until they could be placed in the hands of the right community to tell their story. Gerri Schaad and Jennifer Green identified and saw the need for a state archival community organisation and helped to begin the OAA. These archivists acted from their own archival virtue and answered the call for moral action in varied ways, but in ways that have had a lasting impact on Oklahoma and its history.

Oral History Narrative: Memory and Legacy

'Rarely heard is the voice of the archivist into whose care the documents of the past are entrusted, even though it is the archives that contain many of the key pieces to the puzzle.'⁸³ Trying to fit the pieces of a puzzle together without the box lid or a picture to look at is one of the more frustrating experiences of life. Archivists work to reduce frustration on the part of the researcher. However, looking at archives without looking at the people working within them, with whom the documents have been entrusted and the stories they have accumulated through years of experience in processing, collecting,

⁸³ Bastian, *Owning Memory*, p.ix.

working with researchers, digitising materials, and navigating their repository structures, is lacking all the pieces. The literature even suggests that, ‘for many researchers...the archivist’s processing of collections...remains a mystery.’⁸⁴ The often unknown or misunderstood work of archival processing is just another part of why archivists need to share the stories in their heads, for others to hear the nature of work and to enhance the legitimacy and respect for the work done within archival repositories.

Since Oklahoma’s archivists constitute their own socio-subculture within the state as established in Chapter 1, the collection method for how best to examine their own identity in that larger culture needs to be identified. A dissertation from the University of Texas, which examines archives after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, argues that collections of materials both within the archive and from without can, ‘potentially create models of ownership and categorization that are not tied to capitalist exploitation or to positivist determinism.’⁸⁵ While Kotecki argues for collections of ephemera and film to create ownership and categorization for archives, this thesis utilises oral history. Oral history interviews were chosen because they would allow movement beyond positivist determinism or constructivism by capitalist society and allow for stories from within to emerge. This methodology was chosen in order to gain a better understanding of both the individual and collective Oklahoma archivists in the greater historical landscape of the state. ‘Oral history offers a way to understand the people who sustained the organisation and what fuelled their work. It is a form of explanation and a way to document the

⁸⁴ Lisa Mastrangelo, Barbara L’Eplattenier, Wendy B Sharer, and Alexis E. Ramsey, *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, 1st edn., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009: p.51. <muse.jhu.edu/book/4176>

⁸⁵ Kristine Elisa Kotecki, *After the Archive: Framing Cultural Memory in Ex-Yugoslav Collections*, PhD Dissertation: The University of Texas, 2013, p.14.

creation of records that form the archives.’⁸⁶ Oral history as a collection medium enabled the documentation of the people behind the archival work, the Oklahomans who seek to preserve and make available the diverse history of Oklahoma and all its peoples.

In Chapter 3 a discussion of the use of oral history taken in narrative form occurred. It concluded by using oral history as the qualitative measure, gaps in written documentation with repositories would be filled through each archivist’s examination of self-identification and self-reflection. Oral history enables the overlooked person or event to find a place, allowing for the telling of history not, ‘from below, but history (or sociology) from within.’⁸⁷ Historical examination from within allows the profession to examine itself on a holistic scale, both as people working within the archival profession and, at the same time, as people who have lives outside of the walls of the archives.

Oklahoma archivists are one of those overlooked groups, as much of the archival literature is produced outside of the state with areas richer in economic conditions and educational opportunities.⁸⁸ Even more relevant to the socio-subculture of Oklahoma, which was established earlier in this chapter, oral storytelling is integral to the Indigenous Peoples residing within the borders of the state. Scholar Fixico describes it this way: ‘Stories are the *sine qua non* of Indian life and they transfer knowledge among Native

⁸⁶ Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn, eds. *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, memory and identity*, London: Facet Publishing, 2020. ‘Maison d’Haïti’s collaborative archives project: archiving a community of records,’ by Désirée Rochat, Kristen Young, Marjorie Villefranche, and Aziz Choudry, p.120.

⁸⁷ Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, eds, *Narrative and Genre*, New York: Routledge, 1998, p.16. The editors clearly state that, ‘few scholars now are unaware of their role in shaping the sources and framing the study’ of their research, and arguing for the ‘voice of the “other” is itself raw and unadulterated.’ History ‘from within’ is especially relevant to this research as I am also a practising archivist, knowing the within though professional context often brought up by the interview subjects.

⁸⁸ Oklahoma Rankings, *US News*, 2022 <<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/oklahoma>> [accessed 27 August 2022]

people as well as passing this oral literacy to the next generation.’⁸⁹ Oral history thus has much more relevance to Oklahoma’s community because of the nature of knowledge transmission established long before archivists were hired for works of documentation or preservation. By examining Oklahoma, taking personal narratives, and grouping those thematically through the placement of interview questions based on the reviewed literature, each archivist participating helps to socially construct the group. At the same time, the historian helps to pull the images out of the socially constructed collective memory through the stories the archivists have self-identified.

Examining Oklahomans in narrative form is not a new method of collection. However, other researchers have focused more on the examination of a particular narrative form – like popular biographies – stating, ‘Both authors (Oklahomans) make no effort to conceal their uncritical adoration of their subjects. Far from attempting to distance themselves, in fact, the authors try to get as close as possible.’⁹⁰ The examination of Oklahoma narratives by Oklahomans before the 1995 Murrah Bombing reveals an insider perspective, a friend telling a friend’s story, as opposed to a more traditional academic examination. The author goes on to state his analysis method as, ‘the symbolic creation of the state as a border zone, followed a generation later by the discovery of oil and the formation of an oil based economy, makes the Oklahoma identity special, if not altogether unique.’⁹¹ While Nuckolls focuses primarily on turn-of-the-century biographies, one at the time of the Land Run and the other at the establishment of

⁸⁹ Donald L. Fixico, ‘*That’s What They Used to Say,*’ *Reflections on American Indian Oral Tradition*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017, p.6.

⁹⁰ Stein and Hill, *The Culture of Oklahoma*, p.107. Nuckolls focuses primarily on identifying the Arthurian hero type in Oklahoma narrative biography. This is a good example of Oklahoma cultural definitions before the 1995 Murrah Bombing.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.106.

statehood, what is telling to the reader is that the cultural identity named occurs before a paradigm shift in the state post-1995.

In 1993, the Oklahoma identity was defined as, ‘the symbolic existence of Oklahoma as a perpetually renewable frontier.’⁹² After 1995, the Oklahoma identity changed to America’s Heartland, which lived out the Oklahoma Standard as identified by both author Rilla Askew and the Murrah Bombing Memorial Commission. Thus, many of the oral histories of archivists overlap with this shift in Oklahoma’s cultural identity. From the forty-three quantitative participants, thirty-one indicated they had lived in Oklahoma for more than twenty-one years, putting them in the state no later than 1998. However, at least twenty-four of those forty-three selected ‘30 or more years’ as their response on the quantitative survey. Thus, the majority of quantitative participants were living in Oklahoma when this paradigmatic identity shift occurred. Of the twenty-four who were living in Oklahoma at the time, ten were employed in archival institutions. America’s Heartland was replacing the Oklahoma self-perceived ideal of a perpetually renewable frontier.

The paradigm shift occurring with the identity of Oklahoma is important because it affects the memories and legacies of the participants and what their self-determined lasting contributions are to Oklahoma’s historic landscape. Oklahoma has not traditionally been a site for archival theory, with only two mentions of Oklahoma in the *Encyclopedia of Archival Writers*.⁹³ Neither individual mentioned stayed within the state,

⁹² Ibid, p.129.

⁹³ Luciana Duranti and Patricia C. Franks, *Encyclopedia of Archival Writers, 1515-2015*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. Thomas Elton Brown (1946-) earned a ‘PhD in 1974 in American History from Oklahoma State University’ and ‘He also served as a consultant to the states of Mississippi and Oklahoma on aspects of their own fledgling machine-readable records programs,’ p.90; Charles M. Dollar (1934-) ‘In 1966, Dollar joined the History faculty at Oklahoma State University, where he continued his

opting to work, study, and publish beyond Oklahoma's borders. Yet both do have a connection, albeit a loose one, to Oklahoma's archival history before the paradigm shift occurred. Brown and Dollar were focused primarily on technological issues like history and machine-readable coding a few decades before the Murrah bombing. The importance of documenting these retiring and end-career archival workers who have stayed in Oklahoma and navigated its transitions, as difficult as they have been, becomes a vital element to understanding them. Much like what happened in post-World War II Europe and Palestine, 'Archivists and scholars were never just stewards, and the archives they created were never just about the past. Instead, holding the traces of Jewish history allowed communities to lay claim to the Jewish future.'⁹⁴ The worst domestic act of violence marked Oklahoma and its people in a profound and lasting way, including those archivists and scholars documenting the occurrence and the paradigmatic shift from viewing history as past to viewing history as present and active. Again, demonstrated by the quantitative data, fifty-three percent of the forty-four respondents, or twenty-three, used words and phrases like 'expertise', 'experience', 'diverse knowledge', and 'capturing current history as it unfolds' in defining their role in organisational culture. Oklahoma archivists see their roles and responsibilities as ongoing, vital, and active, not as passive repositories adverse to change.

Their self-perception is further validated in the oral history interviews when asked about the legacy they would like to be remembered for in Oklahoma archival history.

Stephens, in reference to her work at the Oklahoma City Zoo, said, 'I'm really proud to

computer-based historical research.' He was appointed 'director of the newly established Machine-Readable Archives Division at the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) in the United States' in 1974, p.174.

⁹⁴ Lutsig, *A Time to Gather*, p.174-175.

have saved so many things before they were lost [...] I'm really proud to have been able to preserve that story.'⁹⁵ For many of the participants, the saving and preservation of materials for future generations was a worthwhile legacy to leave Oklahoma. For others, like Dr. Brad Robison, it is in the enthusiasm he created for the study from the larger community:

I would hope that I have influenced people to understand and, and especially in my students and colleagues, that the history of Oklahoma is an exciting history and then it's proven by the efforts that have been carried out to maintain and exhibit documents, cultural artifacts...⁹⁶

As someone who worked with the Murrah Bombing almost from day one, Robison would understand the dichotomy of a history that is vitally important to the historical record, but also deeply personal within a smaller community. This circles back to the discipline of anthropology; to know who you are both individually and as part of a larger community. Recalling memories of a career spent in archival work places the individual within the profession but also external to it as well, particularly when asked about how professionals view their personal contribution to the larger community, both archival and Oklahoman.

Invisible Workforce

In examining workforce literature as it intersects with feminist studies, historically the term 'waves' has been used to denote different time periods. Scholars like Malinowska argue that, 'Despite the embeddedness of the wave metaphor in theorizing feminism, the metaphor has been considered problematic and contested within feminist literature. Its structuring is often considered historically misleading and politically

⁹⁵ Amy Stephens, interview by JJ Compton, 24 October 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-17, p.8.

⁹⁶ Robison, p.7.

useless.’⁹⁷ However, due to its proliferation in the area of workforce studies, the wave metaphor will be utilized. The second wave of feminism in the United States and the United Kingdom saw an increase in cries for equality in the workforce and passage in the United States of The Equal Pay Act of 1963 by then President Kennedy. In the United States, it also issued a call for more archives to collect materials from females or to open and actively promote long-held materials by women within archival institutions.⁹⁸ Archivists around the globe reacted to this call with enthusiasm and encouragement for colleagues as the exponential growth of women’s archives and women’s material in the last fifty years has demonstrated. Oklahoma’s archives were a part of answering this call as well, with the University of Central Oklahoma’s Herland Voice Newsletter Archive, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Ada Lois Sipuel Legal Case Files collection, Oklahoma State University’s Oklahoma Women’s Archive Collection, and the Oklahoma

⁹⁷ Ania Malinowska, ‘Waves of Feminism,’ in Karen Ross, Ingrid Bachmann, Valentina Cardo, Sujata Moorti, and Marco Scarcelli, eds., *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2020, pp.1-7, p.2

<<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119429128.iegmc096>>

⁹⁸ ‘Second Wave Feminism,’ In *Feminist Philosophies A-Z*, by Nancy McHugh. Edinburgh University Press, 2007. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/edinburghfem/second_wave_feminism/0> The main difference was in the US the cry was focused on middle class pay while in the UK it ‘extended to working-class women’ with the ‘strike at the Ford plant in 1968’; United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, ‘The Equal Pay Act of 1963’ <<https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/equal-pay-act-1963>> [accessed 14 December 2022] The act ‘prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions’; Sandra Gioia Treadway, ‘Plenary: Making Invisible Women Visible: Women’s History and Women in the Archives, 1970- 2020,’ MARAC 2021 Spring - Virtual Meeting 12-16 April, Given 12 April 2021 <<http://hdl.handle.net/1903/27018>> [accessed 8 December 2022] From her speech, Treadway recalls how this second wave cry began: ‘Recognizing that women’s history sources had been neglected by most manuscript repositories and hoping to raise the visibility and influence of women in the archival profession, several women active in the Society of American archivists arranged a session for the annual meeting of the SAA’ which was held in November 1972. One curator, Eva Mosley ‘urged archivists to overcome their long standing biases about women’s papers that they simply weren’t important, and to do a much better job of highlighting the Women’s History materials they had in their collections.’

