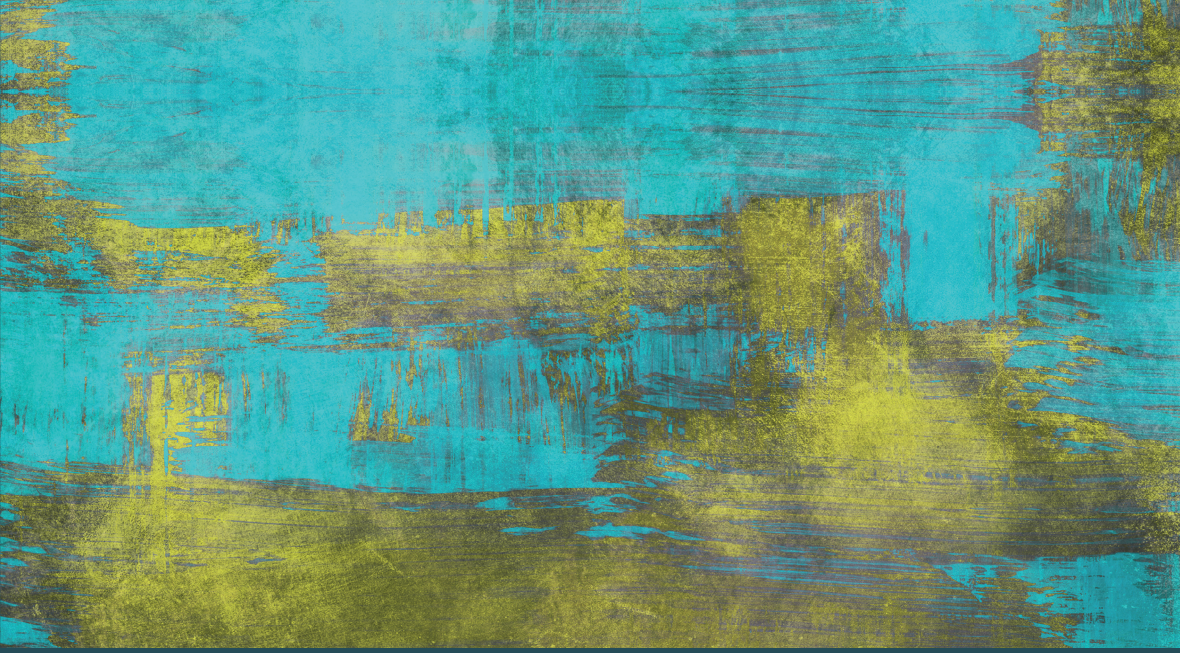
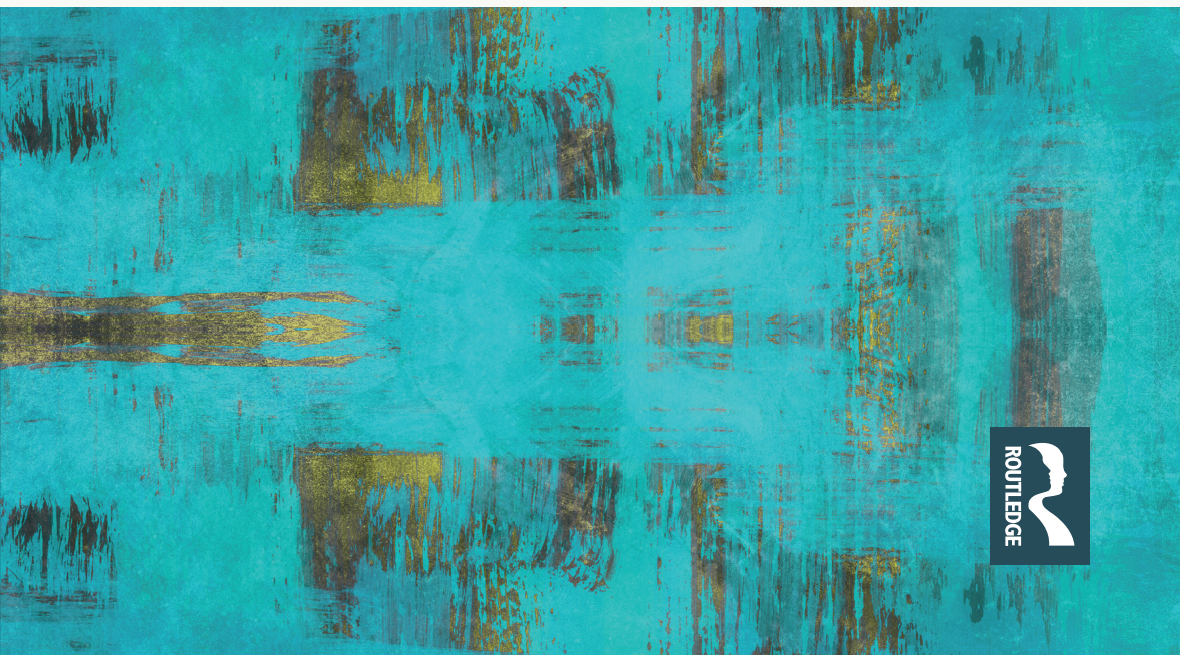


Routledge Studies in Archives

EXHIBITING THE ARCHIVE

SPACE, ENCOUNTER, AND EXPERIENCE

Peter Lester



Exhibiting the Archive

Exhibiting the Archive examines the role that exhibition plays in archives and analyses the impact they are understood to have on how users and visitors experience the archive.

Drawing on research conducted in Europe, North America and Australia, the book analyses the key theoretical and social influences on exhibition-making in archives today and discusses the role of exhibitions in the archives of tomorrow. This is the first in-depth study to consider exhibition as more than outreach or advocacy: it frames exhibition as an encounter with archives and with people, and interprets it as a mechanism for change within the archive. Against a backdrop of increasing digital activity, Lester asks what experience within the physical space of the archive could be. Drawing on ideas of spatiality and embodiment, as well as social justice and activism, Lester considers the role of exhibitions within the physical archive and the part they can play in reshaping how experience is understood to happen within it.

Exhibiting the Archive offers a new perspective on the archive that will be of interest to academics and students engaged in the study of archives and records. The discussions of cutting-edge practice offer new insights into how exhibitions are conceived and made, and will therefore be of interest to practitioners around the world.

Peter Lester is a researcher and archivist. He recently completed his PhD at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. His research interests focus on the exhibition and display of archives, encounters with archival material and the design and experience of archival spaces. He is also a professionally qualified archivist with over ten years' experience in the UK archives sector.

Routledge Studies in Archives
Series Editor: James Lowry

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Exhibiting the Archive

Space, Encounter, and Experience

Peter Lester

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Abbreviations

AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
BFI	British Film Institute
BRA	British Records Association
GMCRO	Greater Manchester County Record Office
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MALS	Manchester Archives and Local Studies
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MLFHS	Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society
NWFA	North West Film Archive
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Introduction

The diary is written in pale blue ink, the cursive handwriting readable, if not always very clear. The short entries recount life in the closing days of August 1916. It was wartime, and personal freedoms were curtailed. The writer notes her visits to the police station to register her movements, as required by law. On the 21st she took a train to Penrith to attend a No Conscription Fellowship. The meeting was enthusiastic, although she found the 'northern accents difficult to follow'. The next morning whilst she waited for the train, she noted the clean air and the bright sun on what she termed 'a gorgeous day', a day at the end of summer.[1] Beside the diary is a card that bears the writer's photograph. Her face is framed by neat, dark hair and she wears what looks like a large, straw hat. She does not smile, and her gaze looks slightly away from the camera as if to pose is an unwelcome duty.

The writer is Mabel Phythian, activist and campaigner and, later, local councillor. My encounter with her takes place on an overcast day in June, one hundred and one years after she wrote those words in her diary. I am at Archives+ in Manchester, where a copy of the diary is on display alongside leaflets for the Women's Peace Crusade, which took place across Britain during 1917 and 1918 arguing for a negotiated settlement to end the First World War. The words in the diary tell a story of one person's lived experience against the backdrop of a wider social and political movement that took place during wartime.

For me, an archivist researching the exhibition of archives, these are stories that are new. I experience a sense of curiosity about these largely unknown histories. But I do not just learn something; whatever the merits of these political actions, I feel a sense of empathy for the pain and suffering that people experienced during the war; I smile at Mabel's struggle with the regional accents; and I imagine the warmth and feeling of a bright and sunny day in summer, even one overcast by conflict. Around me are the sounds of people visiting the archive, meeting friends and colleagues and experiencing the many stories featured in the exhibition (Figure 0.1).

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Figure 0.1 Archives+, Manchester. Photo: Mather & Co.

There will be many such experiences, such encounters over the coming months, as I talk to archivists, designers and curators about their work, and I visit various different exhibitions. There are large galleries and small showcases; mediaeval manuscripts and digital screens; intimate moments of tragedy and joy; spaces to gather with others and spaces to reflect and question. The landscape of exhibition in archives is vast and varied, an ever-present and popular practice. The diversity and scale of such practice warrants further attention, yet it is true to say that exhibitions have not really been the focus of much archival scholarship. Where they have been discussed, they have generally been framed through a discourse of merit, the result of theoretical assumptions about the purpose of archives and the role of the archivist. Consequently, exhibitions have to be justified, and the easiest way to do this is to explain what material good they produce for the archive. In other words, exhibitions function as outreach, there to promote the archive to existing and potential users and visitors, stakeholders and administrators. In a similar way, they function as sites of learning, informing visitors not only of what the archive is and what it offers but also what can be discovered from the collections within it. I want to suggest, however, that exhibitions have the potential to do far more than this. Rather than (just) a site of outreach and promotion, if we consider exhibition as an experience – as an encounter with archives – then we can conceive new ways of thinking about exhibition and its transformative potential within the archive.

What do I mean by 'experience'? I suggest that our experience of archives happens through an encounter between individual and archive that has the

potential to produce different and varied responses: some are intellectual, defined by cognitive understanding, whilst others are emotional or sensory. These various and different responses are not isolated and unrelated but intertwine and shape one another.[2] They are different for everyone but they all, I argue, emerge from the phenomenological encounter with the archive, from the encounter with other people, and from the spatial and temporal setting in which these encounters take place, itself shaped by wider socio-political and cultural factors.[3] Whilst the language of experience and encounter is not new within either museology[4] or archival studies,[5] it is useful in broadening understanding of archive exhibitions beyond the remit of outreach and promotion. In short, the lens of experience offers a potentially richer and broader language for thinking about and examining the exhibition of archives (Figure 0.2).

What this book sets out to consider, then, are the ways in which exhibitions within the archive are thought about and designed to generate certain experiences; to analyse the influences that shape such work; and to theorise the implications that arise from it. Conversations within archival literature have often considered exhibition in very practical terms, examining matters of conservation and security, design and evaluation. What I aim to do here is to consider a more critical reflection and analysis of exhibition-making within the field and to unpack the relationships between theory and practice that reveal new thinking about exhibitions within

Figure 0.2 *Records of Rights*, US National Archives. Photo: Jeffrey Reed/National Archives and Records Administration.

archives and their transformative potential.[6] Put another way, I focus on the *process* of exhibition-making, examining its drivers and influences, and its meanings and implications on wider conceptions of the archive. In this sense, then, this is not a 'how-to' guide; it is not concerned with technique in terms of how to produce a 'good' exhibition but, rather, with what technique *means* or is designed to *afford* in terms of experiencing archives. How do archivists, designers and curators conceive archive exhibitions? What kinds of experiences and meaningful encounters are they designed to produce? And what are the implications of such work on our understanding and experience of archives?

The book is situated at the intersection between museum and archive scholarship and is located within a context of critical archival thinking. Since the late 1980s, interest in a more conceptual reading of the archive has developed across a number of disciplines such as anthropology, history and art, influenced by the work of such philosophers as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.[7] This so-called 'archival turn' has itself assisted the articulation of new ways of conceiving the archive within the field of archival studies.[8] Since the 2000s increasing scholarship, influenced by postmodern thinking, has questioned established readings of the archive as passive and neutral, and positioned the archive as active within society, bound up in structures of power.[9] Such work has interrogated and implicated recordkeeping in processes of marginalisation, silencing and oppression as well as liberation, and examined its relationship to social justice and human rights.[10] A critical archival studies frame seeks to transform recordkeeping practice, positioning archival research beyond practice-based questions and situating it as active in realising the emancipatory potential of archives within wider society.[11] Such a reading not only calls for radical re-orientation of archival practice but also seeks to foreground those who have been typically marginalised and oppressed by institutional recordkeeping, reframing the archive as a site of personal value and meaning-making.[12] This position has increased urgency in the light of growing populism and nationalism, fragile and contested articulations of truth, greater calls for decolonisation and worldwide protests as part of the Black Lives Matter movement.

These developments within archival research mirror a much longer revisionist trend within museum studies and practice, typified by a paradigmatic shift in understanding around the purpose and function of the museum since the 1980s. Such developments are characterised by a move away from an elitist and exclusionary model of the museum to a more socially responsive institution working for a range of different communities,[13] focusing less on objects and collections and more on people – both museum audiences and the wider community.[14] In this articulation, public engagement and participation that have typically persisted in the margins of museums become increasingly incorporated and embedded as core functions, with communities performing as active participants, rather than as recipients or consumers.[15] Moreover,

museum practice in some institutions has considered its work in relation to social justice, examining questions of equality and diversity within contemporary society.[16] Developments in museum studies, often termed 'new museology', have likewise focused on the theoretical underpinnings and socio-political context of museum practice, rather than purely on method.[17]

Within this context, it is important to recognise that exhibition is itself a political act and museum studies scholars (as well as researchers in other disciplines such as anthropology) have long analysed its entanglement with structural power and cultural subjectivity. The authoritative voice of the exhibition in fact belies a process imbued with value judgements, giving presence and thus empowerment to certain histories and communities, and not to others.[18] This problematising of the medium articulates the exhibition as a form of discourse which, in a Foucauldian sense, is itself entangled within structures of power.[19] Yet exhibition-making also offers the potential to open out these questions, rather than close them down; to reflect on the ways in which cultural institutions are active in shaping broader social narratives and, at the same time, harness them in processes designed to generate personal meaning-making and wider agendas of social justice.

Whilst located within critical archival and museum thinking, the book also draws on areas of study within a broad range of disciplines including architecture, phenomenology, materiality, anthropology and library studies. By harnessing scholarship and research within these various disciplines, then, I aim to gesture the conversation around archival exhibitions in ways that extend beyond merit and justification and, likewise, to consider their role and purpose in a more diverse and transformative way than is suggested by focusing exclusively on outreach and learning. To assist with this, I will develop a theoretical framework that draws on concepts of spatiality and phenomenology, as well as temporality, to generate new perspectives. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's theory of *social space* and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of *embodiment* and *being-in-the-world*, the framework is designed to develop an understanding of 'lived' experience within the archive, situating the individual at the centre of experience.

Scope and Definitions

Foregrounding the spatial and phenomenological encounter with archives draws attention to physical archival spaces, yet it is important to recognise the digital as a key driver within the field. Technological developments, which have long had significant effects on how archives are created, managed and understood,[20] have radically altered the archival landscape since the 1990s, with born-digital records, electronic recordkeeping, digitisation and online access driving both theoretical and practical change.[21] Scholars have considered the effect of digital technologies on the space of the archive, suggesting shifts in use, often framed by a gradual reduction in onsite activity towards

more digital forms of access.[22] The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during the writing of this book in 2020 and 2021 has also arguably highlighted the importance of online engagement (and, to a degree, accelerated these shifts) at a time when many physical archives around the world have been closed to public access. For exhibition practice, then, there is a clear drive here for online activity, especially for audiences unable to visit an archive in person, and throughout this book, I will acknowledge the importance of the digital in my discussions. But the main focus of my interest here is on physical spaces, not in opposition to the digital, but alongside it; to ask: within this context of broad digital activity, what (if anything) does the physical space of the archive offer, in terms of experiencing the archive in different and variously complex ways? Whilst these trends suggest an increased turn towards online activity, physical exhibition-making still remains a significant part of the archival landscape, as I will show. This diverse landscape suggests that physical exhibitions continue to play a role in how experiences are designed for different communities. These different archive spaces, then, offer the potential to think about archive exhibitions in new ways.

It is helpful here to provide clarification around several of the terms used throughout the book. The term 'archive' itself is complex to define since, as mentioned above, it has become subject to broad concepts and discussions that have resulted in shifts in meaning.[23] Although there are variations and (an increasing) fluidity between them, distinctions can be drawn within archival theory between 'documents', 'records' and 'archives': documents hold information (communicated knowledge) and thus have content and structure, but lack context, whereas records are generated through contextual transactions. Archives are those records that have ongoing value.[24] Within a postmodern understanding of archival theory, this definition becomes increasingly complex: Tom Nesmith, for example, introduces a degree of ongoing understanding to a seemingly static definition of both archives and records.[25] Again, interest in the archive across other disciplines has also led to broader, more metaphorical definitions as a way of conceptualising knowledge and memory.

For the purposes of this book, then, the term 'archive' is used in two ways: firstly, it refers to preserved documented and recorded information about the past (irrespective of age and medium) and thus, the terms 'document', 'record' and 'archive' are used interchangeably. In this definition, archives are typically textual, but may also include maps, plans, photographs and illustrations, for example, and extend to digital, oral and intangible forms of knowledge as will be discussed in more detail later. Secondly, 'archive' refers to the building or repository where these records are kept. I focus on public archives: principally national, local (state, city, county), university and some specialist archives such as those in museums. I also include libraries that hold rare books and special collections: it is worth noting that many different types of cultural institutions hold archival materials, even where those organisations

are not described as archives. In all of these cases, I am concerned with how exhibition is conceived, designed and produced by archivists and designers. I am also interested in innovative forms of display and, in this sense, the book draws on archive exhibitions held in other locations.

It is worth noting here that there has been considerable scholarly interest in the work of artists and creative practitioners who use archives to examine questions of collecting, recording and memorialising the past. Such creative work has generated new theoretical insights into the meaning of archiving, personal memory and identity.[26] Moreover, scholarship has also considered the nature of exhibiting archives in relation to art and questioned its documentary status.[27] Such discussions sit outside the scope of this book, which is concerned instead with approaches to exhibition-making within cultural institutions and how such activity reformulates thought and practice within the archive.