Historical Society's Women in Oklahoma History.⁹⁹ The OHS collection functions as a starting point for researchers in Oklahoma women's history, a place to begin a more specific examination of the topic. The University of Tulsa's Special Collections also recently acquired the Dr. Barbara Santee library and personal papers which contain her forty years of activism for Oklahoma women's reproductive rights.¹⁰⁰ The workers within the archives built relationships with families and communities of people, obtained materials to better highlight the experiences of women in Oklahoma, and made material available online through finding aids and digital collections.

But Oklahoma women archivists' own stories of being a part of this call to action by the Society of American Archivists have never been captured or told. Jan Davis from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) stated how she believes her department is viewed by those who allocate its resources:

I don't think the archives is perceived as a key component of this agency and the work that it does. So I think sometimes it does not necessarily get the focus that it needs. In comparison with other states, there are many states that have much stronger support both staff and financial, for the permanent records of state government, they're state archival collections. If I were going to speculate, I would say we're probably in the bottom third with respect to staffing and funding for what we do.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ University of Central Oklahoma, Max Chambers Library, 'Herland Voice Newsletter Archive,' <<https://library.uco.edu/archives/herland/>> [accessed 14 December 2022] which was added to the library in 2016; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'Ada Lois Sipuel Legal Case Files,' <<https://digitalprairie.ok.gov/digital/collection/sipuel>> [accessed 14 December 2022] which appears to have been published online in 2006 according to the metadata from <<https://digitalprairie.ok.gov/digital/collection/sipuel/id/378/rec/1>> [accessed 14 December 2022]; Oklahoma State University Archives Repository, 'Oklahoma Women's Archive Collection,' <<http://archivespaces.library.okstate.edu:8081/repositories/3/resources/751>> [accessed 14 December 2022] in which the finding aid shows last updated as 2010; and Oklahoma Historical Society, 'Women in Oklahoma History,' <<https://www.okhistory.org/learn/womenshistory>> [accessed 14 December 2022]

¹⁰⁰ Melissa Kunz, 'Barbara Santee archive of Oklahoma women's reproductive rights,' University of Tulsa Depart of Special Collections and Archives website posted 25 January 2016 <<http://orgs.utulsa.edu/spcol/?p=3996>> [accessed 14 December 2022]

¹⁰¹ Jan Davis, interview by JJ Compton, 1 October 2019, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, 1-8, p.3.

Advocating for archival workers and their necessity in Oklahoma is one that helps both historians and the general public better understand why the archival work in Oklahoma continues despite many mitigating negative factors. Through examining the workers at a time near or after retirement, capturing their beliefs about what makes Oklahoma archival work relevant and important in a state which takes for granted the work they do on a daily basis also reveals the women in repositories working behind the scenes in what is termed the invisible workforce.

As the literature review suggests, feminist interpretations of the workforce have highlighted the invisibility of women, especially in professions which are highly female-centric. Libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) are one such profession. The participants in this thesis were not as heavily female dominant as other literature suggests for LAMs. The Department for Professional Employees Fact Sheet states that, 'Library workers have been, and will continue to be, mostly female' and 'in 2010, women accounted for 82.8 percent of all librarians.'¹⁰² The recently completed A'CENSUS II survey of the archival profession in the United States found:

The archives profession has become more women-dominated over time. Since 2004, the proportion of women in the archives profession has increased from 65 percent to 71 percent, representing a 6 point increase. Conversely, the proportion of men in the archives profession has decreased by 11 percentage points, dropping from 34 percent in 2004 to 23 percent in 2021.¹⁰³

Of the twenty-five Oklahoma interviewees, sixty-eighty percent were female and thirty-two percent were male. This is almost fifteen percent lower than the national average for

¹⁰² DPE Research Department, 'Library Workers: Facts & Figures,' Department for Professional Employees, May 2011. <<https://ala-apa.org/files/2012/03/Library-Workers-2011.pdf>> [accessed 5 December 2022]

¹⁰³ Makala Skinner and Ioana Hulber, 'A'CENSUS II All Archivists Survey Report,' Ithaka S+R. Last Modified 22 August 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.317224>> [accessed 16 December 2022]

library workers and three percent lower than the percentages reported by the Society of American Archivists. This correlates to Oklahoma's female workforce statistics in general, which have shown a decline in the last twenty-plus years: 'From 1997 to 2020, Oklahoma's female labor force participation rate declined from 56.2 percent to 52.2 percent.'¹⁰⁴ More men work in LAMs because there are not as many females working in the state of Oklahoma. A more recent report which ranked Oklahoma as the worst state for females to reside in the US says, 'Oklahoma is considered the worst state to live in for women, highlighting poor outcomes in nearly every metric, including poverty, voter turnout and life expectancy.'¹⁰⁵ Thus the seventeen female participants, one of whom had actually moved out of Oklahoma, faced additional challenges compared to their male equivalents. Though not the traditional workforce invisibility associated with working women, when living conditions are found to be detrimental to females, it appears there will be fewer of them participating in building the economy and workforce within a state.

Another factor which contributes to the invisibility of female archival workers is their own mentality on how they view their own legacy and contributions to the preservation of Oklahoma's historical record. When asked directly what they viewed their legacy is or could be, some of the female interview subjects responded with the following: 'I believe that what I'm trying to bring here is that this is a place for everybody', 'the work of helping to get our collections into a standardized more

¹⁰⁴ Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Economic Research and Analysis Division, 'Characteristics of Female Workers in Oklahoma, 2001-2020,' August 2021 <<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oesc/documents/labor-market/publications/demography-reports/characteristics-female-workers-2021.pdf>> [accessed 5 December 2022] p. 4

¹⁰⁵ Jeff Elkins, 'Oklahoma ranked worst state for women in 2022,' *Norman Transcript* 2 March 2022 <https://www.normantranscript.com/news/oklahoma-ranked-worst-state-for-women-in-2022/article_ae61e792-99bb-11ec-ac4a-dff13bcca7f3.html#:~:text=A%20recent%20study%20found%20Oklahoma,to%20the%20annual%20WalltHub%20study> [accessed 5 December 2022]

transportable format for the future and, but also helping push other archivists around me to gain that sense of control', and 'And since I know that I'm going to be leaving in two and a half years, I'm trying to get everything established so that the next person who comes in will be able to just, you know, slide in.'¹⁰⁶ Creating welcoming spaces for multiple generations of visitors, manipulating data into more malleable formats for the future, and realising that the end of a career is imminent but still trying to make it seamless for the next person hired are the kind of invisible labours done behind the scenes, that is necessary but not glamorous and which gets overlooked by administrators and supervisors. No wonder the general public misunderstands the work archival professionals are performing within the state of Oklahoma.

Beyond the second wave of feminism grouping to which many of Oklahoma's retiring archivists belong, those born after the movement and working in archives are categories which belong more to the third wave of feminism, in which,

The creation of archives is part and parcel of how we produce and legitimize knowledge and make our voices audible in the public sphere. Rather than a destination for knowledge already produced or a place to recover histories and ideas placed under erasure, making archives is frequently where our knowledge production begins.¹⁰⁷

While the second wave of feminism saw Oklahoma archivists capturing stories and creating the archival collections mentioned above, this third wave group composed of mid and early-career female archivists sees the aspect of creation more within archival repositories. This is especially true of the work Milligan has done with the OOHHP, which not only connects the stories of Oklahomans via technology but also captures

¹⁰⁶ Stephens, p.8; Hoffner, Interview, p.6; Baroff, p.5.

¹⁰⁷ Kate Eichhorn, 'D.I.Y. Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production Since 1990,' *Women's Studies* 39:6 (2010): pp.622-646, p.625
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2010.490716>>

them. Her visionary thinking as a folklorist in identifying the importance of story has helped all of Oklahoma connect. A similar earlier historical work is the Oklahoma Living Legends collection whose originals are housed at the Oklahoma Historical Society. Due to the digitisation, the work of these professionals is now available to listen to online with the disclaimer, ‘Historical recordings and documents may include offensive language, negative stereotypes, and descriptions of traumatic events. These materials are presented as part of the historical record and do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the Oklahoma Historical Society.’¹⁰⁸ Again, these materials have been curated somewhere else and transferred and the invisible female archival labour force is actually helping to create as part of knowledge production. This is where the oral history interviews of archivists in this thesis shine bridging the differing waves of feminist interpretation within archives, from the retiring generation who belonged to the second wave and the third generation who are creating alongside and within repositories. Hearing their stories adds to the body of knowledge for feminism studies, as well as archival studies, creating a more holistic and interdisciplinary view of Oklahoma archivists.

The above discussion utilising feminist interpretations of librarians and the LAM sector as invisible workforce labour is necessary to place Oklahoma’s LAM women in the generational experiences of their employment in the larger society. However, by limiting it to the interpretations of feminism, it lacks the intersectionality examination of scholars today, who try to examine these perceptions through a more inclusive and holistic approach. That being said, white women still make up a large percentage of LAM

¹⁰⁸ Oklahoma Historical Society Audio Archives, ‘Oklahoma Living Legends Collection,’ <<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2cTTbGugbsaVo0gridwYaU0aokzMUzHb>> [accessed 28 December 2022]

employment, something the library and archival fields are beginning to realise and address. White feminist scholar Schlesselman-Tarango argues, ‘...I am a white female librarian. Most of the people engaged in U.S. librarianship look like me. This is a problem...’¹⁰⁹ The participants in this project are primarily female, with seventeen of the twenty-five identifying as such and the remaining eight identifying as male.

However, when examined more closely, three of those seventeen females were non-white, two identified as belonging to different indigenous people’s tribes, and one identified as Hispanic. This means that of the twenty-five participants, the non-white make up is 12% of the total. Of those identifying as female participants the non-white makes up 17.6% of the total. This is statistically significant as, according to the 2020 US Census Bureau data, Oklahoma is composed of 9.5% American Indian or Alaska Native and 12.1% Hispanic or Latino, for a total of 21.6%.¹¹⁰ Thus, women working with LAM institutions are below the average representation population of the state by four percent. Oklahoma’s archivists must continue to push for diverse personnel within their institutions so the historical work is reflective of all of Oklahoma’s people.

The work of this thesis, to amplify not only the invisible workforce of women but those of non-white women, seeks to address the argument that

Scholarship in LIS has been effective in dissecting the ways in which our profession has come to be a feminized, and our field also has been analyzed through a variety of feminist lenses. While this is important and intriguing work, intersectional frameworks have been lacking, specifically when it comes to race. We must be clear that when we talk about early librarians, the people we are likely referring to are white women. In specifically naming these subjects, we

¹⁰⁹ Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, ‘The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library,’ *Library Trends* 64, 4 (2016): pp.667-686, p.668 <[doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0015](https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0015)>

¹¹⁰ United States Census Bureau, ‘Quickfacts: Oklahoma,’ *U.S. Census Bureau Website* <<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/OK>> [accessed 11 February 2023]

allow ourselves to identify and interrogate the complex relationship between white womanness and the operations of white supremacy.¹¹¹

By amplifying the voices of a state whose general makeup is varied and diverse, especially among Indigenous peoples, the work of not only the white woman but of the Indigenous woman, the Hispanic woman, and the African-American woman can be heard from, acknowledged as important, and create a more generative conversation in what the profession can be doing to help all of Oklahoma's residents be represented in the greater historical record. When the invisible becomes visible, Oklahoma archivists need to make sure it is not only for the external community but the personnel working within repositories as well.