Throughout, the terms 'user', 'visitor' and 'audience' are generally employed interchangeably to refer to people who interact with archives. Whilst it may be possible to distinguish between 'users' to archive search rooms and 'visitors' to archive exhibitions, this is unhelpful largely because it presupposes certain degrees of agency or passivity, whilst the term 'user' can be broadened to encompass all stakeholders in an archive.[28] It is important to recognise that such terms (alongside others, for example, 'client' and 'citizen') are not neutral, but categories constructed within wider social, economic and historical frames and trends.[29] In recognising these considerations, then, where it is necessary to define a particular type of user, an alternative and appropriate term (such as 'citizen') is used.

Methodologies

The book is based on a wealth of new research drawn from archive practice in different organisations around the world. With any research project, there are many different strategies that can be used to unfold new and different perspectives on the theme. Here, I have used two complementary approaches: a wide-angle lens to look broadly across archival practice in different organisations and, secondly, two detailed case studies that drill down into the specifics of exhibition practice and their wider implications for archival spaces. Common to both approaches are questions around purpose and design, and how such work (is intended to) shape meaning and experience of the archive.[30] Yet both approaches work to accomplish slightly different aims. The broader picture that is generated from the first approach works as a 'landscape of practice' across the sector, revealing a tapestry of different ideas and concepts around exhibition practice. Based upon a large number of 'micro-case studies', these various perspectives work together to produce a rich and diverse picture of how exhibition is designed and thought about, helping to generate new ideas around what exhibition means for the

archive. The themes that emerge from this part of the study tell us about the relationship between archives and their audiences, revealing a plurality of experiences. They also suggest how exhibition is designed to shape meaning about archival material and its role and purpose within wider society. This landscape of practice comprises institutions in North America, Europe and Australia, each chosen less for their typicality and more because they exemplify interesting, in some regards innovative forms of practice that warrant deeper investigation. Recognising the diverse political, social and cultural contexts that surround these archives, my inquiry works with each in its own sectoral and geographic situation. In this sense, the study is designed to reveal insights into exhibition practice within each given location whilst, at the same time, pointing towards more generalised forms of understanding.

Complementing this approach are the two detailed case studies, which draw on many of the themes emerging from the landscape of practice but develop their analyses from a deep investigation into two specific organisations. The first of these is Archives+ in Manchester, UK. A partnership of archives based in the city's Central Library, Archives+ opened to the public in 2014 following a large-scale refurbishment of the town hall and library and the introduction of a new transformation programme within the city council. Here, my discussion considers the productive capacity of exhibition to generate change within the archive at a broader institutional scale.

The second case study is the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen. The library's Black Diamond extension, opened in 1999, was designed partly as a space for cultural activities, including exhibitions. In this study, I consider the culture of experimental exhibition-making that has developed at the Royal Danish Library and an approach to design that focuses on spatiality and embodiment, and the place of books and archives within this.

Situating these two detailed case studies beside the broader landscape of practice, then, the book is designed to stimulate a varied and productive conversation around contemporary exhibition practice in the archive. As we journey between institutions and visit different exhibitions – our brief sojourns throughout the landscape of practice and our longer stays in Manchester and Copenhagen – I draw on a range of conversations with archivists and designers that underpin much of this new research. Although conceived as interviews, and framed around specific questions and discussion points relevant to each institution, I prefer to use the term 'conversation' to indicate an exchange of ideas between myself and others, all engaged in the work of archiving. Most of these conversations took place in person, although several happened online and a few in the form of a written questionnaire. For the landscape of practice, I visited over 30 institutions and had conversations with individuals at many of them. Many of the conversations at Archives+ took place during the summer of 2017 and included present and former staff members from across the organisation, as well as with the project architect, designer, business consultant and interpretation consultant. I made two visits

to Copenhagen. The first of these was in April 2017, when plans were well underway for the library's two new exhibitions. During this visit, I spoke to several personnel within the library and considered the exhibition-design and production process. My second visit was in September 2017, when the two exhibitions had opened, and further conversations took place. All of these conversations help reveal the different ways in which exhibition is thought about and designed to generate various experiences.[31]

A large part of the research came through the study of documentary material, including both text-based and visual records. These comprised the internal records and promotional material of the various different organisations, including reports, consultation strategies, photographs and exhibition literature. In the case of Archives+, a wide variety of institutional records were used, including official records of the city council, such as high-level reports and committee minutes. The material also included internal working documentation such as funding applications, briefs, consultation reports, design and consultation strategies, progress reports, memoranda, correspondence and case study documentation. These various documents provided insight into the practical processes involved in the capital project. For the Royal Danish Library, annual reports were used that documented the library's activities over a long period. Internal reports describing the design of exhibitions as well as photographs and publicity material were also used. The research drew across all these various records to examine and explore the mission, goals, processes and activities of the different organisations.

I made personal visits to many of the exhibitions between 2015 and 2019. The purpose of these visits was twofold. Firstly, I made detailed records of the exhibitions, documenting their design and interpretation through photography, note-making and sketching. Secondly, I developed a reflective analysis of my experience of the exhibitions and how they worked to generate intellectual, emotional and sensory responses for me. To help with this, I began by drawing on Beverly Serrell's *Excellent Judges Framework*[32] to think through what it means to inhabit these exhibitions – of what it means to be a part of them. But my approach sought to develop a deeper, more theoretical perspective: harnessing concepts of spatiality and phenomenology, and drawing across such fields as historiography, museology and critical archival thinking,[33] I sought to analyse and critically unpack the processes of exhibition-making and how they are designed to enable certain meanings and modes of engagement.

The key analytical focus of my inquiry here is on the intentions of archivists and designers and how their work is designed to produced certain types of experience. What it does not aim to do is analyse how exhibitions themselves are actually experienced by visitors. This is not to ignore or devalue the user – on the contrary, the argument here is framed by a call to reshape practice around the user and in partnership with the user. Instead, it is to place emphasis on the *processes* of exhibition-making themselves – of how

they are generated and produced – and what these processes can tell us about contemporary exhibition practice. It is to unpack the methodologies that work to situate the user at the centre of the archive and which, in turn, gesture towards what it means to encounter the archive.

Plan of the Book

Having provided an outline of the scope of this book, then, I turn in Chapter 1 to a detailed discussion of how archive exhibitions have been considered by scholars in the past, examining in greater detail the discourses of justification and merit that surround them and how they became framed by the language of outreach. My key argument here is that these conversations have been shaped by wider theoretical propositions about the archive and therefore cannot be separated from the broader intellectual discussion around its supposed neutrality and objectivity. Much of this discussion is drawn from UK perspectives on archival exhibitions but also considers developments in North America and Australia. In identifying the shortcomings of our understanding of exhibition when defined by the terms of a supposedly neutral archive, I argue for a reframing of exhibition within the context of critical archival studies. Such reconceptualisations point to new possibilities for how we can think about archive exhibitions.

In Chapter 2, I propose a new way of thinking about exhibitions by developing a framework that focuses on philosophical ideas of space, time and embodiment. Drawing on the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this chapter offers a critical assessment of archival scholarship firstly on spaces and secondly on engagement with archives, including the influence of the digital on our perception of the archive. This framework develops a new lens for conceiving archive exhibitions and analysing the process of their making and design.

Following this discussion, I open Chapter 3 by drawing across several 'micro-case studies' that constitute the landscape of practice to consider exhibition through the lens of experience. Whilst acknowledging that many archives define their exhibition work as outreach, I foreground discussions of exhibition that gesture towards new readings around the role of exhibition and the implications that emerge from these. A key feature here is the importance of distinct and diverse audiences with an interest in engaging with archives in an experiential way, and of exhibition practice that responds to such audience needs. In this sense, the archive is reformulated in terms of what it is *for* and how people want to engage with it, which in turn has implications for the space of the archive.

Throughout the next four chapters I analyse exhibition practice in greater detail and consider its implications on the archive. In Chapter 4, I identify several key themes that emerge from across the landscape of practice that reveal something of the character of archive exhibitions. These themes are

gathered around ideas of scale, context and performativity and, in one sense, articulate a sense of the archive itself and, in another, gesture towards characteristics that define certain instances of archival exhibition. I develop these ideas further in Chapter 5 by examining the activist potential of archival exhibitions. Here, I consider exhibition as a space to explore empathy within the archive, before turning to questions of power and how exhibition practice can both reflect upon and challenge the archive. Finally, I look to participatory forms of practice that harness the liberatory potential of archives in contemporary matters of justice and equality.

In Chapter 6, I move away from the 'micro-case studies' that form the landscape of practice to consider in detail the work of exhibition in wider reshapings of archive spaces, including its potential to contribute to transformational and organisational change. This chapter explores the reshaping of Archives+ in Manchester and the role played by exhibition within this. In Chapter 7, I examine exhibition as a spatial and phenomenological encounter with archival material. This chapter focuses on the innovative exhibition-practice at the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, analysing the embodied and sensory capacity of exhibition against the backdrop of wider organisational change.

In the concluding chapter, I draw across all these discussions to consider in more detail the idea of exhibition as an encounter with archives that happens across different scales and its capacity to shape different types of experiences. Furthermore, I consider the implications of exhibition-practice on new readings of archival spaces. Finally, I focus on the importance of people within these various different readings and how the concept of experience situates people at the centre of the archive.

All writing is shaped by the contexts in which it is written, and this book is no different. It gives emphasis to certain perspectives and not to others; and generates its own narratives and omissions. This is not to disregard those perspectives that are less represented here; rather, to recognise that all accounts, including this one, tell only part of the story.[34] What the present work aims to do is contribute to a conversation about the potentiality of archive exhibitions and the wider contexts and influences in which they are located; to encourage debate around these concepts; and to stimulate new responses and ideas.

Notes

1. Tylecote 1915–16.
2. See Lester 2018.
3. Lefebvre 1991.
4. See, for example, Falk and Dierking 1992; Macdonald and Basu 2007; MacLeod, Hourston Hanks and Hale 2012; Bedford 2014; Wood and Latham 2014.
5. See Latham 2011; Dever 2019, 105.
6 On research and practice in archival studies, see Gilliland and McKemmish 2004, 149; Gilliland, McKemmish and Lau 2017, 22; Gilliland and McKemmish 2018, 86.

7. Foucault 2002; Derrida 1996. On archival turns, see, for example, Craven 2008, 12–5; Stoler 2009, 44–6; Buchanan 2011; Caswell 2016; Ketelaar 2017; Yaneva 2020, 24–41.
8. Ketelaar 2017.
9. See, for example, Cook 2001; Schwarz and Cook 2002; Ketelaar 2002, 224–31; Evans et al. 2015.
10. See, for example, Duff et al. 2013; Caswell 2014a; Caswell 2014b.
11. Caswell, Punzalan and Sangwand 2017, 1–2.
12. Gilliland 2012; Roeschley and Kim 2019.
13. Anderson 2004, 1; MacLeod 2013, 2–3; see also Witcomb 2003; Weil 2007. For a discussion of how these shifts have arisen, see Weil 1999, 231–8.
14. See Weil 1999.
15. Bernadette Lynch (n.d. [c.2011], 507; n.d. [c.2014], 6) calls for an increased embedding of such work in museums' core practice.
16. Sandell and Nightingale 2012; see also MacLeod 2013, 2–3.
17. Vergo 1989, 2–4.
18. Lavine and Karp 1991; Macdonald 1998, 1, 4; Edwards 2001, 184–5.
19. Foucault 2002.
20. Forde 2003, 134; Ridener 2008, 158–9; Bunn 2016.
21. See, for example, Bearman and Hedstrom 1993; Cook 1997, 40–3; Ketelaar 2004; Ketelaar 2007; Bunn 2016. This is a vast area of study and suffice to say there is only room to provide a small number of citations.
22. Luck 2015, 39–48. See also Collins 1982; Cox 1998, 28–9; Cullen 2008; Chenard 2014; Moss, Endicott-Popovsky and Dupuis 2015. On questions of digitisation, democratisation and commodification, see Lager Vestberg 2008, 60; Breakell 2011, 24–5; de Groot 2016, 76; Procter 2017, 298–9; Taylor and Gibson 2017.
23. For a discussion of the complexity of definitions themselves within an archival context, see McKemmish 2005; Yeo 2007, 315–9; Thomas 2017, xx–xxi.
24. See Williams 2006, 3–15. Laura Millar does not make such a clean distinction between documents and records; for her definitions of archives, see Millar 2010, 1–5.
25. Nesmith 2005, 262.
26. See, for example, Eichler 2006; Buchanan 2012; Breakell 2015.
27. See Crookham 2015.
28. Williams 2006, 133.
29. Cupers 2013, 2.
30. As such, knowledge here is recognised as socially constructed and the research characterised by qualitative, interpretivist reasoning.
31. Individuals are identified in the text where express permission has been given; in those cases where it was not, an agreed generic description along with the affiliation has been used.
32. Serrell 2006.
33. On using alternative fields of study to develop new analytical approaches, see Bal 2007, 71.
34. For similar comment, see MacLeod 2013, 30.

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Chapter 1

Conversations about Exhibitions

The idea of displaying archives or, at least, of visitors attending archives to view materials in much the manner as museum objects, has been a feature of archival institutions in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America since the mid-nineteenth century.[1] In the United States, archive exhibitions seem to have increased in popularity following the Second World War, arguably influenced by growing museum attendance, and were often designed to mark various anniversaries and centenaries from the late 1940s onwards.[2] An exhibition of documents opened at the Australian War Memorial in 1954, although earlier displays had included archives,[3] whilst the first archive exhibition in Japan was staged in 1969.[4]

By the middle of the twentieth century, the exhibition of archives in the United Kingdom had become common practice,[5] and overviews of many displays appeared regularly in the journals of the British Records Association (BRA).[6] In 1949, the association felt that exhibiting archives was considered widespread enough to appoint a subcommittee to investigate their use and role. This subcommittee reported that 'It had been found by experience that the best means of arousing local interest in the preservation of records, and of demonstrating their educational value, is by holding displays'. The report goes on to provide some practical guidance on hosting an exhibition.[7]

These reports indicate the widespread popularity of exhibition-making within British archives. They also describe what they see as the purpose of exhibition – to create a greater interest in archives for a wider public, with education being a key aspect of this. The BRA's 1949 report noted education as the principal aim of exhibitions,[8] and this was reflected in how the BRA later determined the quality of the exhibition, rather than the numbers attending, as an indicator of success.[9] This sense of advocacy also extended to the profession itself: many of the exhibitions organised for the silver jubilee of the BRA in 1958 showcased the work of archivists and the association, especially in regard to preservation.[10] There is clearly a sense in these reports of the archive profession engaging with exhibition in an enthusiastic way, whilst the scale and variety of activity indicates a broad range of interest and technique.

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Yet despite this ubiquity of archival exhibitions and the favourable descriptions of them recorded in the association's journal, attitudes towards this activity amongst individual archivists themselves were decidedly mixed, with some commentators questioning the professional value and relevance of this work. In 1956, Ralph Bernard Pugh decried the archival exhibition; whilst recognising the value of small displays and occasional larger ones, he commented that, ultimately,

> Archivists and curators ought to be scholars. They ought accordingly to be continuously engaged in listing or cataloguing their collections, revising those lists or catalogues, and interpreting or re-interpreting their material. For the archivist these activities reach their climax in the publication of a guide setting out in summary form, though scholarly fashion, the characteristics of the various record groups and classes that constitute the whole accumulation within his charge.

Is it possible, Pugh muses, that such guides have not been produced in some places because the archivists there are too busy curating exhibitions? He concludes by writing that

> It is undeniable that children and amateurs can learn much that is interesting and valuable from exhibitions of manuscripts and lectures about them. They must, however, be taught not by archivists but by teachers. The archivist's pupils are not schoolboys but scholars.[11]

Pugh's comments reveal a very clearly defined role for the archivist, one that focuses on scholarly research: exhibition is clearly excluded. This appears to contrast with the widespread popularity of exhibition-making reported by the BRA and poses questions about what the archivist's role should be. F.G. Emmison responded to Pugh by arguing that exhibitions are 'not organised for the benefit of the public; they are put up primarily to win the support of those who control the repository', and that providing lectures and exhibitions for the public is necessary to secure funds and the influence of employers.[12] In this rather more pragmatic view, then, exhibitions are still about advocacy, but more as a way of attracting funding and managerial support, rather than interesting and educating the public. Roger Ellis, writing in the mid-1960s more generally about engagement activities, took a broader approach. He still wrote of the need to advocate the benefits of the archive to historians; yet his appeal goes to a wider public, not just as a matter of 'public relations', but to 'make the country's archives something which everyone accepts and knows about as a matter of course'. Whilst Ellis understood this through an (somewhat condescending) educative lens, he also saw this work as a priority for archivists.[13]

These activities are things that many archivists had been doing as a matter of course.[14] Yet, despite their popularity, there is clearly a question here

around whether exhibitions should be a part of the archivist's proper duties. The comments of Emmison and Ellis, to a degree influenced by the real-world contexts in which archives operate, reflect a need for this kind of work, yet they are framed as justifications; they contrast with those expressed by Pugh, whose more theoretical argument places exhibitions beyond the scope of the archivist's core duties. This question around function and role has hovered over the discourse surrounding exhibition right up until the present and has shaped or limited much of what has been written around the subject.

What also emerges from these comments, as well as from the BRA's reports, is an understanding of exhibition as a form of advocacy. Education is also important, although this is often framed by a need to raise the profile of archives and archivists. These motives are important, but it is interesting to reflect on why exhibition is understood in this way since, again, its effect is to limit the possibilities of what exhibition is conceived as being for. In this chapter, then, I consider the theoretical influences that have shaped contemporary arguments around exhibition with a view to challenging preconceived notions of their role and purpose, before reaching for alternative readings that can help widen the landscape of what exhibitions are understood to do.

Objective Readings of History and Archival Theory

To understand how the discourse around exhibition came to be dominated by questions of professional integrity, it is necessary to unpack the theoretical shaping of the archive profession. To do this, it is important to note that the concepts that have shaped the practice of recordkeeping have themselves been influenced by historiographical thought.[15] Indeed, the ideas expressed by Pugh can be understood when seen through the close relationship between history and archives which prevailed throughout the early twentieth century. But as historiography developed over the following decades, the practice of recordkeeping responded to these shifts and this has, in turn, challenged established theoretical norms. In this sense, arguments such as those outlined by Pugh have become increasingly reactionary.[16]

The practice of keeping archives and records developed as a bureaucratic and administrative function of governments and institutions, but from the late nineteenth century became closely associated with the developing profession of the historian.[17] The professionalisation of history and its establishment as an academic discipline in the early nineteenth century was influenced by the German historian Leopold von Ranke.[18] Ranke was concerned with establishing an approach to history based on a scientific model which employed an empiricist observation of primary source material.[19] In this sense, history was seen as objective, a view influenced by an earlier, seventeenth-century shift in philosophy as represented by Descartes and Kant that sought to understand the nature of reality from a neutral standpoint.[20] In this reading, history is concerned with facts: as Ranke put it, to tell 'how it actually happened',

devoid of the perspectives, viewpoints and, indeed, biases of the historian.[21] History in the Rankean tradition was concerned with national and political histories: the grand narrative, seen from a bird's eye view, that swept across the centuries with the military campaigns of generals and the political campaigns of statesmen.[22] This form of history typically placed emphasis on narrative sources, principally the official archives of the state.[23]

This 'scientific' model of history played an important role in the development of archival theory in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which archives were seen as objective, neutral and evidential, the building blocks, as it were, for constructing historical narratives.[24] In this sense, the comments of both Pugh and Ellis in describing the archivist's work, whilst varied in scope, were both shaped by notions of how archives are used by the historian. An understanding of the historian's profession as seeking an 'objective truth', influenced by an empiricist and positivist approach to history, in turn, shaped an objective approach to the understanding and management of archives. This became consolidated through the encoding of archival theory first by the Dutch archivists Muller, Feith and Fruin and, in the early 1920s, by the British archival theorist Sir Hilary Jenkinson.[25]

In keeping with historical tradition at that time, Jenkinson asserted an objective characteristic to the archive in his *Manual*, the first account of archival theory to be published and read widely in English.[26] He understood the archive as an accumulation, rather than a collection of records, produced by the records' creator without any consideration of their future use. Custody is important, since the authenticity of the record is established through '*an unblemished line of responsible custodians*'.[27] Since the archive is formed from those records preserved by the creator (and thus transferred to the archivist), the integrity of the archive is retained; it simply passes from creation to preservation with no subjective selection or appraisal taking place. In this way, the record is instilled with authenticity and impartiality. This integrity provides and asserts an objective truth inherent within the archive, thus giving a truthful account of the past and therefore of history.[28]

There are clear implications here for how the archivist's professional role should be understood. For Jenkinson, the archivist is a passive, impartial custodian; to maintain the integrity and impartiality of the record, the archivist must always remain objective. To do otherwise would, in effect, alter the 'truth' and thus the account of history that the archive can tell.[29] Appraisal and destruction were the responsibility of record creators, rather than archivists. If archivists were to select and interpret the record, they would introduce a degree of subjectivity into which archives were kept and what can be learnt from them. Further, archivists must refrain from any research activity themselves, since to 'favour' one topic or school of thought would be to influence or prioritise certain histories over others (something Jenkinson described as 'positively dangerous').[30] Jenkinson was particularly concerned here with a subjective approach to arranging ('methodizing') and calendaring, but such a

reading would clearly include exhibition, since to mediate the record through selecting and interpreting exhibits introduces a degree of subjectivity that can prejudice the kinds of histories that can be told.

Jenkinson divided the archivist's duties into two. Those he termed 'Primary' were directed at the physical custody, arrangement and description of the archives themselves; whilst the 'Secondary' duties, clearly subservient, entailed publication and provision of access for 'students', here understood as historians and other researchers.[31] It is these duties that have clearly framed Pugh's argument; whilst he notes that archivists should be 'interpreting' their material, his emphasis on lists, catalogues and guides conforms with the types of public access that constitute Jenkinson's secondary duties.[32] Pugh's views, then, help distil Jenkinson's theoretical viewpoint and articulate what is perceived to be problematic with exhibition-making in archives: firstly, through the selecting and interpreting of exhibits, the practice of display questions the impartiality of the archivist and, secondly, that exhibition falls outside a tight reading of Jenkinson's primary and secondary duties.

Despite the implications of Jenkinson's theories, exhibitions have remained popular with archivists: at the BRA's annual conference in 1971, which discussed the role of exhibitions, participants showed broad support and a desire for training in their preparation.[33] By defining exhibitions as a form of outreach – understood in terms of both its political and financial benefits and in engaging local communities, including through education and learning – exhibition is seen to support the 'established' purpose of the archive as a site of preservation and research, as defined by Jenkinson. Jenkinson might argue that archivists are not policymakers or administrators[34] but, in reality, promoting the archive and engaging the community must often be taken up by archivists themselves. The implication of this reading, however, is that exhibition itself has become enfolded with outreach and education, a position that has reified over time, and which has largely remained unchallenged.

Jenkinson's work helped articulate and define a fledgling archival profession and, in practice, he (reluctantly) recognised that archivists have to make appraisal decisions,[35] but his objective approach to archival management has played a lasting role in shaping and influencing theory and practice. This helps explain why the contributions of Pugh, Emmison and Ellis to the question of exhibitions, and public relations work more generally, are written through a lens of criticism and justification. The influence of Jenkinson's thinking has remained strong, even as the archival profession has had to consider its stance and role as the use of archives has changed and the need for engaging the public has increased.

New Approaches to History

A widening use of archives developed as a response to changing historiographical trends in the mid-twentieth century, although with roots in much earlier developments. New approaches to studying and writing history in the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to movements away from the national and political histories of the Rankean tradition, focusing instead, for example, on the effects of industrialisation and long-term economic trends.[36] A turn towards historical relativism in the early twentieth century also asserted a more subjective view of history.[37] But further shifts away from these macro-narratives has led to more qualitative forms of research, including more personalised stories such as microhistory and historical biography.[38] The rise of social history in the 1950s and 1960s, resulting from wider socio-cultural trends such as de-industrialisation, decolonisation, the rise of activist movements and, later, neoliberalism and globalisation, as well as an increasingly widening diversity in higher education,[39] has resulted in the growth of new fields of study that focus on post-colonialism, women and Black history, for example.[40]

Such movements and trends have also led to the development of various forms of public and popular history.[41] Although they also have their roots in earlier centuries,[42] these types of histories gained momentum during the latter half of the twentieth century. The increasing interest in family and local history, as well as a developing sense of 'heritage' and an active historicising of the present, might be understood as a reaction to rapid and deep-seated socio-economic changes in the mid-twentieth century, encouraged by later globalisation and capitalist growth.[43] Indicative of such forms of history is a sense of identity, as individuals and communities look to the past (and an increasingly localised and individual past) to construct meaning about their role in contemporary society.[44] Whilst recognising variations in its definitions, a key characteristic of 'public history' is its participatory character, involving individuals and communities in building the stories of their past.[45] Furthermore, the idea of history as 'constructed' enables questions to be asked concerning *how* history is written and presented, and who is involved and represented in that process (and therefore who is omitted).[46]

These trends and shifts throughout the twentieth century have had a resultant effect on how archives are conceived, managed and used. The increase in public history, as well as growing demand from educational institutions, for example, led to texts written by historians and archivists in the 1960s and 1970s detailing the broad range of historical sources available in public archives and suitable techniques for using them.[47] By the mid-1990s, family history was identified as the most popular form of research within archives, resulting in events and resources designed specifically to cater for genealogists.[48]

As uses changed and increased as a result of these historiographical trends, the role of the archivist altered. An increasing need for public relations activity arguably pushed at the boundaries of Jenkinson's secondary duties and thus refashioned the scope of the archivist's work, resulting in an increased tension around what the archivist's proper and core work should be. These shifts also posed questions within archival theory itself, opening up a greater

focus on the use of archives and how those forms of use might influence the management of archives, especially within the context of appraisal.

The most significant challenge to Jenkinson's approach came from the American theorist Theodore Schellenberg. Writing in the 1950s, Schellenberg argued that archives (and here he focused largely on public archives) had value not just for the government agency that had created them, but for other users as well, including people outside government: for Schellenberg, archives had both evidentiary and informational value.[49] He advocated for appraisal based on these two types of value, the latter reflecting the needs of the researcher, and that the archivist should play a crucial role in this.[50] This contrasts significantly to Jenkinson, for whom preservation was based on the record creators' needs and in which the archivist should not be involved.[51] Schellenberg's support of a subjective approach to appraisal shifted attention away from the truth as self-evident to the truth as understood from interpreting evidence found in the archive, yet he still maintained an objective reading of history as the ultimate end-goal for the archive's user.[52] Nonetheless, this position recognised the importance of ongoing value and use as a key factor in the appraisal of records; furthermore, it gave a subjective, partial role to the archivist and, in effect, recognised their part in shaping what historical accounts could be told.

Schellenberg's work, although in part a rebuttal to Jenkinson's, was driven mainly by the increasing bulk of government and official records produced in the mid-twentieth century, itself the result of increasing bureaucracy and the influence of technology.[53] But reactions and criticisms to both Jenkinson's passivity and Schellenberg's selection criteria indicated changes in attitudes that pointed towards the archive as an attempt to preserve a full and comprehensive record of society.[54] In turn, this indicated a shift in understanding of the archive, away from its administrative function to one more focused on social value. Instead of just interpreting the archive as a bureaucratic function of organisations and the state, this concept refashioned the archive as a historical record of society and thus an artefactual repository of individual and social memory. In this sense, then, the archive became enfolded with notions of culture, place and identity.[55]

Interpreting the archive as a cultural resource to be made accessible to wider audiences inevitably led to a shift in how it was understood and managed. This, in turn, had implications for understanding the roles of access, use and outreach and, since exhibition is squarely understood within the context of outreach, its role also came under scrutiny. In the United Kingdom since the late 1970s, the archive was no longer being viewed as an administrative function of its parent organisation but rather as a public-facing 'service'. There had been an increasing tendency for local authority archives to be relocated as part of internal local government reorganisations: archives were commonly moved from central, administrative departments to education, culture, heritage or leisure services.[56] Similarly, the development of

local studies centres, originating in the 1970s, and which in some cases saw a merging of archives with libraries and museums, can likewise be seen as an emphasis on 'heritage'.[57] Recast as cultural 'services', the idea of public relations work and of outreach became increasingly vital to archives. An increasingly user-orientated practice through the late 1990s[58] saw the opening of the Family Records Centre in 1997[59] and the development of new educational resources.[60] Yet despite these developments, questions and concerns remained about the place of such activities: as one commentator, writing in 1993, put it: 'Can we properly fulfil our core functions of listing, conserving and making available our holdings, and still do the outreach?'[61]

This, of course, is the same argument that was exercised in the 1950s, whereas now the climate had changed: as a result of the historiographical turns towards popular and public histories, the popularisation of heritage and increasing importance being placed on use, the need to promote the archive and attract new audiences had become ever more urgent. Despite this, theoretical understandings of the archive that purport a custodial role in the model outlined by Jenkinson remained influential, resulting in a framing that continuously questioned the value of outreach, including exhibitions.[62] In some respects, outreach could attract support and funding for the archive, but it was also seen to distract from the archivist's 'primary duties': as Gareth Haulfryn Williams commented, 'by putting energy into displaying material, [we may] be stepping beyond the bounds of our professional duties; while we are being document displayers, we are not being archivists'.[63]

Of course, there is an economic argument here, a question of time and resources that such work entails and the economic payoff it can deliver.[64] This is an instrumentalised approach to outreach work: it is beneficial if it translates into some material gain for the archive, a way of attracting funding and political support. This is a reading of outreach pared down to its basic purpose and leaves little room for any sense of value in audience engagement. It reinforces an understanding of the archive as outlined by Jenkinson, in which acquiring and preserving the archive is the principal purpose behind recordkeeping, and outreach functions only to support this.

In the United States, exhibitions were tied closely to education work and the idea of broadening access to collections, although here too there was a close correlation with promotion.[65] Questions about the relevance of exhibition to the archive also emerged here, including its purpose and value, and whether it is a 'core' (or even appropriate) task for the archivist.[66] A key debate that formed in North America in the 1980s and early 1990s, focusing on the relationship between appraisal and access, provides a helpful development in thinking around the purpose of outreach.[67] Emerging from an increasing interest in archives among new user groups, as well as widening technology that enables greater use, this debate queried the assumption that access and use should be seen simply as products or outcomes of acquisition and preservation. Should they instead be seen as the purpose and reason

for recordkeeping – the end result to which all other activities – acquisition, description, preservation – function in order to achieve this?[68] In other words, should Jenkinson's primary and secondary duties be reversed? Access to archives is here reframed through the lens of democracy, accountability and personal rights;[69] yet the debate also cautioned against appraisal decisions and description shaped by the fashions and politics of the day, divorced from the contexts in which the archive was created.[70]

Although these discussions throw up important questions about the importance of provenance, the nature of appraisal and expectations over access and use, they all reveal the influence, the push and pull of new theoretical ideas, all shaped by new approaches to history and turns towards popular notions of heritage. They reveal a climate in which the archive increasingly seeks to reconcile its role towards wider society and thus expose tensions in thought and practice, with implications for how outreach – and especially exhibition – is understood and viewed. The concept of use-driven appraisal is influenced by Schellenbergian thinking,[71] yet throughout, the influence of Jenkinsonian thinking, of impartiality and custody, continues to have an impact on this discussion, shaping the discourse around outreach and advocacy.[72]

This, of course, is the key thread that runs through much archival literature around outreach: is it appropriate to interpret the archive? Is it part of the archivist's role? Or should the archivist instead focus purely on preserving, arranging, describing? These are issues that also emerge in Australian, Canadian and Japanese writing and reveal a sense of unease about the purpose and role of outreach and, especially, of exhibition.[73] Indeed, are archives themselves *supposed* to be exhibited? Does their informational capacity cease when they are displayed in showcases?[74] Despite these concerns, calls for more integrated marketing strategies reveal the growing importance of public relations work;[75] and, during the 2000s and 2010s a trend that asserted the relevance of outreach, including exhibitions, began to frame it as an essential part of the archivist's professional role.[76] And whilst there is a lingering question over whether such activity should be the work of archivists or alternative education or outreach posts, it is at least recognised as being a necessary part of the archive's core work.[77]

But perhaps what is most interesting in all of these conversations is the fact that the argument continues to be made at all: even in contemporary discussions of exhibition-making, the need to explain its value still persists.[78] It seems as though exhibition has become largely accepted as a role for the archivist to undertake, but the continual need to justify it suggests that its value is not fully realised. Indeed, the scarcity of literature around the topic indicates a lack of engagement with exhibitions and their potential.

Part of this problem is the accepted labelling of exhibition as an outreach function. As I have shown, the conversations of the 1950s onwards that have argued for exhibition do so on the grounds that it functions as a practical way for promoting the archive. This persistent justification results from

theoretical concepts about the purpose of archives. As spaces for scholarship and research, as outlined by Jenkinson, the archive has a very clearly defined role, as does the archivist, the impartial custodian. Consequently, exhibition can only have a role in such a space if it somehow aligns with this mission. As a form of outreach, exhibition works to support the archive's purpose and value when conceived in this way. Of course, outreach is an essential function of the archive. Moreover, exhibition is often conceived as a site of education and learning, although this is often coupled with promotional aims.[79] Yet this framework, I argue, limits the potential and the capacity for how exhibitions are understood and what they can do.

This is also revealed by a focus on technique. Much of what is written about exhibitions concerns practical considerations and methods, including the care and preservation of documents whilst on display[80] and the need for appropriate planning, policy and best practice procedure.[81] Attention to practical concerns has focused on selection, arrangement, layout, accessibility and the use of text and colour, some of which draw on museum literature;[82] as well as evaluation that draws on both practical design issues and visitor studies.[83] More recently, there has been interest in the development of online exhibitions.[84] The focus on conservation needs is rightly important when considering the long-term preservation of archival material but it easily snaps back into the wider discourse of merit: in Jenkinson's reading, the preservation and security of the documents are key and thus, by implication, restricts or prohibits their use in exhibition.[85] More broadly, the focus on practical issues limits any discussion of what technique is able to *do* in terms of how exhibitions create meaning around the archive. In other words, I argue for the need to harness technique as a way of analysing the purpose and role of exhibitions; to consider *how* technique is designed and used to shape responses in visitors and what this reveals about archives and the place of exhibitions within them.

What is perhaps most significant, however, is how this ongoing argument reveals a problem with how the archive itself is conceived and what it is understood as being for. Expressed differently, the 'traditional' concept of the archive, largely objective and neutral and concerned with evidencing and researching the past, against which exhibition is routinely argued, remains deeply entrenched and continuously influential. To conceive of exhibition as an outreach function is, in fact, to maintain an existing or static reading of the archive: it seeks to promote the archive *as it is*, rather than to transform or change it. The potential for exhibitions to shape new understandings and experiences of the archive are restricted by a discourse that asserts continuity. And so, a tension remains between the interpretive, experiential role of the exhibition and the more traditional reading of the archive, one which the framing of exhibition as outreach remains unable to break down.

What this calls for, then, is twofold: it requires a new conception of exhibition that is not saddled with the outreach label. This requires a new, theoretical

understanding of how exhibitions work and what they can accomplish. But it also underlies a problem with an objective reading of the archive, and one which focuses on its role as (only) a space of historical research. Alternative models of the archive are needed, ones that reconceptualise what the archive is for and broaden the possibilities of what the archive can do. By turning to alternative readings of the archives, it is possible to point towards a more integral place for exhibition and to perceive the transformative role that it can play.