Workforce Transitions: Greying & Retiring Archivists

As mentioned in both the introduction and the chapter 1 literature review, what is now termed the greying of a workforce generation is occurring on a global scale in all industries. The continued retirement of archival professionals both nationally and within Oklahoma are cause for concern when their positions are left open for long periods of time or not filled at all. The 2022 Archivist Census or A'Census II reported in the Executive Summary:

One in five respondents are considering leaving the archives profession within the next five years. An additional one in four respondents are not sure if they will stay or leave. Of the 20 percent of respondents planning to leave, the top three reasons are retirement, burnout, and limited compensation/salary or better compensation/salary elsewhere.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Schlesselman-Tarango, *Library Trends*, p.681.

¹¹² Skinner and Hulbert, 'A'CENSUS II,' <<https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/acensus-ii-all-archivists-survey-report/>> This survey had 5699 respondents across the United States and is one of the most comprehensive surveys available to the archival profession. The A'CENSUS was originally sent to survey the field in 2004 and was the first comprehensive survey of US archival professionals. For more

The work of this thesis only points to retirement as a key component of the greying of the profession. Burnout and compensation, while valid and especially high in the post-COVID-19 era, point to the archivist's struggle for career recognition and validation in a society heavily pushing STEM fields. This topic alone could generate another thesis, so I will leave it to be explored by others.

Specifically in Oklahoma, the state is seeing many retirements of long-term employees within LAM institutions like Bill Welge from the Oklahoma Historical Society, Kay Bost's retirement from Oklahoma State University's Archives, and Susan McVey from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.¹¹³ Susan had been active in library organisations since 1976, having served with ODL since 1996 and retiring completely in February 2019.¹¹⁴ A concern to note which is especially relevant to this project, is that McVey's replacement, Melody Kellogg, who was appointed in 2019 resigned in 2022.¹¹⁵ Kellogg's replacement was not approved and named until September 2022, meaning that since 2019 there has been no real institutional memory like McVey possessed.¹¹⁶ It is

information on the first Census see <<https://www2.archivists.org/initiatives/acensus-archival-census-education-needs-survey-in-the-united-states>> As this project began in 2017, the A'CENSUS II data was unavailable to this project prior to both the quantitative and qualitative sections.

¹¹³ Bill Welge, Personal LinkedIn Profile Page, <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bill-welge-05a21640>> [accessed 7 June 2017]; Kate L. Blalack, 'Leadership Log,' *Southwestern Archivist* 34, 1 (February 2011): p.30 ; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'State Librarian Emerita,' Last Modified on 30 June 2022 <<https://oklahoma.gov/libraries/about-odl/offices-and-staff-listing/state-librarian-emerita.html>> [accessed 28 November 2022]

¹¹⁴ ODL, 'State Librarian Emerita.'

¹¹⁵ Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'Press Release: Meet Your New State Librarian, Melody Kellogg,' *ODL Website* 4 February 2019 <<https://www.facebook.com/okdeptoflibraries/posts/meet-the-new-state-librarianmelody-kellogg-new-director-of-the-oklahoma-departme/2794122570598221/>> [accessed 19 January 2024] (Original announcement taken down, but was able to locate it on Facebook); Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'Minutes,' *ODL Website* 15 February 2022 <<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/libraries/documents/agendas/odl-board-packet%204-8-22.pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2024]

¹¹⁶ Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 'ODL Director,' Last Modified on 12 October 2022 <<https://oklahoma.gov/libraries/about-odl/offices-and-staff-listing/odl-director.html>> [accessed 16 December 2022]

unknown but assumed unlikely that McVey and Kellogg and the current State Librarian and Archivist had any kind of informal knowledge transfer of the job beyond what could be put in a document, email, or guide. This kind of workforce knowledge loss, especially during the time of COVID-19, which may have caused a delay in the replacement being filled, is harmful to the transmission of knowledge between an ageing workforce and a younger generation coming in as replacements. The lost voices and stories which could be told during an orientation or job training overlap are the ones the organisation's history will lose. As Linde reported in her embedding with an insurance organisation:

Mandated policies and procedures, as well as informal practices, form part of the way that institutions learn and remember. Many formal and informal policies are the result of a decision made during or after a problem. Sometimes these policies remain with no one left to remember the reason that they were instituted; sometimes an older member of the institution can tell the origin story of the procedure.¹¹⁷

When older members of the organisation retire and there is no one around to ask 'why?' or 'what happened?' new LAM professionals are left to guess about the implementation of decisions. This lack of institutional knowledge, even with donors or family members, in regards to the organisation's adherence to certain policies and procedures is problematic at best and, at worst, may be an open information violation. As the Obama Presidential Digital Research Center is a new paradigm, even the policies and procedures NARA has laid out will evolve over time in the face of continuing technological advances. Oklahoma's late and mid-career archivists, when allowed to help train and overlap vocationally with emerging archival professionals, will be able to pass on the stories behind the documents and policies. The knowledge behind the stories, which often

¹¹⁷ Linde, p.13.

go untold in an industry, is not recognized for the valuable contribution it plays in maintaining and upholding Oklahoma's democratic landscape.

A news story released by the Associated Press again brought up the socio-economic factors pushing older individuals to stay in the United States workforce longer than originally planned. The post-COVID-19 inflation is causing economic difficulties for every generation, but 'those over 65 often have an even harder time because they usually live on a fixed income, unable to increase their paychecks with overtime or bonuses.'¹¹⁸ The quantitative survey data revealed in Chapter 3 that of the forty-three respondents fourteen self-identified in the American normative popular vocabulary as part of the Baby Boomer generation, the oldest having been born in 1949 and the youngest of that generational grouping in 1964, with two participants in the years 1952 and 1956. Of those within this grouping in the quantitative data, twelve took part in the oral history interviews, which is discernible in the data since the participants opted to provide their names in the quantitative data optional field. This is an unusually high number as nineteen of the forty-three opted to remain anonymous, and an additional two respondents only provided a forename – one of these two provided an email address, so they did not remain anonymous. These twelve respondents, part of the greying Oklahoma workforce, give insight into their career length and the factors which allowed them to retire or kept them working as told before the additional COVID-19 inflationary pressure. It is not known whether these individuals re-entered the workforce after the time of the interviews unless they specifically stated it during the interview.

¹¹⁸ Associated Press, 'Working at 76: Inflation is forcing hard choice for older adults,' *KOCO News* 16 December 2022 <<https://www.koco.com/article/inflation-older-adults/42258143>> [accessed 16 December 2022]

Re-entering the workforce after retirement or waiting until longer to retire is a trend in American workforce studies, but one which has some serious limitations. A 2002 study showed that, ‘health is an important determinant of ability to work as people age; that disparities in health translate to diminished labor market opportunities for those with less education, and that worse health among younger cohorts of white Americans may reduce their ability to work up to and past traditional retirement ages.’¹¹⁹ According to the research of Berger, López, Maestas, and Mullen, health and education level alone directly correlate with how long a person remains or re-enters the workforce after the traditional retirement age in America, typically sixty-five to seventy years old. In regards to education, research by de Grip, Fouarge, Montizaan, and Schreurs argues that continued training is vital to engage the older workforce. The authors state, ‘If organizations want to slow down early labor market withdrawal, they are well advised to be responsive to older workers’ needs and preferences as to create an environment in which they find meaning in their work.’¹²⁰ Thus, for older archival employees, personal health and lack of training opportunities are factors which influence retirement age and whether they re-enter Oklahoma’s general workforce.

Dr. James L. Crowder is part of the retired group of participants. In his oral history he talks about his organisation’s size saying, ‘when I retired we were down to one person, which is virtually impossible for that size base.’¹²¹ Crowder also discussed how

¹¹⁹ Ben Berger, Italo López, Nicole Maestas, and Kathleen J. Mullen, ‘The Link between Health and Working Longer,’ in Lisa F. Berkman and Beth C. Treeddale, ed., *Overtime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, pp.113-137, p.115-116.

¹²⁰ Andries de Grip, Didier Fouarge, Raymond Montizaan, and Bert Schreurs, ‘Train to retain: Training opportunities, positive reciprocity, and expected retirement age,’ *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117 (2020). < <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103332>>

¹²¹ James L. Crowder, interview by JJ Compton, 19 January 2019, in Edmond, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-20, p.3.

he still kept in touch with the grandson of one of his donors and research subjects.¹²² The role in institutional knowledge he still plays even after retirement is captured in his recounting of telephone calls he receives by the new employees coming in looking for something:

...if there's a Tinker question, they'll come to me, and you know after the first year if something came up about Tinker, they would call me at home. If it was an official call I wouldn't play with him, but if it was somebody I knew and they'd say James I need help on this one. Do you know where the photograph of so-and-so is? You know, and I'd go yeah, file eight, drawer three.¹²³

Crowder would help his replacements but not the military officials because of how many cuts had occurred and the lack of support he had been given by them over the course of his career. This apathy towards his former employer may be a reason why he did not re-enter the military LAM workforce. More likely, it is because he chooses now to serve on the board of Zambia Christian Schools, where unsurprisingly his role is, 'board secretary which is the *de facto* archivist for over 10 years and keep all the records.'¹²⁴ Thus, Oklahoma archivists, upon retirement, choose whether or not to contribute back to the institutional knowledge of an organisation based upon their own experiences with them during their career.

Other now-retired archivists interviewed have their own passions and workforce contributions, which they described during their interviews. Sherri Vance describes her connection to the work of archivists post-retirement in the following way: 'I've retired and I'm still you know archiving my house. And well that it is a passion, it becomes a passion. It becomes a passion.'¹²⁵ Kitty Pittman, who retired from the Oklahoma

¹²² Ibid, p.11.

¹²³ Ibid, p.14-15.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.1-2.

¹²⁵ Vance, transcript, p.7.

Department of Libraries, also now volunteers after retirement: ‘I’m doing work at Stillwater Public [Library] on a collection.’¹²⁶ Kitty also reflects back on how, in order to be upwardly mobile in the workforce at ODL, it required managing people and doing supervisory responsibilities. Now that Kitty is retired, she is enjoying doing the actual work of an archivist again:

I like now I’m back in the collection, I’m back in making a decision whether this archive material goes here or there or if we put this book on the shelf or, you know, those kinds of things there are what should we digitize first and how are we going to arrange the collection that, I, those are the things I like and have always liked.¹²⁷

Dr. Brad Robison, who worked at the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism collecting materials and working with survivors immediately after the Murrah Bombing in 1995, recounts that in his retirement, ‘I, sometimes I’m called upon to give tours at the Memorial at the, especially through the museum. I do a couple of, a year, maybe an interpretation of the outdoor memorial.’¹²⁸ Thus, personal satisfaction after retirement is found by Oklahoma’s retirees in acts of volunteerism and personal archiving of family history materials.

Volunteerism among Oklahoma’s retired archivists correlates to the literature which states that generationally, ‘Many Boomers will seek volunteer opportunities as a means to remain active, use their skills, and pursue interests that they have not previously had time to do. Boomers will seek volunteer roles that allow them to use their own skills and interests.’¹²⁹ Bill Welge, who retired from OHS, says this of his former career: ‘I

¹²⁶ Kitty Pittman, interview by JJ Compton, 9 January 2020, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-10, p.5.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.7.

¹²⁸ Robison, p.4.

¹²⁹ Ken Culp III, ‘Recruiting and Engaging Baby Boomer Volunteers,’ *Journal of Extension* 47, 2 (April 2009): pp.1-8, p.2 <https://archives.joe.org/joe/2009april/pdf/JOE_v47_2rb2.pdf> [accessed 16 December 2022]

consider the Oklahoma Historical Society my home away from home. They've continued to let me show up. They don't create any issues at all and, and I'm here to help if I can help.¹³⁰ You can take the Oklahoma archivist out of an archive, but they will not stop doing the passionate work of their profession because, as pointed out in the literature, they want to continue to use their interest in history and knowledge of the collections in their organisations to benefit the institution and the researcher. Their institutional knowledge, which is only built up over years of working in archives, is something Oklahoma's archivists want to pass on to the next generational workforce.