New Conceptions of the Archive

Shifts in thinking about the archive, away from a bureaucratic instrument to a wider reflection or memory of the whole of society, is again a response to shifts in historiography, in particular a turn away from objective and neutral understandings of the past to something subjective and socially constructed. The new approaches to history of the mid-twentieth century were indicative of more polyvocal perspectives that began to address the omissions and gaps in what had previously been studied. This turn towards polyvocal histories is arguably reflective of Jean-François Lyotard's 'incredulity towards metanarratives',[86] a term he used to define his understanding of postmodernist thought. More a frame of mind than an extant philosophy,[87] postmodernism emerged as a response to the political and social upheavals of the twentieth century, seeking to question established truths and existing norms of power. As a reaction to the objectivity and rationality of modernist and Enlightenment thinking, a postmodern perspective questions or is sceptical of accepted or seemingly legitimate ways of knowing.[88] Within a historiographical context, such a position rejects the grand narrative that diminishes experience into absolutist and universalist progression and, instead, emphasises contingent, socially constructed and, thus, diverse knowledge systems.[89] Such a perspective discerns and amplifies the perceptions and interpretations of others, including the marginalised and under-represented.[90]

Postmodernist thought has, in turn, reconceptualised understanding of the archive. A shift towards the archive as a site of interpretation has emerged as a result of the so-called 'linguistic turn' in literary studies, which developed into poststructuralist critical thought. Roland Barthes was one of the leading thinkers of this movement, arguing that texts (including archives) possess multiple inherent meanings and are hence subject to many interpretations, rather than just their author's.[91] In this reading, the archive does not represent the source of truth but, rather, a site open to many interpretations of the past, one in which use becomes increasingly important.[92] Instead of an objective, singular document of a fixed reality or truth, then, the archive is a constructed and thus interpreted account shaped by social and cultural frames and perspectives.[93]

Further, rather than being natural accumulations of information, as Jenkinson suggested, archives are, in fact, shaped and controlled for specific political, historical and social purposes.[94] In this sense, then, the archive presents a selective view of the past. A key thinker in this regard was Michel Foucault, whose philosophy concerns the shaping of meaning and knowledge and the power relations that are enfolded within this. Foucault argued for the study of discourse in its own right: not to 'treat discourse as *document*, as a sign of something else… [but] in its own volume, as a *monument*'.[95] He argued that meaning is expressed according to certain conventions which are governed by rules or 'statements' defined within specific temporal and geospatial contexts; this he termed 'discursive practice'.[96] In Foucault's reading, then, the archive is not that which is written and preserved but, rather, that which enables a given society or civilisation to formulate understanding and meaning: 'The archive is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events… [it] defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*'. [97] The archive is not a neutral accumulation of recorded information; rather, it frames and bounds how and what society understands, articulates and remembers about itself.[98]

The idea of the archive as active in the shaping of knowledge is embodied, as Jacques Derrida writes, in a process of 'archivization': 'Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives'.[99] For Derrida, the need to stabilise the inordinacy of memory – to fix and to frame the remembered past – is driven by a fear of forgetting; yet this fixing, by its very nature freezes the archive as like a fossil, in effect destroying it and thus rendering it a thing of the past. Derrida termed this process 'consignation', its aim 'to articulate the unity of an ideal configuration'.[100] By fixing the archive into a singular instance of the 'past', this moment of memorialisation is also a moment of destruction, the *mal d'archive* that both destroys what it seeks to remember.[101] Thus, by contextualising (and therefore fixing) the meaning of the archive to a given instant, the archivist accords a particular meaning to the past which, in turn, refutes or silences other perspectives.[102] The archive is thus active in shaping knowledge, governing and determining what is worth remembering.[103]

The consigning of knowledge to the archive, and the consequent framing of narrative and discourse that emanates from it, are manifestations of political power: of who produces, constructs and controls what is known and remembered. The archive, then, becomes implicated in modes of power, consciously or otherwise fashioning society into the discourses and agendas of the powerful.[104] This extends beyond records themselves to the whole infrastructure that defines and produces the processes of archiving.[105] The archivist, too, is not a passive and impartial figure, but active in interpreting, mediating and defining what and how the record of the past will be collected, preserved and understood.[106] This sense of power becomes bound with the 'evidentiary proof' that the archive gives to 'testimony', as Paul Ricoeur

writes, thus exerting an authority that shapes the frame of knowledge for those who use it.[107]

As a site that generates discourse shaped through the lens of the powerful, the archive thus renders other narratives and voices silent,[108] prohibiting the stories of those communities from being remembered or told.[109] In one respect, silences emerge because it is impossible to archive everything.[110] But appraisal processes and records destruction inevitably reduce the collective record to 'a sliver of a sliver', to use Verne Harris' phrase, thereby resulting in 'deep, amnesic trouble'.[111]

A postmodern reframing of the archive questions the accepted metanarratives of the powerful and instead seeks out the perspectives of others, those whose voices exist at the margins.[112] In this sense, the pluralising of the archive becomes increasingly urgent. Indeed, the development of community archives, especially from the early 2000s, points to under-representation in formal archival practice; they can be understood as sites of activism or protest that reject such absences.[113] This has led to calls for a more 'pro-active', 'flexible' and community-oriented role for the archivist as facilitator and mentor within the community, rather than as institutional custodian.[114]

Such arguments are part of an exponential growth in scholarship that has increasingly challenged established or accepted ideas within archival theory and practice. Literature focusing on community and participatory archives has drawn attention to a reframing that shifts power to those involved in the creative processes of knowledge and records, including their subjects. The term 'participatory archives' lacks a single definition[115] and has been used to describe the co-creatorship of archival metadata, online co-creativity and community-based participatory archives, among others, and is emergent within the context of post-custodial readings of archives and the relationship of recordkeeping to international law and human rights.[116] Scholarship has focused on the multiplicity of creators and actors involved in recordkeeping processes and calls for greater recognition of their rights and interests, including greater agency in how they are managed.[117] Participatory recordkeeping speaks to processes of marginalisation and silencing and redraws power hierarchies that respect and empower different voices: to enable communities 'to speak, not to be spoken for'.[118] This position points to a form of archiving that is not limited to improved access but extends to a reorientation of recordkeeping systems that encompasses multiple perspectives, knowledge systems and worldviews.[119]

Such concepts are likewise reflected in literature that examines the role of archives and recordkeeping in relation to human rights. Increasingly recognised as both a liberating and an oppressing agent in society,[120] the archive is entwined in notions and expressions of both justice and injustice, with ongoing implications and effects on present-day issues.[121] This has resulted in growing scholarship that calls for greater reflexivity and recognition of the archivist as activist, and for interventions in recordkeeping practice that focus on social justice.[122] Such calls likewise extend beyond greater recognition and

access to embrace participatory forms of recordkeeping practice that work to enact justice through processes of healing and reconciliation.[123] This is especially pertinent in relation to human rights archives, that is, 'records that document violent and systematic abuse of power', the maintenance and use of which should centre on the rights of victims.[124] Protecting human rights and promoting justice for those who have suffered is an 'inherently political endeavor'[125] and one which ethically demands action.[126]

What emerges from these conversations is a repurposing of archives as sites that speak to and embrace the needs and rights of communities in the present day; as such, calls for activism harness the political agency of recordkeeping to promote a more just society.[127] Modes of neutrality and objectivity help to generate a sense that the archive is a fixed record of a past that no longer has any direct bearing or relevance on the present and, in turn, avoids analytical scrutiny.[128] Yet, in contrast, recognising that the work of the archivist is not neutral acknowledges that such work in fact promotes or resists the political frames of power that define recordkeeping systems.[129] Recognising the relationship between past and present injustices articulates the political agency of recordkeeping and harnesses the archive for the needs of contemporary society.[130]

Likewise, community archives reframe recordkeeping through the values and needs of the community and, as such, reformulate archival records away from ideas of authority and bureaucracy.[131] Michelle Caswell et al. have discussed community archives within the context of misrepresentation and omission (here termed 'symbolic annihilation'[132]) and have conceptualised a model of 'representational belonging' that articulates the empowering, affirmative and affectual power of community archives on their communities.[133] Community-based participatory archives entwine the archive with emotional, affectual and personal and communal ties and meanings, reframing the practice of archiving within a context of identity and memory, and thus as something vital to individual and collective lives and experiences.[134]

The lineage of archival thinking outlined earlier in this chapter – the writings of scholars such as Jenkinson and Schellenberg – has played an active and dominant role in shaping thought and understanding around archival exhibitions, something that more critical perspectives can work to reshape. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that this lineage is one that is clearly Western and white, a historiography that has worked to dominate, suppress and erase non-Western ideas and traditions.[135] The suppression of Indigenous knowledge systems is inextricably tied to colonialism and its ongoing effects.[136] A growing body of scholarship has called for greater critique of Western archival discourse within this context and to examine non-Western and non-dominant thought and practice, with a view to disrupting, unsettling or dismantling hegemonic trends, and reshaping historical and contemporary understanding of the archive.[137] These areas of scholarship

mark an ongoing 'renaissance of archival theory'[138] and work to alter and reframe perspectives on the archive.

New Conversations

In response to philosophical shifts in thinking, archival studies scholarship has examined the ways in which archives are entwined with power and the effects of this on individuals and communities, including the marginalisation of peoples resulting from silences and lacunae. Calls to recognise the political and activist nature of archiving and the growth of community and participatory archives all point to a shift in how the archive is understood: away from an exclusively bureaucratic tool and a seemingly passive record of the past to something that impacts upon and shapes the lives of people in contemporary society. Moreover, scholarship has increasingly sought to unsettle and disrupt hegemonic Western archival thinking by examining non-Western and non-dominant traditions.

What, then, is the effect of these discussions on conversations about exhibitions? As discussed earlier, the language around exhibition largely remains framed by discourses of justification and merit, revealing the ongoing influence of Jenkinsonian thinking on the archive. Although increasingly accepted as a relevant part of professional archive work, exhibitions are typically conceived as outreach; the literature has generally yet to harness the potential of exhibitions as a way of responding to calls for greater interventionist, activist and participatory roles in archiving, whilst experiential accounts of exhibitions are largely absent. However, there is a small yet growing body of literature that speaks to new ways of thinking about what exhibitions can do.[139]

Perhaps the most pertinent question relates to claims of neutrality and the role of interpretation, an issue that has long framed the discourse around exhibitions and which, as a result of postmodernist thinking, becomes increasingly problematic. As discussed above, conversations around interpretation have typically been framed by questions of professional duty. Should the archivist rely on the 'purity of the document' and not interpret it, even if this produces displays that are not very engaging or informative?[140] Yet the process of selecting documents for publication or display already places an interpretive structure on the archive.[141] Putting documents on display without interpretive content is not a neutral act: it is to mediate, since it takes up the positions and arguments expressed in the archive (which, itself, is not neutral) and, thus, deliberately or otherwise, presents a particular viewpoint.[142] It does not counter or offer alternative perspectives and, therefore, it drives forward a specific narrative. Expressed differently, a neutral standpoint is one that gives equal space to all perspectives including the unpalatable, distasteful or disputed.[143] The point here is that claims to neutrality rarely consider such implications: not interpreting is construed as not expressing any opinion or viewpoint at all, but this in fact reinforces the perspectives that are present in

the archive. To exhibit without interpretation is a political act, since it asserts the power structures and the omissions inherent within the archive.[144]

Exhibitions are necessarily imbued with values, and these delineate, inform and shape audience responses, with wider implications for personal and social identity and worth.[145] Within archival literature, the concept of interpretation is persistently shaped by notions of objectivity and neutrality, yet this delimits the political nature and power of exhibition and its role in shaping audience engagement with archives. Only through dismantling such claims can the ways in which exhibitions act upon the archive be unpacked: thinking through the reflexive, activist, experimental and transformative potential of exhibition-making within the archive.

To what extent do postmodern shifts towards critical archival theory and practice reanimate or reframe our understanding of the role of archival exhibitions? Scholarship has begun to consider exhibitions within this context. In one sense, the reflexive capacity of exhibition as a form of institutional or professional critique[146] can draw attention to the contingent and contested nature of archives, such as archival silences.[147] Exhibition techniques including selection and juxtaposition can be harnessed to focus, for example, on questions of truth and memory, evidence and authenticity.[148] Likewise, the socially activist potential of exhibition[149] in seeking to redress past injustices and promote the rights of the oppressed speaks to a transformative role enfolded within notions of dialogue, reconciliation and healing, one that points to urgent contemporary issues.[150] These concepts not only suggest how archival exhibitions reflect critical turns within archival theory but also point to the transformative role that exhibition can have to reformulate the purpose of archives within society.

I want to broaden these conversations by asking *how* exhibition-making within this context is designed to reconceptualise the archive. Within a context of critical archival thinking, the archive is recognised as socially constructed, generated through interactions between people. In this sense, the role of exhibition starts to acquire a new potentiality, an identity which foregrounds the experiences of individuals and their encounters with the archive. How do archivists and designers think about the purpose and role of exhibition? How do they present, critique and unfold the archive? How do they harness the potential of exhibitions to reshape new understandings and experiences of the archive? By centring on this moment of encounter, we can begin to reconceptualise what the process of exhibition-making is understood to *do* and consider the wider implications of this on the nature and experience of being in the archive.

Notes

1. Kane 1952, 39; Franz 1986, 5; see also Gelfand 2013, 53.
2. Leisinger Jr 1963, 77; Rabins 1980, 29; Kane 1952; Sanborn and Burr 1954, 265; Gelfand 2013, 53–4.

3. Condé 2007, 25.
4. Tetsuya 2014, 186.
5. British Records Association 1952, 47.
6. See, for example, British Records Association 1950b, 47, 51; Atkinson 1952, who refers to BRA displays in the 1930s; Auerbach 1952; British Records Association 1952, 47–50; British Records Association 1953; Gifford 1953.
7. British Records Association 1950a; see also Farr Casterline 1980, 7; Allyn, Aubitz and Stern 1987, 402; Gelfand 2013, 54.
8. British Records Association 1950a, 43.
9. British Records Association 1953, 73.
10. Redwood 1958, 178–9.
11. Pugh 1956, 494, 496.
12. Emmison 1957, 43. He made a similar argument in response to Pugh's comments some years later at the BRA's Annual Conference in 1971: see British Records Association 1972, 107.
13. Ellis 1966, 158–9.
14. See Ellis 1966, 158–9; also Gray 2008, 1.
15. Ridener 2008, 155; Procter 2017, 298.
16. See Gelfand 2013, 50.
17. See Ellis 1966, 155; Procter 2006, 362; Procter 2010, 19–23.
18. Burke 2001, 2–3.
19. Johnson 2007, 128; Ridener 2008, 15; see also Brichford 1982, 90–1.
20. Burke 2001, 5; Ankersmit 2005, 17–8.
21. Burke 2001, 5. The question of reality and interpretation in historical research has been the subject of much debate; see, for example, Stone and Spiegel 1992, 189–90.
22. Burke 2001, 4; see also Caine 2010, 16. For distinctions between metanarratives, grand narratives, general history and macrohistory, see Magnússon 2003, 704.
23. Burke 2001, 4–5.
24. Ridener 2008, 15.
25. Ridener 2008, 22, 25–6, 37–8. On the Dutch Manual, see Muller, Feith and Fruin 1968; Brichford 1982, 93–9; Ketelaar 1996; Cook 1997, 21–2.
26. Jenkinson 1937; see also Ridener 2008, 41, 49.
27. Jenkinson 1937, 11, original emphasis; see also 37–8.
28. Jenkinson 1937, 11–5; Ridener 2008, 55; see also 42, 54, 58; Stapleton 1983/4, 77; Tschan 2002, 178, 182.
29. Jenkinson 1937, 149–50; see also 21–2; Cook 1997, 23; Tschan 2002, 178; Johnson 2007, 129–30; Ridener 2008, 41, 55.
30. Jenkinson 1937, 123.
31. Jenkinson 1937, 44.
32. Pugh 1956, 494; see Jenkinson 1937, 125–32.
33. British Records Association 1972, 108–9.
34. Jenkinson 1937, 15–6.
35. Jenkinson 1957, 149; see also Stapleton 1983/4, 81; Cook 1997, 23; Tschan 2002, 185.
36. Burke 2001, 4; Ridener 2008, 18; Caine 2010, 17, 19–20.
37. Ridener 2008, 15–6; see also Burke 2001, 3–4.
38. Ginzburg and Poni 1991, 3; Burke 2001, 5; Magnússon 2003, 710.
39. Ridener 2008, 107; see also 103, 106; Burke 2001, 8–9; Flinn 2011, para.9; Cosson 2017, 55; on education, see Innes and Styles 1986, 381.
40. Caine 2010, 3.
41. Cosson 2017, 55.
42. Kean 2013, xvi.