The advent of what the literature is referring to as episodic volunteering may prove to be difficult for many organisations to manage in the post COVID-19 era. This type of volunteering emerged in the postmodern era where, 'people are often too busy to provide extensive and ongoing support for a worthy cause, and they are not interested in a long commitment to any single organization or cause.'¹³¹ For LAM institutions this is extremely problematic because, as mentioned by Gilliland in Chapter 1, 'every archivist knows the depth of knowledge that is to be gained by laying out an entire series or collection and manually processing it.'¹³² Having one-off volunteers in an industry driven by long-time employees and volunteers, the collection level knowledge and organisational culture will be profoundly altered. The advances in technology currently allow for digital processing of archival materials. However, there is pushback from professionals aiming for decolonizing practices to be implemented in the form of 'the

¹³⁰ Welge, transcript, p.11.

¹³¹ Ram A. Cnaan, Lucas Meijs, Jeffrey L. Brudney, Sophie Hersberger-Langloh, Aya Okada, and Samir Abu-Rumman, 'You Thought That This Would Be Easy? Seeking an Understanding of Episodic Volunteering,' *Voluntas* 33, 416 (2022): pp.415-427, p.16. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00329-7>>

¹³² David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archives*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2017: p.xvi.

slow archives'.¹³³ The slowdown of work done by archival professionals allows professions to see, 'the intricate web of relationships formed and forged through attention to collaborative curation processes that do not default to normative structures of attribution, access, or scale.'¹³⁴ Slow archiving, coupled with the episodic volunteering done by retirees and workforce participants engaging in sporadic short-term projects, will affect the training and retention of both employees and the volunteers who are needed to keep entities operational. This is especially true in the LAM field in Oklahoma where the work of archival professionals could not be completed without the help of volunteers. These volunteers fill gaps in open positions and during furlough of employees while also alleviating underfunding and staffing cuts allowing the work within repositories to continue. However, volunteers come and go, each requiring training and time for the staff. Thus, while vital to keep archives functioning in Oklahoma, volunteers are not to be considered tied to institutions like the career professional archivist.

Some archivists retired because of family responsibilities. Jeanne Prince says, 'But whenever I decided to retire I had to, I spent several years taking care of my parents and just now I'm getting to where I can pick up my life again.'¹³⁵ This call to take care of ageing parents is a hard but necessary decision for some to make. But the desire to be in the field and the happenings of politics and its implications are still real to those with ties to Oklahoma's history. Prince relates her worries as a retiree in relation to history and political governance, both in the state and nationally:

¹³³ Kimberly Christen and Jane Anderson, 'Toward slow archives,' *Archival Science* 19 (2019): pp.87-116, p.90. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-019-09307-x>> The slow archives is defined as 'Slowing down creates a necessary space for emphasizing how knowledge is produced, circulated, contextualized, and exchanged through a series of relationships. Slowing down is about focusing differently, listening carefully, and acting ethically.'

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Prince, p.9.

I think that we're going to be faced with a problem of reliving history over and over because we're forgetting the things that we had learned... I feel like my hands are tied but it just seems the way things are going that history ends, this we may not even have history, historians in the future which is scary!¹³⁶

While retired archivists may not stay abreast of theory or different historical movements even during their career, as seen in Chapter 3, they very much know the relevance of contextualised and primary documents in a democratic society. These retired archivists show concern over the lack of these types of resources currently be given to everyday citizens. For as mid-career participant Dr. Jason Harris points out in his oral history interview:

people have become so focused on certain time periods or certain perspectives in history, that things that fall outside of it are hard for them to put into context or hard for them to understand in their historical context. You know that there's, in some people's minds, history from previous generations should be ignored because of the context in which it was written.¹³⁷

Historical contextualisation is being lost when LAM professionals are disregarded as necessary to the historical professional landscape. But perhaps these are just the worries of an ageing generation as the term Boomer has gained a negative connotation in American society, 'It's the digital equivalent of an eye roll.'¹³⁸ Or, perhaps like the initiative for this thesis, knowledge transmission between generational workforces are struggling with how best to transmit the knowledge successfully, just like those within Oklahoma's LAM field.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Jason Harris, interview by JJ Compton, 1 August 2019, in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, transcript, pp.1-9, p.4

¹³⁸ Lorenz Taylor, "'OK Boomer' Marks the End of Friendly Generational Relations,' *New York Times (Online)*, 29 October 2019.

<<https://www.proquest.com/nytimes/docview/2309657787/9EEE67E1721246E6PQ/1?accountid=37418>> [accessed 16 December 2022]

The retiring workforce of archival professionals is partly due to health-related concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic's shadow still looms large for individuals over the age of sixty-five in the United States. The news media has reported consistently that those sixty-five and over have a higher hospitalisation rate when they contract the COVID-19 virus.¹³⁹ This does not correlate in any way with archivists other than their age demographic, the fourteen oral history interviewees who identified as part of the American normative vocabulary generational identified of Baby Boomer. But it does point to the fact that the older workforce is more likely to have health complications associated with COVID-19 should they still be in the workforce and not completely retired.

One library leader's response to COVID-19 queries what leadership within libraries will look like moving forward. Lewis says that within higher education libraries will, 'take a huge financial hit' in the United States, with, 'expected cuts in state support for public institutions' and 'enrollments ...unlikely to quickly recover.'¹⁴⁰ For large public higher educational institutions supporting large LAM entities like libraries and archives, there will be long-term effects in sustainable funding and staffing, something Oklahoma has wrestled with long before the COVID-19 global phenomenon. Since data collection began before the pandemic struck, neither the effects COVID-19 would have on the ageing archival population nor the imminent national funding and staffing crisis

¹³⁹ Deidre McPhillips, 'A COVID-19 "senior wave" is driving up hospitalizations,' *CNN.com* via *KOCO.com* 23 December 2022 <<https://www.koco.com/article/covid-senior-wave-driving-up-hospitalizations/42327561>> [accessed 27 December 2022]

¹⁴⁰ David W. Lewis, 'Academic Library Leadership After 2020: The Theory of the Case,' *Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) ScholarWorks* December 2020 pp.1-6, p.1 <<https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/24779/Library%20Leadership%20After%202020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> [accessed 10 February 2023]

facing higher education in the post-COVID-19 landscape were identified as interview queries for the greying of the archival profession in Oklahoma.

National data shows massive job loss during the pandemic which only adds ‘to an ongoing twenty-first-century trend in U.S. employment that has arguably received less attention than it deserves: the country’s fall from being one of the top advanced countries in employment per person of working age to a much lower position...’¹⁴¹ Freeman goes on to argue that unforeseen shocks affect all the labour markets, the COVID-19 pandemic did so on a larger scale for a longer period of time. For archivists and other LAM professionals already struggling, both in Oklahoma and nationally, COVID-19 exacerbated areas already facing staffing and funding pressures, the results of which are still being determined today. Thus, the greying and retired Oklahoma archival workforce is unique in that many individuals still volunteer back in their organisations. However, the long-term effects of COVID-19 and the changing nature of volunteering will affect institutional sustainability if they continue to remain unaddressed by the administration.

Workforce Transitions: Generational differences

Pointing back to the literature review and methodology sections, the American normative vocabulary for defining generational groupings is laid out in Chapter 1’s section on workforce transitions. The generational grouping labels are a first step in getting an idea and understanding of the ages of employees working within archives in the state of Oklahoma. These labels appear to be irrelevant based on the skills and knowledge of archival employees. Again, looking at the literature, it appears that the

¹⁴¹ Richard B. Freeman, *Planning for the ‘Expected Unexpected,’* in Lisa F. Berkman and Beth C. Truesdale, eds., *Overtime*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, p.93.

distinction between digital immigrant and digital native while often defined generationally are not necessary to assess the capabilities of the individuals. Rather, examining what technological tools are being developed and utilised provides the context of the information to be able to analyse the mixed methodological data. Within higher education, one recommendation which is directed towards teaching faculty and campus leaders is the, ‘need to stay abreast of current research as we move forward with innovative and learner-focused programs.’¹⁴² To extrapolate the definition on to archives, these professionals need to stay aware of new developments, technologies and other related current events to be aware of how best to help users contextualise information in both in-person and digital environments. Thus, generational labels, whether by birth group or digital identification, remain largely unhelpful in the archival profession where relevancy, suitability, and continuing education play a larger role.

The need for Oklahoma’s archivists to stay aware of current events on the national level is what prompted an additional question about the design and implementation of the President Obama Digital Research Center. The Center has now evolved into the Barack Obama Presidential Library in partnership with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). During the recording of the interviews, many participants found a digital space relevant to the ongoing shift and advances in technology. When initially asked about the current event, only two were aware of the discussion surrounding Obama’s Presidential materials. At the time of writing, the latest

¹⁴² The best literature review on this is by Theodore B. Creighton, ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Digital Learners: An International Empirical Integrative Review of the Literature,’ *Education Leadership Review*, v19 n1 p132-140 Dec 2018.

message from NARA, placed on their research guide related to the Obama Presidential Papers, says:

Obama presidential records are stored and preserved by the National Archives. However, they are NOT accessible to the public. NARA is working to digitize the textual records as quickly as possible. Textual records are scanned in their original order and organized by folder. Researchers will still read the documents in their correct context. Records, both digitized and born-digital, will be made available for research via the Obama Library website and the [National Archives Catalog \(NAC\)](#).¹⁴³

The guide is important because one of the main points of contention when the digital research centre was announced revolved around the idea that everything would be digitised without any kind of contextualization occurring. NARA was prompted to work with the family and other interested parties in turning over the materials to develop new policies and procedures for access, handling, and FOI requests. The work of this thesis is paramount in examining how archival professionals react during a paradigmatic shift in the profession, thoughts and reflections of which were captured during the qualitative oral history interviews.

What is important for future generations studying these generationally different archivists is not their label identification, but rather how during their careers within archives they continued to stay abreast of changes happening both within and beyond their states. In addition, how these professionals have navigated their ongoing interactions with the changing technological advances of the day are examined. Sadly for Oklahoma archivists, being aware of what is happening and wanting to implement change to stay relevant is often at odds with what is realistically feasible for the

¹⁴³ National Archives and Records Administration, 'Research Guides,' *Barack Obama Presidential Library* <<https://www.obamalibrary.gov/research/research-links>> [accessed 24 September 2022]

organisation. The best example of this is again ODL's archivist Jan Davis who explains their situation as of October 2019:

If I were to change anything for our organization, it would be to make certain that we had the capacity both for physical records and for electronic records. We experience the same kind of situation with electronic records in that we don't have the staff to process accessioned electronic records and we do not have the funding to pay for the storage for the electronic records. And we do not have the funding to pay for the technology to provide access to the electronic records.¹⁴⁴

When parent organisations – in this case the Oklahoma's state legislature – do not help by funding or staffing positions within the entities that are legally responsible for preserving the history of the state of Oklahoma's government, it becomes impossible for archivists to implement the technology and knowledge vital to citizenry access. Thus the blame should not be placed on the generational differences of employees being digital immigrants or digital natives, but rather what funding and staffing are being provided to ensure organisations are operating at their best to be able to preserve the history of Oklahoma.

Workforce Transitions: Technological shifts

The 20th and 21st centuries have brought about rapid and frequent advances in technology. Generational researcher Jean M. Twenge argues that 'technological change isn't just about stuff; it's about how we live, which influences how we think, feel and behave.'¹⁴⁵ From the turn of the 20th century's introduction of mechanised labour forces to the advent of computing networks of DARPA and ARPA to the Internet untethering in the mid-1990s for public use to the 21st-century development by Apple generations of

¹⁴⁴ Jan Davis, p.4.