43. Hoskins 1972, 7–8; White 1981, 34; Samuel 1994, 146, 150; Heald 1996, 96; Gregory 1999, 100–1; Flinn 2007, 159; Breakell 2011, 26; Martin 2013, 2; de Groot 2016, 2, 74; Cosson 2017, 55. There is an extensive literature concerning heritage; for an overview of the main discussion points, see Robertson 2013.
44. Mander 2009, 32; de Groot 2016, 5, 71–2; see also Flinn 2007, 158–9.
45. Kean 2013, xiii.
46. Kean 2013, xxii–xxiv.
47. See, for example, Emmison 1966; Emmison 1973; Emmison and Smith 1973; Iredale 1973. Specialist publications include Gibson 1974 and Alcock 1986.
48. Boyns 1999, 65.
49. Schellenberg 1956, 16.
50. Schellenberg 1956, 28–32; see also Stapleton 1983/4, 82; Cook 1997, 27; Johnson 2007, 132; Ridener 2008, 83–5.
51. See Stapleton 1983/4, 78.
52. Schellenberg 1956, 236; Ridener 2008, 90, 95.
53. See Stapleton 1983/4, 81–2; Cook 1997, 26; Tschan 2002, 179–81. It is important to note that Jenkinson's work arose from the increased volume of records resulting from World War I (see Jenkinson 1937, 20; also Tschan 2002, 177), but his approach reflected an ordering of archives based on medieval (and thus finite) holdings.
54. Ham 1975, 13; MacNeil 1994, 12; Cook 1997, 24, 29; Tschan 2002, 187.
55. Cook 1997, 44; Cook 2001a, 18. On archives as a 'societal resource', see Cook 2013, 102–3, 112.
56. Boyns 1999, 68; Stevens 1999, 85.
57. Rimmer 1992, 11–2; Stevens 1999, 86.
58. See Boyns 1999, 68–9; Tyacke 2002.
59. de Groot 2016, 73–4.
60. Tyacke, 2002, 11.
61. Anon 1993, 110.
62. See Yates 1988; Weir 2004; Gelfand 2013, 58–9.
63. Williams 1995, 91; see also Williams 1989.
64. See Williams 1989, 58; also Gelfand 2013, 59.
65. See Leisinger Jr 1963; Powers 1978; Rabins 1980, 29–30; Allyn, Aubitz and Stern 1987; Gelfand 2013, 58.
66. Josephson 1945, 198–9; Rabins 1980, 33.
67. Freeman 1984; Dearstyne 1987, 77, 84–6; Blais and Enns 1990/1, 101–9; Cook 1990/1; Craig 1990/1, 138–41; Ericson 1990/1, 114–7; Wilson 1990/1. For summaries of this debate, see Cook 1997, 29; Bance 2012, 18–24.
68. Ericson 1990/1, 114–7.
69. Wilson 1990/1, 92, 96.
70. Cook 1990/1, 124–31; see also Ham 1975, 8; Johnson 2007, 141.
71. See Cook 1997, 29.
72. Ericson 1990/1, 115–6; see also Ham 1981, 207. For a viewpoint that asserts the supposed objectivity of the archive – and that archivists should not interpret it – see Maher 1998, 262–3.
73. On Australia, see Acland 1987, 30, who describes the exhibition 'as a form of archival extension, while recognising the primary need of moral defence of the archive'; and commentary in Nicholls 2001, 64 and Condé 2007, 27. On Canada, see Wilson 1990/1, 95, who refers to the influence of the Dominion Archivists Douglas Brymner, Arthur Doughty and his colleague Adam Shortt, who asserted a 'neutral' perspective on archival management. Writing in 1991, Wilson notes that interpretive exhibition is common but 'seldom have archives placed major emphasis

on them'; although see Tunis 1985, 223, which introduced the new exhibition review section of the Canadian journal *Archivaria* because exhibitions were considered prominent in archives. On Japan, see Tetsuya 2014, 188–9.

74. Williams 1995, 91.
75. Freeman Freivogel 1978; Weir 1991, 15; Pederson 1993, 307–14; Nicholls 2001, 69–70; Weir 2004; Williams 2006, 146–7.
76. See Hyslop 2002, 51; Gray 2003, 10; Helen Nosworthy, cited in Nicholls 2003, 30; Lester 2006, 86–8; Gray 2008, 7; Hackman 2012, 12; Lacher-Feldman 2013, 7–11; Theimer, 2014. In Japan, exhibitions are now a mandatory requirement for archives: Tetsuya 2014, 191–2, 194.
77. Berry and MacKeith 2007, 147–8. In her discussion around interpretation in exhibitions, Sarah Colborne (2010, 62) echoes Nigel Yates (1988) when she writes that 'this may seem like a step too far away from the core activities of the archivist' but argues that such work is expected from funders and to attract wider audiences.
78. Writing in the late 2010s, Jennifer Hunt (2018) and Anna Maria Hajba (2019, 56) both respectively advocate for exhibition work by asserting a need to move away from the 'traditional theory' and the 'traditional role' of custodianship, thus pointing to its ongoing influence.
79. Howgill 2015, 179, 181; see also Pederson 1993, 315; Colborne 2010, 64; Lacher-Feldman 2013, 8–9. Nigel Yates (1988, 72) also refers to entertainment as a way to enable education (and, by extension, interpretation and promotion).
80. See, for example, Farr Casterline 1980, 19–22; O'Connor 1984; Bloodworth and Parkinson, 1988.
81. See, for example, Lacher-Feldman 2013 and Matassa 2014.
82. See Leisinger Jr 1963, 80–6; Farr Casterline 1980, 9–56; Rabins 1980, 33–8; Eutick 1984; Acland 1987; Allyn, Aubitz and Stern 1987, 403–4; Pederson 1993, 315–20; Howgill 2015, 180–1.
83. Colborne 2010; Howgill 2015.
84. See, for example, Kalfatovic 2002; Goodwin Thiel 2007; Hajba 2019.
85. See Powers 1978; O'Connor 1984; Nicholson 1992, 101.
86. Lyotard 1984, xxiv.
87. Cook 2001b, 19; see also Hardiman 2009, 28.
88. Lyotard 1984, xxiii.
89. Cook 2001b, 17; see also Burke 2001, 3; Flinn 2007, 155–8; Ridener 2008, 106; Mander 2009, 29; Caine 2010, 2.
90. Burke 2001, 6; Caine 2010, 2; Cook, 2001b, 23.
91. Barthes 1967, para.7.
92. Brothman 1991, 79; Cook 2001b, 26; Prescott 2008, 33–4; Breakell 2011, 29.
93. Cook 2001a, 17; Cook 2001b, 24; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 3, 5; Ketelaar 2012.
94. Cook 2001a, 7–8; Cook 2001b, 26; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 3; Harris 2002, 64–5; Johnson 2007, 131.
95. Foucault 2002, 155, original emphasis.
96. Foucault 2002, 131; see also Gutting 1989, 231–2.
97. Foucault 2002, 145–6, original emphasis.
98. See also McKinlay 2013, 138; Yaneva 2020, 24, 26.
99. Derrida 1996, 17, 18.
100. Derrida 1996, 3.
101. See Yaneva 2020, 26.
102. Brothman 1999, 80; Nesmith 1999, 141–2.
103. Cook 2001a, 4, 22; Cook 2001b, 29; see also Nesmith 1999, 143–4; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 2; Harris 2002, 65; Ridener 2008, 135–6; Stoler 2009, 22, 32–3.
104. Derrida 1996, 4; Cook 2001b, 27; see also Carter 2006, 217; Johnson 2007, 129.

105. Evans et al. (2015, 339 n1) define these archival frameworks as 'the laws, policies, cultural and ethical mores, archival theories and models which govern and structure archival processes and systems'; see also Schwartz and Cook 2002.
106. Cook 1997, 46; Nesmith 1999; Cook 2001a; Cook 2001b, 25–8; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 2; Harris 2002, 77; McKemmish 2005, 20; Lane and Hill 2011, 10.
107. Ricoeur 2004, 169.
108. Schwartz and Cook 2002, 14; Fowler 2017, 17–8.
109. Carter 2006, 217, 220; Ridener 2008, 134.
110. Johnson 2017, 109–10.
111. Harris 2002, 64–5.
112. Cook 1997, 18–9, 44; Cook 2001b, 23–4; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 16–8.
113. Flinn 2007, 167; Flinn and Stevens 2009, 4, 6; Gilliland and McKemmish 2014, 81; Caswell, Cifor and Ramirez 2016, 61–2. Gilliland and McKemmish note that 'community archives' is not a term that has been defined by communities themselves but originated among archivists.
114. Flinn 2007, 168–9; Flinn 2011, para.37; Cook 2013, 114.
115. For a model of participatory recordkeeping based on the records continuum, see Rolan 2017.
116. See Gilliland 2012, 340–1; Caswell 2014b, 308, 315; Rolan 2017, 196; Roeschley and Kim 2019, 29.
117. Gilliland and McKemmish 2014, 81: they note that potentially many different communities have rights and needs with regard to archives and that participatory archives necessarily become a 'negotiated space'; Evans et al. 2015, 352, 355–6.
118. Shilton and Srinivasan 2007, 95; see also Gilliland and McKemmish 2014, 80; Zavala et al. 2017, 212–3; Roeschley and Kim 2019, 30.
119. Gilliland 2012, 341; see also Evans et al. 2015, 358–9; Rolan 2017, 197.
120. Ketelaar 2002, 224–31; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 13; Ridener 2008, 125, 127; Gilliland and McKemmish 2014, 80.
121. Duff et al. 2013, 319–20.
122. White and Gilliland 2010, 247; Duff et al. 2013; Evans et al. 2015, 347–8.
123. Duff et al, 2013, 330; Evans et al. 2015, 347.
124. Caswell 2014a, 208–9; Caswell, 2014b, 308, 315.
125. Caswell 2014b, 318.
126. See Gilliland and McKemmish 2014, 82.
127. Caswell 2014a, 209; Caswell 2021.
128. Duff et al. 2013, 319–20; Edwards n.d., para.4.
129. Harris 2011, 121; Evans et al. 2015, 339.
130. Caswell 2021.
131. Gilliland 2012, 340.
132. Caswell, Cifor and Ramirez 2016, 58–60.
133. Caswell et al. 2017, 19–21.
134. Roeschley and Kim 2019, 30–2; Gilliland 2012, 340.
135. Lowry and MacNeil 2021, 2.
136. Falola 2017, 704–5; Sutherland 2019; Ghaddar 2021.
137. Lowry and MacNeil 2021, 1–2. For work in this area, see, for example, Ahmed 2021; Qin, Qu and Hawkins 2021.
138. Lowry and MacNeil 2021, 1.
139. Gabrielle Hyslop (2002, 49–50) reframes exhibitions (and other activities) from the perspective of the public, identifying different audiences and using such techniques for education and access, as well as promotion; see also Nicholls 2001, 68. Kalfatovic (2002, 3–6) uses a wider language to describe exhibitions, writing of 'aesthetic', 'emotive', 'evocative', 'didactic' and 'entertaining' displays; see also Gelfand 2013, 52.

140. Yates 1988, 69.
141. Wilson 1990/1, 95. More widely: on mediation within the search room, see, for example, Brothman 1991, 85; Rose 2000, 558–62; on (museum) documentation, see Swinney 2012, 42–3; and on archive boxes as non-neutral spaces, see Edwards 2009, 146.
142. For an example in relation to records of slavery, see Berry and MacKeith 2007; for a discussion on this issue in the context of photographs and the 'act of viewing' in exhibitions, see Edwards 2001, 195–6. Jessica Lacher-Feldman (2013, 5–6) notes that 'biases permeate all views and interpretations'; she nevertheless advocates for a cautious approach to avoid 'undermin[ing] broader goals and objectives', recommending collaborative displays which enable the archivist to act as 'a facilitator, maintaining a more neutral interpretive stance and perhaps mediating among competing perspectives'.
143. This point echoes Verne Harris' (2002, 85–6) discussion of how archivists invite the 'other' into the archive, including those 'one wishes to resist'.
144. Sarah Colborne (2010, 62) writes of how exhibition content should draw attention to the silences and omissions in the archive that shape interpretation.
145. Kratz 2011, 38.
146. See Marstine 2017, 6–13.
147. Carter 2008, 197; Schwartz 2007. In relation to archive exhibitions as a way of generating different perspectives around art and history in art institutions, see Nesli Gül Durukan and Tezcan Akmehmet 2021, 143.
148. See, for example, Rogers 2010; Marshall Furness 2011, 157; Tector 2011, 155; Rogers 2014; Vega 2014.
149. On museums and activism, see Janes and Sandell 2019.
150. Cronin 2002; Bushey 2014; Alisauskas 2019. See also Nicholls 2001, 69; Hyslop 2002, 55.

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Chapter 2

Spatial and Temporal Encounters

What does it mean to experience the archive? How can we think through the idea of exhibition as an encounter? And how do these concepts open up new roles for archival exhibitions? In this chapter, I want to use the language of experience and encounter to reframe the role and purpose of exhibitions in new ways, to gesture towards the potential of exhibition in reshaping what it means to be in the archive. To help with this, I will here posit a loosely defined framework to act as a lens for exploring these ideas. The work of philosophers Henri Lefebvre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are especially helpful here. Drawing on their theories of space, embodiment and temporality, this framework reaches for a new way of thinking about archive exhibitions, one that places the individual at its centre.

The Lived Experience of Space

When I walk into an archive, the experiences that I have – conversations with archivists, using catalogues, ordering documents – all happen in space. Likewise, in a gallery, as I walk around the exhibits, my experience is spatial. And when I access archives online, this is spatial too: I am physically present within a space, even if the archive is experienced on a screen. Space is essential to experience. How can we foreground this concept of space as an active way of thinking through the transformative possibilities of exhibition? To help with this, I want to consider the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre, whose work seeks to reorient understanding around space and to reveal its social production.

Henri Lefebvre writes of how space is commonly understood in two distinct ways, each of which reflects the mind/body split that characterises Cartesian-influenced thinking. The first of these is the space that is thought about in the human mind, the 'mental' or abstract space of architects' plans and blueprints, for example. The second way is that of space experienced or sensed in physical form, that is, the spaces that human bodies inhabit or pass through.[1] Lefebvre sought to theorise a new way of thinking about space, one that overcomes these distinct mind/body concepts. Moreover, he aimed to

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overturn the idea of space as neutral and passive, questioning typical understandings that oscillate between empty spaces and things within space.[2] He therefore sought to examine 'not things in space but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it'.[3] For Lefebvre, space is a 'lived experience';[4] all human activity takes place within space – it cannot do otherwise – and thus space is fundamental to human social relationships and experiences.[5] Lefebvre termed this understanding 'social space';[6] he saw it as something produced by society, and therefore entwined within the dynamics of social and political interactions. Social relationships and experiences shape space and space, in turn, shapes them.

As the product of these individual and political categories, then, social space becomes implicated in notions of power and control.[7] It is active in shaping human experiences and thus becomes bound up in both enabling and restricting human activity.[8] Through this reading, therefore, space has a political agency; it is shaped by political and ideological forces and, in turn, reinforces or sculpts certain forms of behaviours, activities or thoughts. Space, then, is neither pure nor neutral,[9] but the product of different yet interconnected social, political, economic and cultural actions and forces that operate at personal and broader social levels.[10] Lefebvre's work positions the notion of spatiality as an ontological construct that establishes space as an essential and active part of shaping and being.[11]

In order to develop his concept of social space, Lefebvre developed a 'conceptual triad'. The first node of this triad is termed spatial practice, or perceived space; it concerns the ways in which physical space is produced and experienced, enabling and shaping how activity happens. Society's spatial practice, the ways in which society at large harnesses and employs space in its social and political work, is a key part of this aspect of space. Lefebvre defined the triad's second node as representations of space, or as conceived or conceptual notions of spaces. This embraces the abstract ways in which space is thought about, including the knowledge systems that shape the production of spatial practice. Conceived space will often determine and frame the ways in which perceived space is produced. The third node of the triad is representational spaces, space that is lived or inhabited: it concerns the way that individuals think about and (seek to) utilise and modify the physical spaces that they experience. Importantly, these ideas of space are 'interconnected' such that each may influence or dominate one or both of the others at any given time. The degree to which the user may shape their own experience of a space (the representational or lived experience of space) will rest on the extent to which the other conceptions of space within the triad dominate that given instance.[12] As the product of political and social relationships, then, space impresses certain modes of engagement and limits others.

Put another way, individual or collective attitudes and concepts as shaped by political, social or cultural influences may determine how a particular

space is thought about: to take an example, a space conceived as a place of sanctuary. These representations or conceptual notions of space may shape the spatial practice that emerges: designed to be a place of sanctuary, a refuge or hermitage is founded in a remote location. In turn, the lived experience of such a space may be influenced by those conceived and perceived notions; it may be dominated by how space is thought about and produced, resulting in predetermined and restricted forms of experience. As a place of solitude, the sanctuary requires a long journey and much time and effort to be reached. But the concept of lived space may also allow its users to carve out their own experiences, in contrast to how space is perceived and conceived – the sanctuary may become a space to document the world (through writing or art), for example, rather than to escape from it. What this analogy is designed to express is how the notion of lived space, of space that is part of people's everyday experience, is shaped by both conceptual and physical understandings of space that are themselves the products of political and social circumstances; yet where these political and social circumstances allow, it is through this same notion of 'lived space' that an individual may be able to shape their experience through appropriation and use.[13]

Archival Spaces

When examined through the lens of Lefebvre's thinking, the space of the archive is, like all spaces, tightly bound with social relationships. What the space of the archive reveals is the way in which spatiality is closely entwined with notions of professional identity. Conceived space, shaped by the knowledge of academic and professional fields – here the theory and practice of recordkeeping – emerges into spatial practice, the ways in which archival spaces are designed and produced; this in turn determines the lived experience that happens in the archive.

A close link can be seen between the rise of new professional groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the design of buildings. Adrian Forty, for example, examines this relationship through the medical profession and the design of the modern hospital.[14] These professional groups defined an identity through the formation of expertise and knowledge and this, in turn, influenced the design of buildings, constructed to embody and express this knowledge – but only to those who possessed it. As a result, the way in which buildings are experienced by their users is articulated and shaped by the ideologies inherent within their design and form, thereby reinforcing certain ways of behaving and thinking.[15] This professional shaping is thus enfolded within notions of power: the ways in which spaces, including buildings, are designed, constructed, occupied and used are modulated by those with the power to do so, and thus invest these spaces with their own values.[16]

In this reading, then, the space of the archive is shaped by accepted professional notions concerning the value of recordkeeping. Jenkinson's primary duties of the archivist, what he termed the 'physical' and 'moral defence of the archives', were focused directly on the record, which should be protected from 'all kinds of dangers'.[17] With an emphasis on the integrity of the record, the space of the archive is thus conceived and perceived as a space of management and control. This emerges, for example, in Christopher Kitching's standard reference works on the design of archive repositories. Kitching acknowledges the needs of users and the importance of flexibility in occupancy and use, but his focus remains on the care and protection of the archive. As such, his concern with controlling public access and defending archives from theft and damage echoes Jenkinson's theories and reduces the user to a largely abstract and passive form.[18] These are important reference works on the practical design and construction of archive repositories, but what is telling about them is that, by focusing on form, function, construction and materials, the buildings are conceived as largely neutral spaces.