¹⁴⁵ Jean M. Twenge, *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future* New York: Atria, 2023, p.6.

apps, iPhones, and information in your pocket, technology has constantly grown and developed at a faster and faster speed.¹⁴⁶ Artificial intelligence and nanotechnology no longer exist in the realms of science fiction. In a 2011 publication by the Society of American Archivists, case studies on the integration of different technologies and modalities of delivery including social media, summed up the phenomenon by saying, ‘the scale of changes in the archival profession in recent years, taken as a whole, reflect a fundamental shift that is analogous to the changes seen between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0...as having a much larger scope.’¹⁴⁷ This was a decade before the fields of economics and engineering began discussing further how AI and machine learning take these advances into deeper and more robust areas through platform development and other tools.¹⁴⁸ The challenge for archivists has been how to stay abreast of all this technology while continuing to migrate the archives themselves from paper-based to digital information without losing the integrity of the original format or the contextual information surrounding it. One digital preservationist describes it this way: ‘Obsolescence is one of the unending battles that digital preservationists fight...For as long as there have been digital objects, there have been archivists and records managers planning for the preservation of said objects.’¹⁴⁹ Retired head of the Oklahoma Historical

¹⁴⁶ ‘Creating Breakthrough Technologies and Capabilities for National Security, *Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency* <<https://www.darpa.mil/>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁴⁷ Kate Theimer, ‘Conclusion: Archivists and Audiences: New Connections and Changing Roles in Archives 2.0,’ in Kate Theimer, ed *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections Between Archives and Our Users*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011, pp.334-346, p.334.

¹⁴⁸ As a starting point for engineering see Hasmat Malik, Gopal Chaudhary, and Smriti Srivastava, ‘Digital Transformation through Advances in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning,’ *Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems* 42, 2 (2022): pp.615-22. <doi:10.3233/JIFS-189787> and for economics see Huayao Zhang, Jing Wen, Xiaoling Chen, Yuqing Ge, and Yuting Chen, ‘Intelligent System Construction Paths for Digitalization Process of Real Economy: A Study from the Perspective of Artificial Intelligence and Platform Leverage,’ *Scientific Programming* 1-21 September 2022 <doi:10.1155/2022/1027211>

¹⁴⁹ Erin Baucom, ‘A Brief History of Digital Preservation,’ in by Jeremy Myntti and Jessalyn Zoom, eds., *Digital Preservation in Libraries: Preparing for a Sustainable Future* Chicago: ALA Editions, 2019, pp.3-19, p.3.

Society's Archives Division, Bill Welge recounted working with microfilm and the move to computers: 'We didn't get computers in this society until very late 1980s or very early 1990s. I don't remember exactly when, but I know it was around that time period.'¹⁵⁰ In other words, creating metadata for future generations while remaining relevant in today's generation of technological advances is the ongoing work of archivists in all repositories aiming for sustainability in fluctuating bits and bytes.

The Society of American Archivists began to support technological-specific learning for practising archives with the Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Certification. The curriculum was released in 2016 with the courses continually updated to the program structure.¹⁵¹ As the site says, once completed the, 'DAS Certificate is valid for five years'.¹⁵² When research began on this project, I did not think to ask the interview subjects about their DAS enrolment, even though the Oklahoma Archivists Association has begun to offer DAS courses as part of its conferences and continuing educational opportunities.¹⁵³ However, because technology has been an ever-present part of the archival literature through SAA for decades, a question on archivist's interactions with technology was posed at different times during the oral histories. Amy Stephens, a mid-career professional, responded that she is:

...always going to believe that some things have to be tangible and something with his signature on it, with his real signature on it...is more valuable than a digital photo of his signature on it. So I think there should definitely be a balance. And technology really is still new. We don't know how it's going to change and go so we shouldn't throw everything, of how it's done in the past, out this soon.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Welge, p.3-4.

¹⁵¹ Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Curriculum and Certificate Program, *Society of American Archivists* <<https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁵² DAS Curriculum Structure, *Society of American Archivists* <<https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das-curriculum-structure>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁵³ Oklahoma Archivists Association, 2022 Annual Meeting Program <<https://okarchivists.org/2022/10/25/aaa-annual-meeting-program/>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁵⁴ Stephens, p.15.

This approach of balance and waiting to see what new developments come to fruition is a realistic one for archivists devoted to continually updating their skills. They still perform the necessary job requirements on their job descriptions while being pulled into projects which require discretion, are high risk, or are time-sensitive. Even those agencies which have been hesitant to act in the technologically shifting landscape, whether due to staffing or budgetary shortages, admit, 'But with the technology and the Internet, that, that's the direction that we needed to go'.¹⁵⁵ Archivists recognize technology's capabilities to help migrate information and provide access are key to knowledge dissemination and transmission in a democratic environment. The citizenry needs to be informed. Archivists need to provide the public with a better understanding of what they do in navigating these changes to make information available. In doing so, they will create a different kind of informed citizenry, one that can advocate for the needs of archivists as well as for themselves.

Besides the duty to inform citizens of collections and to stay abreast of technological changes within the archive, there is also a call from the library, archival, and museum (LAM) arenas to address the way in which technology is morphing and changing the LAM field. In an article asking professionals to discuss the archive of the future, professionals were interviewed to determine, 'how emerging digital practices in scholarly publication and scholarly editing in libraries and archives shape notions of the changing roles of the archivist, the librarian, and the humanist in the digital age – and

¹⁵⁵ Chad Williams, interview by JJ Compton, 16 March 2020, in Edmond, Oklahoma via phone due to COVID-19 lockdown, transcript, 1-15, p.5.

thus the changing work of the archive.¹⁵⁶ Fields outside and inside the profession are recognising the changes that technology is having on the practitioners within those institutions. The authors went on to interview different professionals representing the different LAM and digital humanities fields. The archivist they chose to interview from the University of Virginia libraries stated plainly that there remains, ‘a lack of communication between digital humanities centers and libraries and archives. This is sometimes due to the interests of scholars not being well aligned with the collections in the library. But it can also be based on a lack of awareness between the two groups.’¹⁵⁷ This supports what Oklahoma archivists are saying about communication and connection within the LAM communities: ‘I do feel that out of necessity archivists here have found ways to create community to help one another.’¹⁵⁸ Creating community and being able to communicate between groups is important to the functioning and thriving of LAMs.

However, Hoffner goes on to say:

But I think in a lot of ways the terminology that we use is not helpful in trying to communicate. And it gets back to that idea of communicating the value of what we do. If we can’t even find the language to do that in ways that people can access that’s like. You kind of are at a roadblock right away.¹⁵⁹

The archival community has their own language, which it uses to define and legitimise its work. When the jargon of libraries, museums, historians, and digital humanities are mixed into these practices, it becomes more difficult for the average citizen to understand the relevance and value of the work they perform. Learning to talk across these divisions,

¹⁵⁶ Tanya Clement, Wendy Hagenmaier, and Jennie Levine Knies, ‘Toward a Notion of the Archive of the Future: Impressions of Practice by Librarians, Archivists, and Digital Humanities Scholars,’ *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 83, 2 (April 2013): p.113.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.120.

¹⁵⁸ Hoffner, interview, p.3.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.9.

incorporating the technical language while still being able to articulate the necessity of the work being done are challenges which the profession must continue to address and overcome in order to remain relevant in the day-to-day changes and challenges of technological innovation and data curation. Grassroots organising is a first step towards Oklahoma's archivists learning how best to advocate their value to the public.

Sustainability has become a more and more relevant work in the flux existences of digital technologies within archival repositories. When the public cries for more availability of online resources, archivists must ensure that the obsolescence of technology does not occur. As it relates to digitisation endeavours, the idea of sustainability is discussed in the next section. However, one participant bridges both discussions in trying to create a sustainable technological and knowledge transmission as her retirement approaches. When interviewed in 2019 she said, 'I'm thinking of retiring when I am sixty-six. My boss, who is behind you walking around, he is retiring a year before me. He's, I've been a curator with him for over 30 years...And, you know, I'm just kind of getting the itch to retire now.'¹⁶⁰ Knowing her retirement was on the horizon, she had already done a lot of preparation to get the data in a more accessible form for her replacement. She said, 'When I, when I came we were not digital. And so that was a big changeover when I, when I was here.'¹⁶¹ In the interview she touched upon the basics, but more specifics about the work she accomplished during her tenure at the Great Plains are easily found. In a Library of Congress testimony page on the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, she is listed:

Debbie Baroff of the Museum of the Great Plains reports that lots of information has travelled from Oklahoma to Virginia, and back again since 2003, when she

¹⁶⁰ Baroff, transcript, p.3-4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.7.

first found out about NUCMC and all they had to offer. “I believe my archival record keeping is more complete and better organized because of the NUCMC database. Since we don’t have our collections on our website yet, giving it to NUCMC and having cataloguers putting it on the internet, for me, has to be the most perfect opportunity for a one-person archive. And it’s a great way for researchers to find out what’s available at the Museum of the Great Plains. Thanks for all your hard work, and the wonderful communication you send to me. It’s been a pleasure!”¹⁶²

She prioritised getting the archival collections available in the current technology of her career, having utilised national resources as a lone arranger, thus making the data easier to access and more malleable in an electronic environment for her future predecessor. It is not known how long she overlapped in her employment with the new hire. The fact that they were able to hire a replacement that overlaps with her tenure is a step in the right direction for archival repositories, especially those that have only one employee doing the work. Taking oral histories from archival workers is a value-added information source for future employees to better understand why certain decisions were made and by whom. These oral sources allow for a more cohesive knowledge transfer between retiring and newly hired employees making for a more sustainable knowledge base from which an institution can make decisions.

Workforce Transitions: Knowledge Transmission

As addressed in the previous section, archivists are constantly facing new technologies, especially over the course of their professional careers. But how does an archivist pass on this knowledge to a replacement, or if a position is left unfilled, how might that knowledge still be transmitted to the next person hired for the position? The

¹⁶² National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), ‘From the Repositories,’ *Library of Congress website* Posted 31 January 2012 <<https://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/fromrepositories.html>> [accessed 11 February 2023]

overlap of retiring and newly hired employees is one demonstrable way to create a sustainable future for the institution. But how does one go about transferring the knowledge contained within the archivist's brain? One participant humorously recounted, 'so I, I credit several things for the success of my career is that one I was reading stuff I wasn't supposed to [laughter] but learned a lot of it and thankfully retained the information. And mind you this is before computers.'¹⁶³ Many libraries and other information professionals have relied on LOCKSS system for items and data.¹⁶⁴ Archives have always focused on the process of documentation for collections, from the initial donor contact to accessible records at the repository and online. However, documentation can be flawed much like the people responsible for their creation and care. Blouin and Rosenberg argue that the hallmark of archival professionalism is, 'a specific, unique, and in Jenkinson's view, highly moral position of archival neutrality, assign[ed] a professional identity independent of persuasion and historical judgement.'¹⁶⁵ Hannah Turner's work on how knowledge erasure in museums occurs, especially of Indigenous peoples, is by being interwoven through documentation and technologies, 'practice and daily work, and the nature of the invisible labour that looks to repair colonialism's legacy.'¹⁶⁶ Historically, archives have worked through documentation, with lots of copies to prevent data loss and maintain collection integrity. But the legacy of the myth of

¹⁶³ Welge, transcript, p.3.

¹⁶⁴ This is one of the longest running digital preservation strategies in the United States, originating from Stanford. The Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe has ensured backups and redundancies in the data. However, it is the people and the data in their heads that is really being examined in this project. Stanford University, LOCKSS, <<https://www.lockss.org/>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁶⁵ Francis X. Blouin, Jr., and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and Archives*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.38.

¹⁶⁶ Hannah Turner, *Cataloging Culture: Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Documentation*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2020, p.185. Turner goes on to say that, 'understanding how legacy data are inscribed in collections records is an ethical issue...data have histories, and these must be examined.' p.188.

neutrality steeped in colonisation and utilising an invisible workforce problematizes the legacy documents.

Despite the focus on whether documentation is truly representative and accurate, by its very nature as data, it can be destroyed or lost through the movement of collections both internally and through outside external forces like closures and consolidations from organisations. The Holston Archives knows this all too well, when after collections were moved several times, the ‘relocations destroyed most of the cataloging [which the current archivist] had to reinvent.’¹⁶⁷ However, the unrecognised element in knowledge transmission during workforce transitions is what the archivist really knows from working within collections, with donors, with communities, and the partnerships built up over the life of a career. The stories we now know through oral history collection and the loss of such institutional knowledge are conveyed when long-term employees leave. Bill Welge of the OHS recounts, ‘We only have one or two people and they are in our library part that have any length of service that are better than 25 years with the Society. Our current photo archivist has about 10 years...’¹⁶⁸ This knowledge loss phenomenon is something mentioned by Deborah Baroff just a few pages earlier. The massive amount of knowledge loss the museum is facing through the workforce transition of not one but two long-term employees while glanced over in literature, in reality will be felt for many years at the Museum of the Great Plains.

¹⁶⁷ Annette Spence, ‘Holston archives revived, ready to help Methodists tell their stories,’ *Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church blog* posted 16 November 2022 <<https://www.holston.org/article/ferkin-and-holston-archives-17145834>> [accessed 29 December 2022] This blog post tells the story of a collection moved several times and how the ‘relocations destroyed most of the cataloging [the current archivist] had to reinvent all that.’

¹⁶⁸ Welge, transcript, p.7.

Scholars examining all of the American workforce in the post-COVID-19 era argue that by increasing working power and worker voice, the people will obtain ‘good jobs’, or jobs that ‘meet workers’ needs and the needs of their families: that provide, for example, adequate pay and benefits, reasonable schedules, paid leave for illness or family needs, and a safe working environment.’¹⁶⁹ The mitigation and sustainability of Museum of the Great Plains is addressed in the previous section by acknowledging the roles job overlap and oral history play in knowledge and skill transfer. This is further validated by the quantitative data in which thirty of the forty-three respondents checked the box for having worked in archives for longer than eleven years, but only ten of those thirty were for twenty-one or more years of employment (see Chapter 3). Forming a bridge between what is known by long-term employees and retirees and what needs to be known by incoming ones is still a challenge for all information sectors and professionals but when paired with the ‘good jobs’ economic policy scholars argue must exist, a new and improved path can be forged in both how the American working public and the library, archive and museum employees experience work, knowledge transmission, and retirement.

Many different sectors have been examined and have detailed the changes in which technology affected their industry. A mid-twentieth-century study of Yale Economics examined agriculture and railroads through technology and economics but ultimately concluded, ‘if the relation between invention and technological change is random, then changes in productivity might be very noisy while the inventor’s

¹⁶⁹ Lisa F. Berkman, Beth C. Truesdale, and Alexandra Mitukiewicz, ‘What Is the Way Forward?’ in Lisa F. Berkman and Beth C. Truesdale, eds., *Overtime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, pp.301-321, p.308.

equilibrium might be very well behaved.’¹⁷⁰ In the early 21st century knowledge management became a business and information management focal point, where colleges and universities incorporated these practices into their academic curriculum. However, by 2015, one scholar concluded that knowledge management (KM) is gasping for breath and theorises it is because of technology: ‘KM is a complex idea, but most organizations just wanted to put in a system to manage knowledge, and that wasn’t enough to make knowledge flow and be applied.’¹⁷¹ Davenport concludes that Google had a part in its death and that implementing KM was just too time-consuming. From a business perspective, this is true, but from a historical record perspective, the time invested will pay off for the end user, something technological systems have started to notice more and more as the field of user experience (UX) continues to grow and thrive.

There is something within the archival profession which aims to be better at knowledge transmission than in other fields. This is because the whole nature and identity of archives is to preserve information for future generations. However, as much as archivists aim to be good and thorough at doing this, there is a disconnection between desire and practice. David Peters from OSU summed up this idea by saying:

That’s just, that’s just how I think, how it is. And it’s a number of other professions have similar challenges. It’s just that, what’s frustrating, I think, for those of us who are in the archives profession, is that we are the ones who should be the epitome of what [laughter] of what it means to provide documentation and records going forward so that the next generation or the next employee has a better understanding of what we’re doing and why we’re trying to do that. So that’s, that’s the frustration. But the challenge, I think overall, you know, we are, we are doing an adequate job. But I know I know institutional memory has been lost and we’re just trying to do our best to recover what we can.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ William D. Nordhaus, ‘An Economic Theory of Technological Change,’ *The American Economic Review* 59, 2 (1969): pp.18-28, pp.27-28. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1823649>>

¹⁷¹ Thomas H. Davenport, ‘Whatever Happened to Knowledge Management?’ *Wall Street Journal* 24 June 2015 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-CIOB-7428>> [accessed 14 November 2022]

¹⁷² David Peters, interview by JJ Compton, 22 January 2020, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, transcript, p.1-2.

Despite our best efforts, the expectations of our profession, and a true desire to make it seamless for the next person employed after us, there is still just too much information and not enough people to be able to do the work.

Another participant commented specifically on the budget constraints that affect knowledge transmission. Louderback discussed cuts and how this contributed to people loss: ‘And so you have that, that loss of institutional knowledge as well as that, that loss or inability to move forward at the level and degree that that needs to take place at an institution.’¹⁷³ The idea of moving an organisation forward and not letting it remain stagnant is so important. This is why one library leader in addressing what the profession needs post-COVID pointed out, ‘you first need to know what the facts are’ to construct your Theory of case.¹⁷⁴ This Theory of Case will move the library – and archives in this instance – more into the realm of discussion with key stakeholders. Pairing the LAM literature with oral histories of retiring professionals gives us the facts as we know them to better advocate effectively with key stakeholders. Ultimately though the construction of the Theory of Case is about, ‘choos[ing] the path. We are living in times where the path is not clear and it is unlikely to be the path of the last generation. If there was any doubt, 2020 has made sure this will not be the case. So, you can’t simply follow what your first mentor or old boss did.’¹⁷⁵ Practitioners learn from those who have worked in the LAM sector before them, trying to absorb what knowledge can be passed on, about Oklahoma, the repository, the politics, the networking opportunities, and the

¹⁷³ Pamela Louderback, interview by JJ Compton, 20 January 2019, in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, transcript, p.4.

¹⁷⁴ David W. Lewis, *IUPUI*, p.3.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.

technological advances, all in an effort to transmit memory. But despite the realities of financial cuts, staffing cuts, and more work than people, Oklahoma archivists continue to show up and do the work to the best of their ability incorporating technological shifts and advances and helping to create and preserve the history of Oklahoma thereby demonstrating resilience in choosing their own path forward in an uncertain world and state.

Conclusion

Oklahoma continues to be a fiscally conservative state. Perhaps this is due to its reliance on being an oil and gas state, or in Oklahoma City's case, it could be due to its 'political culture [which] is partly responsible for its conservative approach to financing [projects like] MAPS.'¹⁷⁶ MAPS is a voter program that has funded projects like the Bricktown Canal, building and renovating schools, and the Downtown library branch of the Metropolitan Library System.¹⁷⁷ In a 2022 news article, Republican Kevin Wallace, who serves as the chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee in the Oklahoma legislature, is quoted as saying, 'We'll continue to be fiscally conservative as we draft the state budget, always projecting for stability in the future.'¹⁷⁸ With the Republican results in the 2022 November elections, it does not look like this fact will be changing for Oklahoma anytime soon.¹⁷⁹ Archivists who continue to work in the midst of

¹⁷⁶ Aaron M. Renn, 'Doing OK in OKC,' *City Journal* Autumn 2015 <<https://www.city-journal.org/html/doing-ok-okc-14104.html>> [accessed 2 December 2022]

¹⁷⁷ City of Oklahoma City, 'MAPS history,' *OKC government* Website <<https://www.okc.gov/government/maps-3/maps-history>> [accessed 28 October 2023]

¹⁷⁸ Merrilee Gasser, 'Oklahoma lawmakers taking a conservative approach to budget despite windfall,' *The Center Square* 21 March 2022 <https://www.thecentersquare.com/oklahoma/oklahoma-lawmakers-taking-a-conservative-approach-to-budget-despite-windfall/article_488f1112-a94f-11ec-9e93-0f176e11acec.html> [accessed 2 December 2022]

¹⁷⁹ OK Election Results, 8 November 2022 <<https://results.okelections.us/OKER/?elecDate=20221108>> [accessed 5 December 2022]

funding and staffing shortages address the lean budget year after year, maintaining the archive and the legacy of Oklahoma's history. They do the work because they believe that informed citizenry is a key component of democracy. Many do it despite the complexity of Oklahoma's history because they themselves are generational Oklahomans, preserving a history through which their ancestors have lived. Many have become an embedded part of the community with which they are partnering, yet existing as their own socio-subculture of Oklahoma archivists, who preserve and are a part of Oklahoma's historical legacy.

In the Society for American Archivist's recent call for SAA Leaders, Vice-President/President Elect Helen Wong Smith posted:

*Margaret Mead is credited with saying "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We have seen this manifest itself both within and outside SAA, regardless of the number of years someone has served in the Society and society.*¹⁸⁰

Oklahoma archivists comprise a large part of the service outside of SAA manifesting their change in society through other measures. This is evidenced by data in the quantitative survey: nineteen of the forty-three participants were a member of SAA at one point in their career; however, fifteen participants reported a reason for having to leave an organisation was 'funding or budgetary cuts from your parent institution.'¹⁸¹ Oklahoma's archivists join communities of committed citizens as long-term partners in a state which undervalues their contributions to its historical record. They partner with unheard groups, adding their voices to the complexity that makes up Oklahoma's people and history. And

¹⁸⁰ Society of American Archivists, 'Committing to Change: Call for SAA Leader Self-Nominations,' posted 11 October 2022 <<https://www2.archivists.org/news/2022/committing-to-change-call-for-saa-leader-self-nominations>> [accessed 14 December 2022]

¹⁸¹ For reference see Appendix D.

like all of humanity, they do so with their experiences and biases in place, acknowledging them to hopefully be better in preserving the state's historical record. The use of oral history to capture their voices and stories only adds value to the record they are preserving. The resilience of Oklahoma's archival workforce is evident in their caring commitment to both Oklahoma's community and Oklahoma's diverse culture.

Generational workforce data has appeared in the literature as a justification for the decision to embrace or not technological workforce shifts. The digital native versus the digital immigrant status is not a valid argument for archival professionals. Instead, the argument should be caged in the examination of how these archivists stayed abreast and incorporated the technologically shifting paradigms occurring in society, integrating them into their workflows and data collection activities. The answer to this is more important than the generational label assigned to them in popular American normative vocabulary. Secondary to technological examination is the community archivists within the state create for themselves. Grassroots community organising occurs so archivists are able to discuss changes and implement them, as well as to network and talk about problems and best practices. As has been discussed in the library literature, change is inevitable:

Promoting past success or defending status quo is a recipe for disaster. Our community needs fresh ideas and practical experience to help us engage this changing landscape in a proactive and positive fashion – advancing our traditional values while transforming operations and services.¹⁸²

Lastly, Oklahoma's archivists do all of the above while trying to ensure knowledge transmission for future professionals within their institutions. Their stories of practical experience heard through the oral history interviews demonstrate the importance they

¹⁸² Duane E. Webster, 'Foreword,' in Elizabeth J. Wood, Rush Miller, and Amy Knapp, *Beyond Survival: Managing Academic Libraries in Transition*, Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2007, p.xvii.

play in a fiscally conservative state, situating their workforce and knowledge within Oklahoma's historical record. This is what it means to be an Oklahoma archivist. All the twenty-five interviewees stated similar thoughts when asked about their role in creating a legacy within the historical record of the state of Oklahoma, but only one sums up the profession best:

I would hope that, that people would say that what little I've done has moved us forward, has enlightened us, has educated those moving forward. [pause] And that I was a true voice, a true voice for those who came before me and a voice of light for those who come after me.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Louderback, transcript, p.6.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

In spite of the greying workforce, the lack of funding, furloughed and open positions, conspiracies of silence, and the relative newness of Oklahoma as a state within the greater United States, the history continues to happen and individuals and organisations strive to preserve it for future generations. New technological tools are continually being developed and implemented to aid in the process, and as the world has faced COVID-19 together, the call for greater numbers of digitised materials and digital humanities projects has become even louder. But tools often do not tell the institutional memory or reflect the organisational culture as well as an individual who has been immersed in the workforce habits over the years. Whether consciously acknowledged or unknown, the longevity of a career in the same organisation generates oral stories only through the memories of the long-time employee. If these are not captured for the organisation's future employees, they will have no context for the information. Continuing education is a necessary merger with the individual. DAS certification, DAM system management, and the merging roles of records manager, museum archivist, librarian, local historian, and archivist are external and internal demands on the profession. Coupled with the state and national mandated requirements, all of this created the need for professionals trained in data management, archival processes, community engagement, and partnerships to contextualise and make available the history for the next generation in both brick and mortar and digital spaces.