The need to control access and use translates archival practice into processes of security, invigilation and regulation, and these inevitably inform the way that archival spaces are thought about, designed and ultimately experienced. These processes produce a power relationship between the archivist and user which becomes encoded within archival spaces. This can be seen in the access controls into buildings and search rooms; the procedural spaces – registration desks, cloakrooms, locker rooms – that govern and regulate the user's movements; and the spaces that frame the points of contact with original materials – ordering, weighing, issuing, returning; as well as the spaces of invigilation, panopticons that place the researcher under ever-watchful surveillance.[19] Again, these processes are concerned with protecting the record and they have become enfolded within the archivist's ethical responsibilities but are nonetheless 'rationalizations of appropriation and power'.[20] Eric Ketelaar's likening of archives to temples and prisons[21] are spatial analogies that articulate the power hierarchies enfolded within the archive, and which dominate and overlay the lived experience of being in the archive.[22] The space of the archive may be conceived as a space of empowerment – the liberatory potential of archives through access to information and knowledge – but is typically perceived as a site of control – of submission, invigilation and regulation.[23] I am not suggesting that we do away with preservation and security, rather that we question how we design our archival spaces in ways that give greater agency to individual experience and that seek to flatten established power hierarchies. Should we allow conceptions of archival theory to dominate in the design of spaces in much the way described by Luciana Duranti, who harnesses notions of custody, authority and authenticity, and calls for 'powerful, imposing' archive buildings that embody the status of the record within the urban landscape?[24] In such a reading, the dominance of conceived space is at its apogee, seemingly flattening individual experience. Or should

we instead reach for alternative readings that open up new conceptions and perceptions of space?

Liberatory Space

A useful way of thinking through different conceptions of archival spaces is to consider community archives. Community and grassroots archives have typically developed due to a lack of representation; they also question notions of authority and legitimacy in representing individual and community histories.[25] Such spaces can be understood through notions of community, emotion and feelings; they often develop in people's homes, which serve as 'safe havens' in which to document histories at risk of loss and which in turn are made accessible through an interrelationship between the private and semi-public.[26] They have likewise been conceived as spaces that can engender a sense of 'belonging' and 'believing';[27] and as sites of 'survival' and 'home', spaces that are 'politically generative'.[28] What seems to emerge here is a need for spaces that is generated through the omissions and marginalisations of the institutional archive: spaces that derive from and respond to social need.[29] As spaces that empower their communities, such archives reinforce and reaffirm a sense of community identity.[30] Moreover, community archives have been understood as places of 'radical hospitality', that is, spaces 'accessible and knowable through imagined and engaged relations with materials, histories, bodies of knowledge, and the senses'; a 'relational practice' of encounter, interaction and change.[31] Each of these readings suggests knowledge spaces that are shaped not by the management and control of access to the record, but by the generative sense of value that the record has for the people that use it.

The emergence of alternative archive spaces suggests that existing archival institutions do not fulfil the needs of all communities, and this is enfolded within space which, again, is produced by social and political relationships.[32] Within the institutional archive, space seems inherently bound with professional readings of archival theory and its concern with the record; archival space here is demonstrably political, entwined in power relationships. The hierarchy that arises is thus influential in shaping the space of the institutional archive and how the user's experience takes place. The community archive, in contrast, has largely developed organically by users themselves, often emerging out of political necessity and survival, and constructed and managed in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them. The space that has been created here is the product of very different social relationships, not of power and control, but of equity, expressed through generative acts of self-archiving. As such, the spatial experience is (for the community, at least) one of equitability.

The community archive is a very different site from the institutional archive, not least in the social and political constructs that have shaped it. But what it reveals is how the construction of community identity is bound within spatial experience; likewise, of how experience of the archive is

expressed and understood through a spatial lens: as sites of home, safety, belonging, hospitality. A sense of whether the archive is somewhere *of* and *for* someone emerges within its spaces. The example of the community archive points to the intellectual possibility for alternative readings of how archival space is produced.

To unpick the implications of this reading, it is helpful again to consider the work of Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre writes of 'abstract space', bound up in notions of dominance and power; as something 'formal and quantitative', it 'erases distinctions', resulting in the silencing of its users.[33] This reveals the role of institutions and professions in the making of space and how that space is experienced by its users.[34] In contrast, Lefebvre's notion of 'differential space' reflects a reinforcing, rather than a restricting, of difference and the importance of social relationships.[35] It is this potentiality of liberation[36] that makes Lefebvre's thesis useful in contrast to Foucault's concept of the archive as heterotopia, a 'counter-site' in which other places in society are 'represented, contested, and inverted'.[37] For Foucault, the space of the archive (like museums and libraries) is a site 'indefinitely accumulating time' and which sits 'outside of time';[38] it is also a site of control and regulation.[39] As a space bound in professional epistemology, both accumulating knowledge and shaping human understanding, Foucault's heterotopic archive is reminiscent of Lefebvre's theory of space, entwined within and influencing socio-political experience. Yet the heterotopia, as a reflection or a mirror of society, seems somehow to exist outside the everyday experience of reality. In contrast, Lefebvre's understanding of space is embedded within society, acting upon political and social relationships. In this sense, Lefebvre's 'differential space', the idea of space as enabling personal and social expression, helps to open up a liberatory potential to the site of the archive.[40]

Where does the idea of differential space take us? I argue that it helps to reconceptualise the archive as a space that refashions social relationships and engagement with archival material in new and dynamic ways. As a spatial medium that affords encounters with archives – and with other people – exhibition offers a vital lens through which to think through this reconceptualisation. Such a reading places an emphasis on the role that exhibition has – of what it can do – and the different ways in which it can do this. In other words, it requires a reframing of exhibition as something other than just a promotional tool or a site of learning. These roles are important, but the liberatory potential of exhibition demands a wider vocabulary that encompasses a more diverse range of possibilities.

Embodiment and Embedded in the World

Lefebvre's work draws attention to the spatial politics of the archive and helps reframe the potential of exhibition in reshaping archival experience. Crucially, Lefebvre's triad places the person at its centre, active in conceiving,

perceiving and living space. This focus on individual experience in turn draws attention to how people engage with the wider world, including material objects around them. The field of phenomenology provides a helpful way of thinking through what happens when encounters take place between individuals and with other objects. Of particular relevance here is the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose study of phenomenology resembles Lefebvre's understanding of space as a 'lived' experience.

Merleau-Ponty sought to transcend the interventions of language and psychology in explaining or interpreting how the world is experienced: to reach instead for a sense or understanding of how life itself actually takes place, without a lens of disciplinary reasoning.[41] He also sought to unpick the specificity of experience for the individual.[42] This perspective lay in contrast to an empirical and objective understanding of a 'constant' perception, as suggested by such philosophers as René Descartes and Francis Bacon.[43]

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty sought to overcome the dualism developed in the work of Descartes and Kant,[44] that is, between a subject's consciousness and the thing that the subject is conscious of.[45] In a similar impulse to Lefebvre's thinking, which aimed to address the mind/body split predicated in a Cartesian understanding of space, Merleau-Ponty sought to overcome this 'subject-object dichotomy',[46] the disentanglement from objects that Cartesian dualism has encouraged.[47] He argued that the body itself is not an object of consciousness[48] but, rather, a means of understanding the world.[49] Again, the mind is not detached from the body in that it interprets and articulates incoming sensory information; rather, the mind is itself 'incarnated'; its 'roots' lie within the body and thus, by extension, within the world.[50] Furthermore, rather than a detached entity that perceives the world from afar, Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is in fact integrated within the world and it is through the body that a person perceives and thus understands the world.

In unpacking this concept, there are two key aspects to which it is useful to draw attention. Firstly, the notion of embodiment focuses on how individuals understand and know the world through their bodies.[51] It is my body that enables me to type; I am aware of the table on which my computer sits, the chair, the floor, because I can touch, see and move around them. The only way that it is possible to experience and know the world is through the body. Because my body occupies space, it is possible for me to understand how the world itself is spatial; indeed, space would not exist for me if I did not have a body.[52] I do not need to conceive of space and how to move my body in order to walk across the room, for instance; my spatiality enables me to accomplish this: I walk from A to B, rather than think through the process of putting one foot in front of the other.[53] Likewise, I can experience material things around me because I am a material being. It is only possible to experience and know the world through the body – through its materiality and spatiality, the body is 'the pivot of the world' through which experience takes place.[54]

Secondly, leading on from this concept, Merleau-Ponty shows how the body is embedded within space and time; he writes: 'I am not in space and time, nor do I think space and time, rather, I am of space and time'.[55] Expressed differently, rather than reinforcing a bilateralism between a perceiving consciousness and a perceived world, Merleau-Ponty sought to show how the body is fundamentally *of* the world, and it is through this sense of being a part of the world that the body enables perception to happen. He described a notion of 'being-in-the-world', a term he borrowed from Martin Heidegger[56] to articulate a sense of 'emplacement' or 'embeddedness' within a given setting and from which our 'individual subjectivity' emerges.[57] Through the concepts of the body schema, a proprioceptive system of bodily self-awareness[58] and of motor cognition and motricity, through which the body is 'geared'[59] for action in the world, Merleau-Ponty demonstrated the fundamental inhabitation of the body as a form of engagement and action within the world.[60]

For Merleau-Ponty, then, the perception of objects is understood through bodily engagement with the world. Merleau-Ponty developed the concept of 'flesh' as a way of articulating the communicative nature of the body.[61] He considered the interrelationship between that which touches and that which is touched, most clearly described in the image of one's left hand touching one's right: both touching and touched simultaneously, yet each in fact perceiving only the surface of the other.[62] Perception of objects within the world is thus a coherence, a 'coupling of our body with… things':[63] an object is not a site onto which a person projects their conceived understanding but rather a part of the world which is perceived as it is: the 'sense' of the object 'animates' it and is 'embodied in it'.[64] In this sense, the object and the person become entwined with one another in a mutual encounter.[65]

Encountering Archives

Merleau-Ponty's approach to phenomenology is a helpful lens through which to consider how archives are perceived and experienced, as both sources of information and as material objects. What happens when we encounter and engage with archival material? What Merleau-Ponty's theory points to is the idea that when archives are encountered – whether that happens in a public search room or an exhibition gallery for instance – they are experienced with the whole body. Depending upon the situation, people look at archives, read them, touch them and smell them, move them and walk around them: all of these things happen because people communicate with archives through their bodies; the incarnated mind integral to bodily experience.[66] To encounter the archive, then, is to encounter something that exists as both recorded information *and* as physical object, together, and which is experienced both with the mind and the body.

The framing of archives as object *and* information (as 'object-information') is important since the physical properties of archives are often rendered dormant

in favour of their informational value. This is especially notable when considering the exhibition of archives, since the process of display has been critiqued as something that devalues the archive as a mere object.[67] Yet archives have not always been read in such a dualistic way. Historically, archives have attracted interest from scholars not just for the information they record, but also for their physical and material properties. The disciplines of palaeography, diplomatics and sigillography, developed in the seventeenth century in Jean Mabillon's treatise *De re diplomatica libri sex*, focus attention on the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' elements of the document, specifically for authenticating purposes: these sciences attest to the importance of the material form of archives.[68] Moreover, archival material was routinely collected by researchers and antiquarians because of its appearance and material characteristics rather than (just) for its contents.[69] However, as the tradition of historical discourse came to dominate the interpretation of archival material, these disciplines were relegated to auxiliary sciences, there to support the practice of history.[70] Consequently, the informational role of the archive has increased in significance, to the detriment of its materiality. This has resulted in the physical form of archives becoming understood as nothing more than 'neutral containers or platforms'.[71] This neglect of the archive's materiality has likewise resulted from various research and management practices, including an emphasis on transcription and cataloguing standards that largely ignore the material forms of archives.[72]

A helpful way to unpack some of these ideas further is to consider archives within the context of anthropology. Since the 1990s, epistemic interest in the concept of the archive – of the way in which documents produce and shape knowledge – resulted in archival ethnographies that often drew attention to the materiality of documentary forms.[73] This work demonstrates an interest in how the physical and intellectual form of documentation – the markings on the page – both reveal and shape epistemic understanding of societies and cultures. They also reveal how the physical character of the document, including the features on its surface, seemingly fade out of cognitive perception as the information they convey is articulated and read.[74] The seemingly ordinariness of the layout of text upon the page, for example, has effectively become absorbed into common linguistic understanding and only becomes discernible when unconventional technique abruptly forces it into view.[75] As a result, documentation, including archives, become understood as 'neutral purveyors of discourse' rather than as 'mediators' that shape the information that appears on them.[76]

Greater interest in the material properties of archives has arisen in light of the 'digital turn', which produced an imminent sense of the loss of paper resulting from the increased digitisation of archival records.[77] From one perspective, the digitisation of archives, seen as a way of opening them up to wider audiences, may be perceived as a neutral act,[78] yet it radically alters how experience happens.[79] A digitised archive invokes different forms of

behaviour and a different phenomenology of the archive; it changes – both broadens and limits – the type and scope of knowledge that the archive affords. The materiality of the archive is altered through the action of digitisation, leading to questions around what is lost when documents are rendered digital.[80] At the same time, the digital has catalysed interest in the material: not just what the material tells us about how an archive has been created and used over time,[81] but also what it means to experience and work with material archives.[82] Furthermore, the digital has itself been used to reveal new knowledge and meaning around physical documents, including those which would otherwise be damaged through handling.[83]

From a different perspective, interest in the affectual affordances of archives has drawn attention to the interconnectivity between archival records and affects, emotions, feelings and the body. Although not concretely defined,[84] the term 'affect' has been described as a 'force that creates a relation between a body and a world'.[85] Understood as something that is engendered through artefactual encounters between people and objects, affect theory here conceives not just experiences by people in response to archives, but also archives themselves as 'repositories of affect'.[86] Historians and writers have explored the affective and reflexive nature of using archives within their research.[87] Whilst asserting the emotional and the subjective within a field that has typically been framed by claims of objectivity and neutrality,[88] affect theory has also been harnessed as a tool for social justice, as a way of legitimating knowledge and values that have been marginalised or ignored, or recognising and responding to the pain generated through oppression.[89] Moreover, the notion of 'radical hospitality', framed through ideas of 'proximal relationality', draws attention to closeness, the emotions and the senses, enabling touch and connection with archives and with other people.[90]

These bodies of scholarship, then, point to understandings of the archive that amplify the material, the sensory, the emotional and the affectual as critical to how archives are experienced. Crucially, I argue that understanding of archives can *only* result from engagement with the material since we are embodied entities that are entwined with other objects, experience of which is communicated or happens through the body. Engagement with archives is thus an encounter between the archive and the body. The different types of meaning – the bodily, the emotional, the sensory, as well as the intellectual and the cognitive – that derive from the archive (the 'object-information'), are inextricably bound and thus shape one another.[91]

Digital technology has increasingly reshaped the ways in which records – including both digitised and born-digital archives – are created, managed, used and experienced. As discussed above, the digital produces different types of experience but, I suggest, these are still personal encounters that are both embodied and embedded within the world. Digitised archives can be conceived as digital representations of physical or analogue objects which can translate the affordances of the represented into digital form; yet perhaps

they should be seen as new objects in their own right, active in shaping and structuring experience.[92] Digitised and born-digital archives articulate a sense of their own materiality: in one sense, this happens through the hardware and platforms that are used to access them, even functioning as extensions of the self.[93] In another, their materiality is produced through the wider networks and assemblages of information and data that coalesce to produce them, and in which we ourselves are entwined as an active part.[94] Moreover, digital technology amplifies sociality through the interactions of its users, entangling experience in wider interrelationships and the different values and meanings that are placed upon media by its users.[95] Digital media, including archives, then, are embedded within daily life, generating and producing different affordances that connect individuals to the world and each other.[96]

In this sense, then, we can understand our experience of archives – both physical objects and digital records – as an entwining of person and thing; crucially, this is an active form of encounter. Merleau-Ponty argues that to experience something 'is not to receive it passively in itself: it is to live it, to take it up, to assume it, and to uncover its immanent sense'.[97] Individuals are 'in-the-world'; everything they perceive forms a 'milieu', a field of experience.[98] In this sense, objects are not perceived as if from afar, but instead are engaged with as active entities, constantly remade, recontextualised and reused.[99] This reading centres on the fact that archives are active in shaping personal (and wider communal and societal) forms of knowledge. The archive thus possesses a performative character, not just recording events, but itself enacting them: the processes of writing, compiling and filing in themselves make, effect and accomplish decisions and actions. The form and materiality of the archive embodies its productive effectuality: the archive *produces* activity; it artefactually *accomplishes*; it puts into action.[100] Its performativity embeds the archive within the world and inheres within its artefactual presence. As such, through its performativity, the archive affords responses and reactions in the individual, acting upon and shaping behaviour and experience.[101] But this is different for everyone, as each person brings their own subjectivities and personalities to bear in the moment of encounter.

The importance of embodiment and the material have been harnessed within museums to create exhibitions that speak to emotional, sensory and somatic forms of engagement. They represent a turn towards performativity and theatricality in exhibition design,[102] away from the reductionism of the disembodied, perceiving eye, which rejects the body as 'superfluous, an intrusion'.[103] Such work also increasingly recognises the visitor themselves as active and participatory, reframing exhibition away from a site of representation, to one of enactment and encounter.[104] As material, performative entities, archives too can be harnessed within exhibition to create different and varied types of encounter.

Temporal Experience

So far, then, we have considered the nature of space within the archive and how, as something produced by society, it acts upon and shapes experience. At a smaller scale, we have looked at how archives are encountered through the body and how, through their artefactual presence and performativity, they are active in evoking and instilling responses in people. To these different perspectives I want, briefly, to consider another aspect of experience, namely time. Engagement with the archive happens not only as an embodied encounter within space but also within a given moment, a temporal instant. Merleau-Ponty's work is again helpful for thinking through how our understanding of time and our experience of the past is again rooted in bodily experience. As my experience of space happens because my body is itself spatial, likewise, my experience of time takes place because my body is temporal.