Even though they are not neutral, archivists are reflective of an organisation and its mission, integral in telling the good, the bad, and the unfortunate ugly. But the real

lesson here is in the telling, not the hiding of information as archives are often stereotyped. Best practice in archives does not guide us to hide information, but personnel and funding limitations mean that material is not always made readily available to the public. To put something online in a world which cuts and pastes, Photoshops, meme-ifies, and edits freely, with no context or copyright information, is irresponsible at best, or at worst a lawsuit waiting to happen. This does not even consider the generative AI technologies that can easily produce documents, photos, paintings, and other humanities-based endeavours with inputs from users of services like ChatGPT. If any organisation or institution wants to be considered democratic, they must have individuals working, training, and employed in archival duties, for as one African scholar said ‘Democracy has come to be acknowledged as the best way of respecting human rights and guaranteeing dignity and freedom for all.’¹ They need to tell all of Oklahoma’s stories. Because as Sara N. Beam reminds us, ‘Oklahoma, as part of the U.S. imperial project, has *always* been a place of struggle. There’s a sense that you must just roll with it and navigate the conditions, here in scratchy-grass Oklahoma, windy Oklahoma, muggy Oklahoma, with its ragweed, dog hair, pin-oak-bitten wild land.’² By doing so, Oklahoma will no longer be a place too new or a place silenced by a shame filled past, but instead a place of diverse history and culture for all to engage in and learn.

¹ Mohammed M. Aman, ‘Libraries and Democracy,’ in *Librarianship as a Bridge to an Information and Knowledge Society in Africa*, Alli Mcharazon, and Sjoerd Koopman, eds., München: K.G. Saur, 2007, p.71.

² Beam, Sara N., ‘Novice at Belle Point,’ in Sara N. Beam, Emily Dial-Driver, Rilla Askew, and Juliet Evusa, eds., *Voices from the Heartland*, Volume II. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019, p.17.

Revisiting the Work of this Thesis

By capturing archivists' accounts in oral history interviewing and survey data collection, both of which are interpreted thematically and, in a socio,-subcultural lens, Oklahoma archival professionals are revealed to be committed to America's democratic society despite the external political pressures and board mandates which bureaucratise them. Chapter 1 focused on the use of oral history, which in this thesis was used to interview late-career and retiring archivists, paired with a few emerging professionals. This chapter discussed its theory and detailed the justification for its application to this study. The idea of the 'insider' researcher was addressed, as I am currently employed within an Oklahoma archive. Finally, a discussion of quantitative methodology versus qualitative methodology in data collection was discussed with the conclusion that a mixed methodological approach would be the most appropriate for this type of research, which was found both in other studies and in archival literature and practice. Archival theory, feminist theory, oral history theory and intersubjectivity were the primary influences on the methodology. These theories informed the interview questions which were approved by the appropriate institutional review boards and the data was subsequently collected in a twofold process.

In Chapter 2, the literature on the culture of Oklahoma and its implications for the archival profession was explored. Here this study was particularly attentive to the shifts in the state's archival workforce across generations. In order to study these, first the definition of what an Oklahoma archivist is and does was determined. The lens of second and third wave feminism – as problematic as the wave terminology is – was then used to examine female archival workers and the (in)visibility of their labour. Then workforce

transitions were examined alongside concurrent technological changes. Finally, the chapter looked at how technology is utilised by archivists and how technological change plays a role in an organisation's culture. By exploring these avenues through the multidisciplinary literature, a socio-subcultural group of Oklahoma archivists was established. I argued here that knowledge transmission was important for future archival professionals

The quantitative survey findings are reported in Chapter 3, in which the results of the individuals who opted in by answering questions are explored. The key messages initially for this thesis were that Oklahoma archivists join professional organisations not for the networking opportunities, which was the initial thought, and the second highest reported, but for the continuing educational opportunities. This lends itself to be comparable to how archivists stay current with technological changes and archival advances. The grassroots professional organisations are one way that professionals in the state utilise their limited funding and staffing. Also, the survey participants rated themselves high, over 50% in their contributions to both organisational culture and institutional memory, even though over half felt that memory was more important than culture. Thus the work these forty-three respondents do within Oklahoma repositories has a high impact on both the local organisations themselves as well as the state's collective historical record.

Chapter 4 drills down into the life experiences of Oklahoma library, archival and museum (LAM) professionals through the medium of oral history interviews of twenty-five participants. The oral history interviews bring their voices and perspectives to the fore. Because not all the interview subjects came as a direct result of having participated

in the survey sent out to various archival, library, and museum organisations, a baseline of the survey questions was used to backtrack and gather quantitative information from those participants who had not participated for themes like connections to Oklahoma, degrees and qualifications, and membership in LAM organisations. The oral history interviews in turn revealed what archivists viewed as their lasting contributions to the state. Archivists' self-perceptions offer a unique perspective within archival literature because, while there are lots of legacy and *festschriften* honouring individual retiring archivists, the latter – especially in academic circles – never has an examination of archivists within their own socio-subcultural group been recorded and explored. This thesis presents a holistic reporting on the archival profession in a socio-subculture like the state of Oklahoma thereby adding value to the work and writings within LAM disciplines. The collecting and bearing witness of archivists' stories shows the essential nature of their skilled work and knowledge. It captures their problems and experiences in navigating the Oklahoma's fiscally conservative political system, especially through formed relationships and grassroots organising. Chapter 4 demonstrates the navigation of the changing archival landscape nationally in the United States and locally in Oklahoma.

The heart of the thesis is revealed in the thematic analysis done in Chapter 5 which analyses, interprets, and synthesises the mixed methodological approach in the areas of archives and democratic governance in American society and Oklahoma archivists as a standalone socio-subcultural group as revealed in both theory, practice, and Oklahoma's unique political landscape. Chapter 5 examines the role oral history plays in identifying Oklahoma archivist's memory, experiences, and legacies within the state's historical record. Feminist theory is then used to examine women in the invisible

workforce landscape. Lastly, I address how Oklahoma's workforce is affected by transitions of employment due to age, generational adaptability, technology, and the transmission of knowledge

The work of archivists in Oklahoma continues despite challenges in funding and staffing shortages because Oklahoma archivists believe in informed citizenry being a key component of democracy, even in the fiscally and often politically conservative state in which they reside. Resilient and determined in moving the state towards a more informed general public as well as making it a better place for generations to reflect and learn are the two tenets of what it means to have been and to be an Oklahoma archivist.

Resonances and Recommendations

As demonstrated through the work of this thesis, Oklahoma archivists, whether through public funding from the state legislature or from publicly-funded educational institutions and programs, continually fall short when it comes to budgetary needs and staffing levels. It is my hope that with the evidence all laid out in a logical presentation of the challenges and contributions archivists face in their chosen career, both nationally and within Oklahoma, archivists will now have further data to better justify their work. The goal of this thesis has always been to provide administration, government, and other holders of positions of power with material that will allow them to understand the role of archives and LAM fields in democratic society. Archivists are a necessary part of creating public trust, preservation of governmental history, partnering and bringing forth communities and voices often overlooked by the majority, and helping to capture the events happening today which history will reflect back on in the future. Without

archivists, accountability with citizenry becomes much more difficult and contextualisation of historic materials becomes much more subjective. Archivists' are becoming aware of their own biases, yet the silences from within the archives grow even more prolifically. Even as new theories of engagement with archivists and archival literature continue to emerge, the ideas of public trust, democracy, preservation, voice and archival virtue resonate loudly at regional, national, and international levels. Thus, I hope that as the archival profession continues to grow in Oklahoma and the work of archivists' increases within different demographically diverse communities, this thesis will serve as an added value measure in societal infrastructure advocacy.

As far as further research recommendations, the Society of American Archivists should represent the work done by Oklahomans better in their next A'CENSUS survey and additional surveys should be conducted of the profession nationwide. New organisations like the Oklahoma Archivists Association, and perhaps long-established ones like the Oklahoma Library Association and Oklahoma Museum Association should also be queried to send out the survey on behalf of SAA, as many archivists may not be a part of OAA, but do belong to OLA or OMA. The larger survey distribution would capture the archival voices of Oklahoma on a more complete scale for comparison with archival professionals around the United States and amidst the convergence of LAM fields globally. Also, Oklahoma's archivists should be more proactive in contributing their own stories to the body of professionals, whether by signing up to be a guest on the SAA podcast *Archives in Context* or by realising like Scott Cline said, that archival thinking is in fact a part of the role of the archivist, not just doing the day-to-day work. By being proactive in this, Oklahoma's archivists can better network with colleagues

beyond just professional development opportunities like webinars and conferences, and other avenues that are still extremely valuable. Thus, Oklahoma's archivists must ensure their recognition in national measures in spite of their proportionally smaller population size.

This thesis provides a case study for how archivists navigate their professional labours across their careers in ways that are informed by local as well as national contexts. It argues that in this area, which has politically and fiscally conservative governing bodies that are less sympathetic to investment in the archiving sector, archivists play an important if undervalued role as builders of community and preservers of the State's past. But this thesis also underlines that archivists in Oklahoma do not articulate themselves as radical actors - what resonates instead is the idea of work accomplished—collections processed, donations secured, oral histories being recorded. But taking the approach of this thesis – using data and oral histories – draws to the fore the ways that individual careers shape the recording of history. This thesis developed from a personal interest in recording, unpacking, and preserving the importance of this work and its daily labours. The message that it seeks to promote to its archivist readers is: what you do matters, not only to our state and our profession, but because of your inherent humanity and unique identity.

If similar projects like this are undertaken by researchers in other socio-subcultural areas, collaboration within said subculture would be valuable. This would allow for the capture of more and perhaps lengthier stories from retiring colleagues. While the mixed methodological approach was successful in the completion of this project, if done again, the researcher would recommend using the Mixed Methodological

Action Research (MMAR) method.³ This methodological approach which uses the mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research, also combines Action Research in order to produce a change in the future. The MMAR method would be more than just a case study; it would be a study conducted to enact change. Typically, MMAR work is done in collaboration and on a larger scale than the work of this thesis. Because only one person has done this work, the thesis specifically calls for changes in staffing, funding, and archival understanding, with a predilection towards advocacy and recommendations. However, the MMAR would plot out how these changes could be incorporated into funding schedules for universities and governmental agencies to allow the change to be deliverable to the employees wishing for it. Again, through collaboration with multiple people and entities, utilising the MMAR methodology would be easier to initiate and implement in effecting lasting sources of revenue and staffing. Because when archives are not staffed and archives fail, democracy is what suffers through uninformed and misinformed citizenry.

Final thoughts

This thesis did not set out to be a love letter to the archival profession, but after committing seven years to the project through a global pandemic, additional retirements, future economic pressures from within the state of Oklahoma, and a partial collapse of higher educational systems, the resilience of archives within the state is what came through in my research. The strength and determination that Oklahoma's archivists have shown – and continue to show – how to provide hope from one professional to another,

³ Ivankova, p.980.

that the work we do matters. It matters to our local repositories and organisations. It matters to the communities we live in. It matters to the diverse cultures which make up Oklahoma. And it matters to the ongoing democratic principle of providing information to the people of the United States. Oral history is a transformative medium, and my life has truly been enriched by hearing the stories of archivists from around the state of Oklahoma. I only hope the work I have done is truly reflective of each of their experiences and voices to create a shared history of Oklahoma's archival workers.