Time is commonly understood as part of a subject-object relationship in which categories of time, the past and the future, are distinct and detached entities (references to time in common parlance, such as 'time waits for no one', or 'time is passing me by', are indicative of this).[105] Yet Merleau-Ponty, again seeking to overturn the Cartesian dualism inherent within such a reading, argues that time is instead an aspect of being-in-the-world: rather than something reified and distinct from us, of which we are (at times) aware, time is, in fact, part of who we are. According to Merleau-Ponty, our experience of the world around us happens within the present, the 'field of presence', which consists of this moment, now, along with 'the horizon of the day that has already gone by behind it and the horizon of the evening and night out in front of it'.[106] Rather than time flowing along fixed points from the future into the present and thus into the past, time instead unfolds as a 'milieu', a continuity of experience that stretches from the past into the present and that anticipates the future.[107] It is this sense of active experience that constitutes time: just as my body is spatial in that it moves through space without a conscious need to quantify such movement, so my body is temporal: I do not conceive of moving from one moment of time into the next, but rather simply enact or accomplish it.[108] In this sense, the horizons behind me and ahead of me are less concretely defined 'past' or 'future', rather a sense of that which has been, or will be, accomplished.

For Merleau-Ponty, then, time is not an object of consciousness; instead, it emerges out of '*my* relation with things'.[109] He draws on the analogy of water passing through a valley: although the water may seem to move from 'the past' (the glacier which melted yesterday) through the 'present' (passing me in the valley) to 'the future' (the estuary, where the water will arrive tomorrow), this sense of past and future is only relevant to *me* – the water is still present within the world, whether it has passed me yet or not; and so for me, the past and the future exist as 'a sort of eternal pre-existence or afterlife'.[110] It is only through our engagement with the world, then, that a sense of 'past'

and 'future' emerge, and it is this which defines our temporality: 'what being itself lacks in order to be temporal is the non-being of the elsewhere, of the bygone, and of tomorrow'.[111] In this sense, the past and the future exist in the present ('this present instant [which] is also just as much today, this year, or even my entire life'[112]); it is only through *our* experience of the world, of what is changing around us, of our reaching out for that which has happened or is to come, that a sense of time, of past and present, emerges.[113]

Time, then, is an aspect of being-in-the-world; it is centred on our experience with our environment and is accomplished through our engagement with the world; it is something lived. Our encounters with objects thus take place in a temporal dimension as much as a spatial one, an encounter that emerges through our inhabitation within the world and which constitutes a part of our being. Furthermore, time also bears a distinctly phenomenological character, in that, objects, including archives, bear the marks and traces of the past upon them. Encountering the material traces of the past – and the affordances that such an encounter might produce – speaks to the idea of 'historical sensation' as conceived by Johan Huizinga, the 'not completely reduceable contact with the past… an entry into an atmosphere… one of the many forms of reaching beyond oneself'. Huizinga suggests that this is not a psychological 're-experiencing' of the past, nor an intellectual cognition associated with distinct thoughts or concrete individuals, rather something more 'complex and vague', a 'stimulation' of the past, brought about or 'evoked by a line from a document or a chronicle, by a print, by a few notes of an old song'.[114] It is this sense of 'historical sensation' that Frank Ankersmit draws on to consider how objects seem to possess some aspect of the past within themselves. For Ankersmit, historical items are imbued with the past and, in themselves, enable the past to extend into the present: they are 'like travelers through time (and they have now reached us on their journey), although always bearing in themselves the signs of their origin'.[115] It is this characteristic, Ankersmit claims, which affords certain types of response in people; he draws on Walter Benjamin's concept of an 'aura' to suggest that a sense of the past is 'still present' in these objects, arguing that 'the past *itself* can be said to have survived and to be still present in objects that are given to us here and now… the past can properly be said to be present in the artifacts that it has left us'.[116] Yet this reading somehow reifies the past – indeed, time itself – as something objective, whilst suggesting the objects in which it inheres are somehow out of time, and thus disconnected from it.

For Merleau-Ponty, historical objects are experienced in the present: the marks that were made on their surface are aspects of the object *now*. Traces of handling and use over time speak to the idea of 'careers' and of shifts in perceptions of the value and purpose of archives.[117] But, crucially, this sense of time that gathers around the archive is a result of *our* relationship with it, rather than something that inheres directly within it; it is our sense of temporality that gives shape to the idea of the archive as changing over time.

Through our reaching out to a sense of the past – to a sense of that which is no longer present (the 'non-being of the elsewhere'[118]) does the past itself emerge and become part of our 'field of presence'.[119] This relationship is what defines notions of historical sensation, of careers (and of authenticity, which I will discuss later), and which works to generate a sense of the past within the archive.

These discussions are designed to help form a loosely defined framework for thinking about what is meant by experience. What I have tried to define here is an understanding of what it means to encounter the archive: how the categories of space and time, embodied experience within the world, the performativity of the archive and a sense of our 'coupling' with things, all work together to produce meaning. Crucially, the framework places the individual at the centre and reframes the archive – and exhibition – around them. In this sense, then, I suggest that we can develop our understanding of archive exhibitions by thinking through how they are thought about, designed and made to produce certain types of experience for the individual. We can generate thinking about exhibition that goes beyond established notions of outreach and promotion, towards ideas that gesture towards its experiential possibilities and the implications of this on wider reshapings of archival spaces.

Notes

1. Lefebvre 1991, 27.
2. Lefebvre 1991, 91.
3. Lefebvre 1991, 89. Lefebvre (1991, 16) sought 'to expose the actual production of space by bringing the various kinds of space and the modalities of their genesis together within a single theory'.
4. Lefebvre 1991, 93.
5. Lefebvre 1991, 132. See also Soja 1989, 76–9; Soja 1996, 46; MacLeod 2013, 27.
6. Lefebvre 1991, 26.
7. Lefebvre (1991, 26) writes that space, 'in addition to being a means of production… is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power'.
8. Lefebvre 1991, 73.
9. Lefebvre 1991, 26, 94.
10. See Till 2009, 126.
11. Soja 1996, 44–6.
12. Lefebvre 1991, 33–44.
13. Forty 2000, 312; see also Hill 2006, 53–5. For an analysis of Lefebvre's work in organisational research that also draws on archives, see Liu and Grey 2018.
14. Forty 1980.
15. King 1980, 17, 27, 28.
16. MacLeod 2013, 26.
17. Jenkinson 1937, 44.
18. Kitching 1993, 11–2, 37–8; Kitching 2007, 13, 15. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre, and writing in relation to architecture and use, Jonathan Hill (2003, 28) defines three types of user: passive ('predictable and unable to transform use, space and meaning'); reactive ('modifies the physical characteristics of a space as needs change but must select from a narrow and predictable range of configurations largely

defined by the architect'); and creative ('creates a new space or gives an existing one new meanings and uses'). This model provides a helpful way to think through the agency of individuals within the archive. It suggests users' experience of the archive is likely to be passive, shaped by a conformity understood and developed through archival principles.

19. See also Ketelaar 2002, 234–6; Drake 2016a.
20. Ketelaar 2002, 236; see also Johnson 2007, 133.
21. Ketelaar 2002, 233–6; see also Cunningham 2005, 46; McCausland 2013, 91; Johnson 2017, 144.
22. See also Koltun 2002; Drake 2016a. On barriers and access, see Wilson 1990/1, 97–8; Heumann Gurian 2005, 203.
23. See Ketelaar 2002, 235.
24. Duranti 2007; see also Caswell et al. 2018, 75. For a detailed critique of Duranti's position, see Cunningham 2005, 44–5; see also Duchein 1992, 15.
25. Flinn 2007, 167; Flinn and Stevens 2009, 6.
26. Cvetkovich 2003, 241–2, 244–5; see also Caswell et al. 2018, 75.
27. Drake 2016b; see also Caswell et al. 2018, 75.
28. Caswell et al. 2018, 90.
29. King 1980, 1.
30. Caswell et al. 2018, 76.
31. Lee 2021, 158, 161.
32. Lefebvre 1991.
33. Lefebvre 1991, 49–51.
34. MacLeod 2013, 183–4.
35. Lefebvre 1991, 52; see also MacLeod 2013, 183–4.
36. See MacLeod 2013, 183.
37. Foucault 1986, 24.
38. Foucault 1986, 26.
39. See Foucault 1986, 26–7.
40. Lefebvre 1991, 38–9. Edward Soja (1996, 146–7, 156) discusses the similarities between Lefebvre's and Foucault's discussions of space, noting the importance of spatiality to Foucault's work but that he 'rarely translated his spatial politics into clearly defined programs for social action'.
41. Merleau-Ponty 1964, 5–6; Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxx, 32, 131–2. In this endeavour, he followed Martin Heidegger's approach to phenomenological understanding: see Heidegger 1962, 32–5.
42. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 28.
43. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 28; see Hale 2017, 10.
44. Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxii–lxiii; see also Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 16–17; Hale 2017, 11.
45. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 123; see also Hale 2017, 63.
46. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 179.
47. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 204.
48. On how the body has typically been understood as an object of consciousness, see Merleau-Ponty 2012, 73.
49. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 94.
50. Merleau-Ponty 1964, 3–4.
51. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 93.
52. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 105.
53. See also Gallagher 2005, 26–8.
54. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 84; see also Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 34; Hale 2017, 12–3, 66.
55. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 140–1.

56. See Heidegger, 1962, 78–90; also Hale 2017, 23.
57. Hale 2017, 16.
58. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 103, 142, 144–6, 154. For a detailed examination of the body schema, see Gallagher 2005; and, in relation to archives, Lester 2018, 78–80.
59. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 261.
60. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 140–1, 143; see also Merleau-Ponty 1964, 5.
61. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 135; see also Hale 2017, 13.
62. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 133, 148; see also 142.
63. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 334.
64. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 333.
65. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 139. See also Hale 2017, 70. Hale (2017, 83–4) clarifies this concept further: the sense of mutual awareness of perceiver and object, of an object's 'aliveness', references a 'sense of… possibilities and limits', rather than of 'vitalism' or agency. This position, then, contrasts with notions of agency as suggested by Alfred Gell (2012). For a riposte to Gell, see Morphy 2012.
66. Merleau-Ponty 1964, 3–4.
67. Williams 1995, 91. I have previously argued this point (Lester 2006) but I would now move away from a distinctly binary reading.
68. See Duranti 1989; Duranti 1991; Williams 2005, 3, 5; Vismann 2008, 73–5; Zouhar 2010.
69. Vismann 2008, 39.
70. Vismann 2008, 39; see also Lester 2018, 75–6.
71. Dever 2013, 176; Dever 2019, 9; see also Rekrut 2014, 238; Lester 2018, 75.
72. Dever 2014, 286; Dever 2019, 11–4; see also Yaeger Kaplan 1990, 103; Rekrut 2005, 28–9; Drucker 2009, 7–8; Magee and Waters 2011, 277; Dever 2013, 176–7; Farge 2013, 16; Lester 2018, 76.
73. Yaneva 2020, 32; see also Harper 1998 and Riles 2006a; in history, see Kafka 2009; in postcolonial studies, see Stoler 2009 and Hull 2012.
74. Eisenlohr 2011, 44; Hull 2012, 13. See also Dever 2013, 175; Dever 2014, 286; Lester 2018, 76–7; Dever 2019, 9–10.
75. Drucker 2009, 14.
76. Hull 2012, 13.
77. Dever 2013, 180; Dever 2019, 10–1; see also Lester 2018, 76.
78. Gaël Chenard (2014, 197), for example, argues that online access should or will replace onsite access, but this suggests a somewhat neutral transition.
79. See, for example, Featherstone 2006, 595–6; Lager Vestberg 2008, 59–60; Latham 2011; Yee 2011; Maidment 2013, 118–9, 123; Swinney 2012, 35; Thomas and Johnson 2013; Johnson, Ranade and Thomas 2014, 232–3; Thomas and Johnson 2015, 193–5.
80. Sassoon 1998, 10–3; Rekrut 2014, 239; Russell 2018, 205.
81. Rekrut 2005; see also Rekrut 2014, 244–5; and, for a discussion of materiality and archival theory, Rekrut 2009.
82. Dever 2013, 174, 180; Dever 2019, 16–8; see also Harper 1998, 22–4; Featherstone 2006, 595–6; Lester 2018, 76; and, for a summary, Biber 2014, 277–8.
83. See Dambrogio et al. 2021.
84. Cifor and Gilliland 2016, 1.
85. Cifor 2016, 8.
86. Cifor and Gilliland 2016, 3; Cifor 2016, 13–4; Cvetkovich 2003, 7.
87. See Brennan 2018, 7; Russell 2018, 200, 203.
88. Cifor and Gilliland 2016, 2; Cifor 2016, 11–2.
89. Cifor 2016, 9, 18–21.

90. Lee 2021, 157–8, 162. Lee refers to both the physical holding of materials and to being touched as in moved and stirred emotionally.
91. Rose 2000, 561–2; Bonnie Mak (2011, 3, 5) discusses the 'matter and mattering of the page'; Lester 2018, 78. I argue that this also encompasses intangible forms of knowledge, including oral and gestural records, as embodied encounters between people. I discuss intangible archives in more detail in Chapter 5.
92. Geismar 2012, 268–9.
93. Elaine Lally, cited in Pink et al. 2016, 63; see also Hale 2017, 114. Gallagher (2005, 32) writes of objects as 'operation extensions' of the body as part of the body's schema.
94. Zuanni 2021, 188–9.
95. Geismar 2012, 280–1; Park 2021, 239–40; see also Miller and Horst 2012, 25–7.
96. Pink et al. 2016, 59–78; see also Arvanitis and Zuanni 2021.
97. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 269.
98. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 261.
99. Edwards and Hart 2014, 4. In terms of archives, see Nesmith 2007, 4.
100. See Brenneis 2006, 65; Reed 2006, 175–6; Riles 2006b, 81–2; Edwards 2009, 130–1; Kafka 2009, 345; Stoler 2009, 1, 2, 20. Stoler (2009, 35) also describes an 'archival pulse', to be found 'in the quiescence and quickened pace of its own production, in the steady and feverish rhythms of repeated incantations, formulae, and frames'.
101. Drucker 2009, 14–5; see also Longkumer 2016, 143, who writes of the Gaidinliu notebooks of the Zeme Nagas of Assam, India, 'as *experienced* and not simply read or understood'; original emphasis.
102. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000, 5; Gregory and Witcomb 2007, 263; Hale 2012, 193; Witcomb 2013, 256–7; Bedford 2014. On narrativity, see Austin 2012; on design, see Galangau-Quérat 2005 and Crawley 2012; on immersive experiences, see Bitgood 2014, 207.
103. O'Doherty 1999, 15. On the politics of sensory engagement in the museum, see Edwards, Gosden and Phillips 2006, 18–20.
104. Basu and Macdonald 2007, 12, 14; see also Bagnall 2003, 87, 95; Weibel and Latour 2007, 107.
105. See Merleau-Ponty 2012, 433, 445.
106. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 438.
107. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 443–4.
108. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 444–5.
109. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 434.
110. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 434.
111. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 434.
112. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 445.
113. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 434, 445.
114. Huizinga 1960, 54.
115. Ankersmit 2005, 115.
116. Ankersmit 2005, 115. On the concept of the presence of the past inhering within objects, see also Runia 2006 and van de Wetering 2012, who writes of historical sensation facilitated through an object's patina.
117. See Harper 1998, 2–5; Brenneis 2006, 65; Biber 2014, 272–3; see also Stoler 2009, 3; Stoler (2009, 9) writes of changes in the value or importance of archives as attitudes and subjects change over time.
118. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 444.
119. Merleau-Ponty 2012, 438.

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Chapter 3

Experience in the Archive

Thinking through exhibition as an experience, a spatial and temporal encounter between people and archives, opens up new ideas about its purpose, role and value. As discussed earlier, much of the scholarly debate around exhibitions has been framed around the opportunities they bring to the archive. Yet understanding exhibition as experience reframes its purpose and value; it is less transactional, as the term 'outreach' suggests; instead, as something experiential, it is of value in and of itself, foregrounding the encounters that people have with the archive – and each other. This reading, then, points to new ways of thinking about what exhibition affords within the archive: as spaces of dialogue and exchange, engagement and understanding, disruption and challenge.

What this calls for, then, is a greater focus on the theoretical underpinnings of exhibition practice; on the archival, museological and wider socio-political framings that impact upon this work and the implications that arise from it. In this sense, I suggest a repurposing of exhibition within the context of critical archive thinking, that is, as a critique of the theoretical and political conceptualisation of the archive and of wider systems of knowledge[1] which, at the same time, repurposes the power structures of recordkeeping in terms of its value for individuals, communities and wider society. Influenced by new museology,[2] such a perspective likewise warrants a shift away from focusing purely on method to examining the socio-political contexts and implications of exhibition practice and, therefore, of the role that method plays within this, as well as the issues and provocations that this generates. Specifically, I want to consider what it *means* to exhibit the *archive* and the wider thinking that emerges from this.

It is important to recognise that, within this repurposing of the topic, exhibition is commonly conceived within the contexts of outreach and promotion that have long defined its role. Many of the conversations that I had with archivists and designers indicated the importance of exhibition as a way of highlighting and showcasing collections; this was tied to making the archive and its holdings more visible and, in turn, attracting new and broader audiences.[3] There is an economic dimension to some of these conversations that reveals the political demands placed upon the archive and the pragmatism

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of working within socio-economic contexts that warrant increased public use.[4] They echo the arguments that have influenced the literature, but these conversations also indicate a value and a vitality in terms of how the archive is understood, and a need to articulate this widely: as Madeleine Trudeau, curator at Library and Archives Canada explained, the archive 'has a value to society… it's important [for society] to understand what it has and does, and why we have it'.[5] What this suggests, then, is that exhibition as outreach is a complex reading, a position underpinned by its typical entwining with learning (more on which, below): the socio-political and economic are clearly drivers but so too is a sense of disseminating the worth of archives to as wide an audience as possible.

Distinct Audiences

Whilst recognising the importance that continues to be attached to exhibitions as outreach and promotional activities, I want to focus on situations that point to new readings around their role and purpose, and the issues and implications that arise from this. These may be deliberate design intentions, or they may emerge from activities that are conceived in quite different ways (again, commonly as outreach activities). The idea of exhibition as experiential is again important here since it suggests a framing of exhibition around its potential for engaging visitors in different and arguably complex ways. What this implies is a different understanding or perception of what happens in the archive or, put differently, an expanded possibility of what a visit to an archive entails. Thinking through the experiential nature of exhibition speaks to a diversity of uses for the archive. This likewise has implications for *who* it is that visits an archive. The National Archives of the Netherlands provides a useful example to unpack this idea further.