The work of this thesis is ultimately a response to the call by Randall C. Jimerson for archivists to, 'recognize and accept this power, thoughtfully and transparently,' the power archivists play in controlling the past.⁴ As an insider/outsider, I wanted to help my state and professional organisations realize the vital role they play in society but also the power they wield within their own institutions. Navigating these dichotomous paths was beneficial and heart-breaking. But despite the joys and sorrows that have accompanied this work, both personally and professionally, the work must continue. If we do not, society will lose fundamental aspects of its humanity. To adapt Jimerson's tribute to Helen Samuels:

Oklahoma's archivists can thus contribute to a richer human experience of understanding and compassion... We can provide resources for people to examine the past, to comprehend the present, and to prepare for a better future. This is the essence of our common humanity. It provides *Oklahoma* archivists with a sense of professional purpose and a social conscience. It also provides society with the best single collective antidote to the possibility of an Orwellian dystopia arising in our midst.⁵

⁴ Randall C. Jimerson, 'How archivists "Control the Past",' Terry Cook, ed., *Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions, Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011, pp.363-379, p.378.

⁵ Ibid, insertion of Oklahoma and emphasis is mine, otherwise the quote is Jimerson's.

For those Oklahoma archivists who continue to stand up for American democracy, may this thesis be an encouragement and tool to be used in studying archival practices and the legacy of our archival professionals. Continue to capture your own history and be a professional who lives the values of archival virtue.

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Appendix A Oklahoma Archives General Survey

Below are the sections and questions which were put into a Google Form and used to collect quantitative data as well as future research participants for oral history interviews.

*Questions with an asterisk at the end were required to be completed by the participants

Section 1 of 5 Background Information

For the purposes of this questionnaire, archives include historical societies, museums, tribal entities which preserve information, and all other keepers of the historical record for Oklahoma. By taking this survey, you agree to have the data you submitted analyzed for research purposes.

Name (optional)

Year of birth (yyyy)*

How long have you lived in OK?*

Less than a year

1-5 years

5-10 years

11-20 years

21-30 years

31+ years

How long have you worked in archives (include time outside of Oklahoma)?*

Less than a year

1-5 years

5-10 years

11-20 years

21-30 years

31+ years

How long have you worked in OK archives?*

Less than a year

1-5 years

5-10 years

11-20 years

21-30 years

31+ years

Do you still live in OK?*

Yes

No

Do you have a college degree?*

Yes

No

Currently enrolled

What field is your undergraduate degree in, if completed?

Do you have a graduate degree?*

Yes

No

Currently enrolled

What field is your graduate degree in, if completed?

Do you have any special certifications, training, etc. (please specify, ex. DAS, CA, CRM)?

Do you have a PhD?*

Yes

No

Currently enrolled

What field is your PhD degree in if completed?

Section 2 of 5 Archival Community

This section will ask questions specific to the creation of community and networking opportunities.

Are you or have you ever been a member of the following organizations? (select all that apply)

ACA (Academy of Certified Archivists)

AHA (American Historical Association)

ALA (American Library Association)

AMIA (Association of Moving Image Archivists)

ARMA (Association of Record Managers & Administrators)

ICA (International Council on Archives)

ICRM (Institute of Certified Records Managers)

IRMT (International Records Management Trust)

OAA (Oklahoma Archivists Association)

ODL (Oklahoma Department of Libraries)

OHA (Oklahoma Heritage Association)

OHS (Oklahoma Historical Society)

OLA (Oklahoma Library Association)

OMA (Oklahoma Museum Association)

PAT (Phi Alpha Theta)

Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.

SAA (Society of American Archivists)

SSA (Society of Southwest Archivists)

Other (please specify in the next question)

Why did you choose the organization you chose to join? Please explain each organization if you are or were a member of more than one.

If you left any organization what was your reason for doing so? (check all that apply)

Retirement

Moved to a different region

Lack of opportunities in the organization

Funding or budgetary cuts from your parent institution

Personality conflict with other members

Other reason not listed

What is the main reason you joined an archival related organization? (please select only 1)*

- Networking
- Career advancement
- Continuing education opportunities
- Friends within said organization
- Shared stories & experiences
- Pooling of resources
- Other reason not listed

Section 3 of 5 Institutional Memory & Organizational Culture

The section will ask questions related to the role of your position in preserving Institutional Memory & Organizational Culture.

For the purposes of gathering data Institutional Memory will be defined by researcher Charlotte Linde as stories "retold contained in both oral and written versions. These are the central element of the institution's memory: the parts of the past that are so important that they are always included. This consensus tells what is most important in the story of the institution: what anyone must know about us to know who We are. Oral tellings of these stories are extremely important for arguing for the existence of a core institutional memory." _Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory_. Oxford: OUP, 2009, 95.

Organization Culture will be defined by Antonio Castillo Gómez as 'Archives are fully part of the history of written culture, which includes all the testimonies, practices, representations and agents involved in the different stages of the writing process, namely the production, reception and preservation of written documents.' "The New Culture of Archives in Early Modern Spain" _European History Quarterly_ 2016, Vol. 46(3): 546.

How do you view your position at the archives? (select all that apply)

- Preservation specialist
- Organization specialist
- Information specialist
- Local historian
- Selection specialist
- Tour guide
- Storyteller
- Data entry and/or file clerk
- Collector
- Exhibitor
- Digital archivist or Digitization specialist
- Other

How do you view your main responsibility at the archives? (select only 1)*

- Preservation specialist
- Organization specialist
- Information specialist

Local historian
Selection specialist
Tour guide
Storyteller
Data entry and/or file clerk
Collector
Exhibitor
Digital archivist or Digitization specialist
Other

Why do you view the above as your main responsibility, please explain?

How would you rate your contribution to your organization's culture? (Linear scale 1-5)*

1 - Not a big contributor to 5 - Contribute a lot

In what ways do you feel you contribute or feel you do not contribute to your organization's culture?*

How would you rate your contribution to your organization's institutional memory? (Linear scale 1-5)*

1 - Not a big contributor to 5 - Contribute a lot

In what ways do you feel you contribute or feel you do not contribute to your organization's institutional memory?*

Which do you think is more important, the culture or the memory of an institution? (select 1)*

Culture

Memory

Section 4 of 5 Institution Specific Information

This section will ask questions specific to your institution and your responsibilities and experiences within the organization.

Have you ever been furloughed in your archival job?*

Yes

No

Have you ever been laid off in an archival job?*

Yes

No

Have you ever had your hours reduced in an archival job, i.e. moving from full-time to part-time?*

Yes

No

Have you ever had to retire earlier than planned in an archival job?*

Yes

No

If you are retired, have you ever volunteered back in an archival setting?*

Yes

No

If you answered yes to any of the above changes, what caused the change?

Personal reasons (health, baby, etc.)

Budgetary constraints

Political reasons

Reached retirement age

Closing of an office/branch/organization

Other

Did you continue in the archival field after these events?*

Yes

No

Why or why not?

Are you still employed?

Yes

No

Section 5 of 5 Future participation

Please fill out the information below if you would like to be included in a follow up interview for additional research purposes.

Email

Phone

Appendix B

Oral History Thesis Interview - Informed Consent & Release



Swansea University

This project involves research. The purpose of the research is to learn more about archivists who have worked in the state of Oklahoma and their impact on the state's historical record(s). Oral History interviews are a large portion of this project. You were asked to be in this study because you are a person who has worked in the state of Oklahoma as an archivist, library historian or records manager professional for at least one year and is at least 18 years of age.

Interview information

If you participate in this project:

You will be one of approximately twenty-five persons interviewed.

Your interview will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour, possibly longer. A follow up interview may/may not be scheduled for additional time.

You will be asked questions about your background, your education, your career, and your thoughts on living in Oklahoma, as well as different archival concepts.

You will be asked about organizational culture and institutional identity as a part of your interview.

Your interview will be recorded electronically and later quoted in the final work product of the interviewer

Your risks and benefits

If you participate in this project:

You may find some people disagree with your opinions or your interpretations of historical events and archival practices and that this disagreement could be strong. This could include family members, co-workers, or members of the general public.

You may have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to preserve the history of the people of Oklahoma. You may also gain some public recognition for your participation in this project.

Your rights

This project is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may stop your participation at any time during the interview. It is strongly encouraged that you provide your name as the Oral History Association Guidelines state: “Because of the importance of context and identity in shaping the content of an oral history narrative, it is the practice in oral history for narrators to be identified by name.” If you are unable to provide your name, you will be anonymized from within the pool of interviewees. Your contact information such as address, email, and telephone will not be disclosed to the public. If you choose not to participate it will not affect your relationship with Swansea University, the University of Central Oklahoma or the interviewer.

Deposit of materials

You will agree to have a brief biographical statement within the Appendix section of the researcher’s thesis, which will be bound and housed in the Swansea University Library. This biographical statement will be solicited from you, but if you do not provide one, the author will compose one to include in the final work product. Also, you may submit a photo if you want to include it with the biographical sketch. You may have to sign a release form for both Swansea University and the University of Central Oklahoma. The thesis will be available for use by researchers, teachers, and students, or other members of the public. Their results may be displayed publicly or published. The materials may also be used for public display (i.e. digitisation) or publication by Swansea University. A further form for deposit will be required at as determined by the researcher upon deposit in the Oklahoma State University Oral History Center, granting the center access and preservation rights, including future digitisation and/or transcription of the oral history interviews.

Participants may contact the researcher, JJ Compton, C.A., for pertinent questions about the research, at ([REDACTED]). For questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact: Research Institute for Arts and Humanities (RIAH) Research Ethics and Governance Committee, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yes No I consent to the use of my name.

Yes No I consent to quotations of my interview to be included in the final work product and I understand that I may have to sign additional release forms.

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and I understand it. I have been encouraged to ask questions and I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study and I have indicated above my choices for participation or not in the certain activities of this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this consent form.

(Please Print)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email (optional):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C

Oral History Interview Questions

Q1. Did you participate in the preliminary survey sent out to various organizations in the state [need to know in relation to certain follow up questions]

Q2. Tell me about how you began your career in archives? Specifically in Oklahoma?

Q3. Can you talk about any memorable experiences in your archival career? [either good or bad]

Q4. What do you think makes Oklahoma different from other states in its approach to historical preservation and keeping the collective memory?

Q5. What do you hope others in the future will remember about the work you did during your career? What do you hope your legacy on the state will be?

Q6. If you could change one thing about your organization and its approach to historical preservation, what would it be (digital, analog, or both)?

Q7. Do you know about the theoretical concept of 'the archive' versus archives? If so, what are your thoughts on it?

Q8. Can you address the idea of archives being neutral and/or objective?

Q9. What is one thing you would tell your younger self? Or one thing you wish you knew coming into this profession?

Q10. Can you share your thoughts on the movement of scholars examining the nature of the historical record?

Addendum: Q11. What are your thoughts on the President Obama Digital Research Center as opposed to a traditional Presidential Library? [explain if unknown]

Appendix D
Email Follow-Up to General Survey Responses

8 December 2018

Dear [insert name of participant],

My name is JJ Compton and I am a student at Swansea University, working towards my PhD in History. I have conducted the first phase of my quantitative analysis, an investigation into the roles and responsibilities of archivists and museum professionals in Oklahoma, with a particular focus on what happens during workforce transitions to Institutional Memory & Organizational Culture. As a fellow librarian & archivist, I am interested in understanding what happens during times of transition in workers and how that impacts our state's history, memory & culture. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been or are currently employed in an archives. [For the purposes of this study, archives include historical societies, museums, tribal entities which preserve information, and all other keepers of the historical record for Oklahoma.]

You are being contacted because you chose to participate in an initial survey which consisted of 5 sections: Background Information, Archival Community, Institutional Memory & Organizational Culture, Institution Specific Information, and Future Participation. You also indicated that you would be willing to participate further by providing your email and/or phone number as a response within the survey. Please consider this email an invitation to participate in an oral history project as an interview subject. If you could reply and let me know if you are willing to be interviewed by January 31, 2019, I would greatly appreciate it. We will then work on coordinating a time and a place for a future interview. I will be providing additional consent and deed of gift forms based upon your decision to participate.

If you have any questions about the study, please email me directly at

[REDACTED]

Thank you in advance for your interest.
Sincerely,

JJ Compton, MLIS, CA

[REDACTED]