The National Archives of the Netherlands has a large visitor centre that it uses to stage exhibitions. Located in a high-profile site (an 'A-location') next to the Central Station in The Hague (Figure 3.1),[6] the development of the visitor centre has its origins in a cultural policy shift within the Netherlands initiated by the then state secretary, Rick van der Ploeg, in 2002, which emphasised a more public-oriented focus for cultural institutions including archives.[7] The National Archives had developed exhibitions in other locations, including in partnership with different organisations but, in 2008 the new director for the National Archives, Martin Berendse, chose to develop a new visitor centre within the archive itself (Figure 3.2).[8] This process represents a shift within the work of the organisation, a more proactive stance in attracting audiences but, of particular interest here, it also suggests a broadening in terms of audience focus, widening interest in the archives beyond a specific research community to one which encompasses other visitors too: as Exhibitions Project Manager Nancy Hovingh explained, 'we went from… offering services mainly set at guiding researchers and handing them the

Figure 3.1 National Archives of the Netherlands. Photo: Herman Zonderland.

Figure 3.2 The exhibition *The World of the Dutch East India Company* at the National Archives of the Netherlands' visitor centre, 2017. Photo: Anne Reitsma Fotografie.

documents they asked for, to offer[ing] a variety of services for different kind[s] of visitors'.[9]

The archive's mission statement, to 'serve every person's right to information and provide knowledge about the past',[10] has resulted in a policy drive for more visitors both online and in person but, perhaps interestingly for this discussion, this is understood through a lens of democratic rights: 'the collection of the [National Archives] is [for] every citizen in this country'.[11] Because the archives are understood as being 'owned by all the citizens, by all the taxpayers', the archive should offer access to its records 'in as many ways as possible'.[12] This perspective speaks to the relationship between archivist and user, articulating rights, rather than privilege, in terms of access and use,[13] here expressed through the different ways in which access and use are enabled. There is a suggestion here of agency on the part of the user in terms of how they choose to use archival material and this socio-political reframing becomes embedded within the space of the archive, through the creation of alternative and different spaces for encounter and use.

The process of developing the archives' new visitor centre (as well as its online initiatives) recognises distinct audiences whose interest in archives would be served in different ways. The idea of a non-research audience was first articulated following a survey undertaken by the consultancy firm Twynstra Gudde in 2003, part of a marketing strategy that aimed to develop a broader audience for archives in the northern part of the Netherlands. In this survey, this non-research audience was first described as 'snackers', but this was later refined by the National Archives to 'browsers'. 'The idea behind the different target groups was the question what kind of information they needed, they were looking for.'[14] The browsers are interested in history, but not actively seeking historical information, unlike a researcher audience. Moreover, this is a substantial audience: according to another 2003 survey conducted by MotivAction, 46 per cent of Dutch people aged between 15 and 80 make up this group.[15] Interestingly, a quarter of Dutch people interested in culture want to experience it in a physical way,[16] suggesting audiences for both physical and online forms of engagement.

Hovingh described how, at the same time, an increasing interest in and need for accessing historical information was also recognised, paying particular attention to personal and family history.[17] Whilst the researcher audience, therefore, remains important, the archive recognised the need to facilitate an experience for this browser audience, and so the visitor centre was designed especially with their needs in mind. For Hovingh, there is an anticipation that researchers will also be interested in visiting the exhibition, whilst some browsers may wish to become researchers too, although colleagues at the National Archives do not see this as a specific aim of the exhibitions.[18] These audiences have largely remained distinct: Hovingh noted that 'my colleagues at the front desk… can see at a glance where the specific visitor in front of [the] desk is coming for: the study room or the exhibition'.[19]

The idea of promoting collections in order to broaden users is arguably a traditional use of exhibition but, again, what is interesting from these conversations is an emerging recognition of how audiences themselves want to engage with archives and, in turn, of archives designing spaces which speak to these different forms of engagement. By opening up the archive to alternative experiences, the space of the archive and how engagement happens within it seems to shift. It represents a turn away from abstract representations of the archive, into which the user should conform, to a more differential, 'lived' space, open to different types of engagement.[20] By creating new spaces for new types of engagement, there is an indication here of the archive seeking to flatten established hierarchies and reshape experience in a way that focuses on the interests of the audience.

An important aspect of this argument is the recognition of different audiences as distinct and separate entities. These distinct audiences are defined by *use*, and how the audiences themselves might understand and express that use. Here, then, is a distinct audience with a potential interest in archives, but one that is not necessarily interested in using them for research. It can be argued that this audience has arisen from an increasing trend towards popular forms of history and cultural heritage. On the one hand, the rise in popular history has led to a marked increase in the popularity of genealogy and local history, and these types of activity have, through onsite and, latterly, digital access, shaped and defined the search room. But, on the other hand, a trend towards popular history has also led to an increasing concept of 'heritage-as-leisure', of which the historicisation of spaces and media are both a key influence and outcome. In this sense, the growth of a non-researching audience who might nevertheless exhibit an interest in archival material can be seen as an outcome of these trends which, in turn, and shaped by political drives for greater openness and access, influence the way in which archives are responding to these audiences and presenting themselves through new exhibition spaces. This audience represents a turn towards different types of activity and different spaces within the archive beyond standard search room provision. In this sense, the exhibition takes on a vital role: it becomes a site or forum for engagement or use. It gestures towards an understanding of the archive itself as a space of experience and encounter.[21]

The concept of providing multiple forms of access and activity based on users' needs and interests was also apparent at several other archives, notably Heritage Quay, the archive of the University of Huddersfield (Figure 3.3), where the design of the archive's public and interpretation spaces developed out of the project's consultative process. Here, people explained how they 'wanted a range of ways to get at archives, from being mildly interested to very studious academic research'.[22] This idea of a distinct audience was also recognised at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), for example, with its distinct exhibition space separate from its search room (Figure 3.4). Here, Laurence Ward, Head of Digital Services, described 'casual historians',

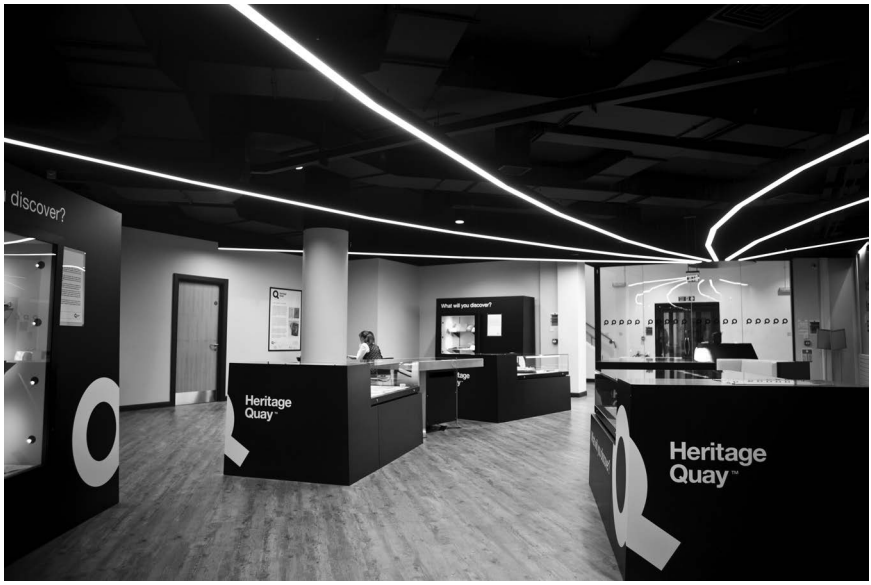

Figure 3.3 The Exhibition Space at Heritage Quay. Photo: Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield Archives Service.

Figure 3.4 The exhibition *Under Ground London* at London Metropolitan Archives, 2019. Photo: London Metropolitan Archives (City of London Corporation).

people with an 'appetite for experiencing the past' but who 'don't want to be researchers'.[23] Likewise, at The UK National Archives in Kew, plans to develop onsite audiences focused on what those audiences themselves would want: 'it's not about making them researchers, but offering something for their needs, relating to collections'.[24]

In some of my conversations, the potential for audiences to cross from one area of use to another was considered a key driver (especially where this was tied to ideas of visibility),[25] whilst others expressed a desire or, at least, an openness for this to happen.[26] But many (also) claimed that this did not devalue the exhibition as an experience in its own right, or suggested that such a translation was unrealistic or unnecessary. At LMA, exhibitions are designed to create opportunities for other forms of engagement (including research), but 'it's important that a visit only to see an exhibition is valued and held in the same regard as a research visit';[27] whilst at Heritage Quay, University Archivist Sarah Wickham commented 'I am not sure to what extent we can expect someone with a casual interest to take valuable time out to begin a research proposition'.[28] In fact, the extent to which exhibitions can attract visitors into the search room had already been questioned: G.A. Chinnery argued at the British Records Association conference in 1971 that exhibitions did not result in an increase in visitors to the Leicester Record Office, for example. Unlike other writers concerned with the material advantages of exhibition, Chinnery saw their work as cultural value, the 'quality of life' they afforded to their visitors.[29] Contemporary opinion regarding the purpose of exhibition and its relationship to the research spaces of the archive seems to be mixed, and the need to use exhibition as a way of promoting archives is clearly important and necessary in many cases, but the comments above also reveal an importance and value of exhibition as a forum for engagement in its own right.

Whilst a discussion of 'distinct audiences' suggests a binary understanding of how the archive is perceived, what is important here is not creating and classifying distinct groups or modes of access but, rather, of responding to individual audience need. What seems to emerge from the National Archives of the Netherlands is a sense of responding to *how* visitors want to experience the archive; the archive is reformulated in terms of what it is *for*. In this sense, it represents a pluralising of experience and the value of exhibition as a space of creative potential within the archive.

The Exhibition as Experience

As Chinnery's argument notes, the cultural value of archives has long been recognised, yet these research findings indicate a growing trend towards creating different types of experience. As discussed above, these trends can be understood as a response to broader historiographical shifts, themselves reflective of changing political and socio-economic developments throughout the

mid-twentieth century. They also reveal cultural shifts within archival thinking that point towards recordkeeping as an attempt to document the history of society in its broadest sense and, more recently, its value to individual and collective communities and society.[30] Likewise, the drive to diversify audiences and to accommodate different and alternative perspectives and views reflects the impact of postmodernist thought on archival thinking and practice.[31] Consequently, new types of engagement programmes have expanded the experiential character of the archive but, with an emphasis on promotion and outreach (Chinnery's discussion notwithstanding), this has perhaps not always been articulated, exhibitions instead being typically conceived in a more transactional manner. To focus instead on the experiential capacity of exhibition-making points to the archive as a space open to pluralised forms of engagement. In this sense, the exhibition becomes an essential function of the archive, embedded within archivists' core practice.[32]

Moreover, a sense of the archive as experiential suggests a reframing of the exhibition as something other than (just) a site of learning. This is important, since exhibition is typically framed as a site for learning, this being understood as its core purpose besides promotion. Learning, here defined as a 'process of active engagement with experience' which 'may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas and feelings',[33] is clearly a valuable role for the archive and, specifically, for exhibitions: in my conversations, several archives indicated learning as an important aim of their exhibition-making.[34] But thinking about exhibition through the broader language of experience – as a part of, but also, crucially, as more than a process of learning – has the potential to expand the conversation about what exhibitions are understood to be and what they can do.

The importance of learning within the context of archival exhibitions is arguably reflective of longer-term shifts in museology that have focused attention away from museums as places of research and collections to places commonly understood as sites of learning; and, moreover, of shifts from didactic, expert-led approaches to exhibition-making to more visitor-oriented spaces framed by constructivist, learner-centred approaches.[35] But scholarship has also challenged the tension between learning and leisure that has emerged within the context of exhibition practice and both articulated and called for understandings of exhibition that speak to other forms of engagement, including the contemplative and emotional, embodied and imaginative, interactive and social.[36] Whilst all these types of 'experience' are enfolded within concepts of learning, they also help to open up other types of conversation about the purpose and role of exhibitions in engaging audiences.

In this sense, then, I argue that the language of experience opens out how exhibitions can be conceived and understood. There is an assumption within the archival literature that exhibitions are about learning;[37] yet it rarely defines what this means.[38] And, whilst archival literature stresses the learning potential of exhibitions, practice is not necessarily (entirely) defined by this:

in describing the exhibitions at LMA, Laurence Ward summed up several different aspects:

> The educational role is really important, it's perhaps the foremost thing we are thinking of when designing the exhibition; but it's also about having fun, we want people to enjoy themselves. Do you go to art galleries to be educated? Is it more of an aesthetic thing, which taps into this idea of being fun? It is [also] a social space, where people can interact.[39]

Accounts such as these again point to a pluralising of experience within the archive, and there are several key implications that emerge from this, not least on the space of the archive, what takes place within it, and how the institution of the archive itself is conceived. By creating space for experience and encounter, the archive arguably becomes reframed, to some extent, as a venue, a destination that suggests something other (or more) than a research institution. What I am trying to say here is that, whilst research spaces offer experiences and encounters with material, the feel and the language that is evoked by the idea of encounter within an exhibition setting points to a different and alternative *sense* of what the space of the archive is and what it enables. At the British Library, for example (Figure 3.5), the idea of a physical

Figure 3.5 The British Library as a venue and meeting place. Photo: © The British Library Board.

venue has gained visibility in response to increased digital access: although investment in online services and access is key, the library also gives purpose to physical spaces and recognises the value of physical interaction with people and things in an increasingly digital world.[40] The library aims to develop its role as 'a resource, a meeting place and a destination'.[41] Several other institutions defined themselves as or described their intentions to become destinations and venues.[42] Whilst this may indicate a concern with income generation, it also suggests or points towards a reframing of the archive as a different kind of space. Yes, it is a space of research and learning, but these reformulations also suggest a space designed to open up new and different types of experience with archives.

If a reframing of exhibition as an encounter points towards a different idea of what archive spaces are, it also implies a reshaping of social experience and relationships, since space itself is inextricably entwined with sociality.[43] In this respect, the idea of the archive as a venue begins to suggest a space where encounters with other people – both intentional (as meeting places) and serendipitous – become amplified. This gestures to the archive's potential as a space where meeting others becomes an integral aspect of use. But it also indicates a possible redrawing or flattening of power hierarchies between archivist and user, a reworking of social etiquettes based less on security and control, as framed by archival thinking, and more on enabling experience in ways defined by audiences and visitors themselves.

The practice of exhibition itself produces its own hierarchies and is thus a political act: a problematic reading of exhibition-making brings to the surface the web of political, social, theoretical and practical forces that act upon the archive. The purpose of exhibition, and the wider institutional agenda to which it is put, influence how the archive is perceived and experienced. To interrogate the exhibition is to reveal different and contrasting readings of archives and different values of exhibition-making; it surfaces tensions between staff (and, in larger organisations, between different departments), the wider organisation, existing researchers and users, new audiences and the wider public. These tensions often revealed themselves throughout different conversations and suggest the political and sometimes contested nature of innovative practice. But more generally, they also reveal how the socio-political relationships that frame archival practice become embedded within exhibition-making, and how such relationships emerge within the wider space of the archive.

To study exhibitions is to unfold the contexts and influences that shape practice and reveal their purpose, goals and intentions. It is to unpack exhibition-making within the environment of the archive institution itself and to consider what this means. For Laurence Ward at LMA, it is important to show 'what we are as an archive, and to develop our unique qualities as an archive'.[44] It is to think through the capacity of archival material within the contours of exhibition, of how design works to harness the archive in modes

of display: in short, what it means to exhibit the *archive*. Yet at the same time, thinking through the experiential nature of exhibition, and the wider implications of this reading also helps challenge and question the limits of the archive; to consider its institutional boundaries, of what it does and what it is for, and its liberatory potential within new conceptions, understandings and uses.

Notes

1. Caswell, Punzalan and Sangwand 2017.
2. See Vergo 1989, 2–4.
3. These ideas were discussed, for example, at the Library of Congress (Cheryl Regan, interview with author, 18 July 2017); the British Library (Alexandra Whitfield, interview with author, 12 January 2017); the National Theatre, London (Judith Merritt and Erin Lee, interview with author, 22 May 2017); The Hive, Worcester (Paul Hudson, email to author, 9 January 2017); Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield (Sarah Wickham, interview with author, 25 January 2018); and the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds (Rhiannon Lawrence-Francis, Laura Wilson, Tim Procter and Layla Bloom, interview with author, 8 May 2017).
4. For similar comment on museums, see Greenhalgh 1989, 74.
5. Madeleine Trudeau, interview with author, 7 July 2017.
6. Nancy Hovingh, email to author, 31 August 2017.
7. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
8. Hovingh, email, 31 August. Martin Berendse was the director of the National Archives until 2014.
9. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
10. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
11. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
12. Hovingh, email, 31 August. A similar argument was used at the National Archives of Luxembourg to justify promotional activity as a vital function of the organisation: Romain Schroeder, interview with author, 20 January 2017.
13. See Ketelaar 2002, 235.
14. Nancy Hovingh, email to author, 7 September 2017.
15. Hovingh, email, 7 September.
16. Hovingh, email, 7 September.
17. Hovingh, email, 7 September. The archive described the research audience as 'deep diggers' and identified a third group, 'surfers', who use the archives as sources of information (for education, journalism) (Hovingh 2014). Here, I include both 'deep diggers' and 'surfers' within the researcher audience.
18. Hovingh, email, 31 August; Presentations Officer, interview with author, 25 October 2017.
19. Hovingh, email, 31 August; Karijn Delen, interview with author, 25 October 2017. Delen notes how some visitors come to research *and* look at the exhibition, but this largely depended on the exhibition theme.
20. Lefebvre 1991.
21. It is worth noting that recognising different audiences, and creating access and programmes for these different audiences, has been discussed in relation to the National Archives of Australia (Hyslop 2002, 49–50; also Nicholls 2001, 68–9) indicating a long-term shift in this pattern, although one that has not been widely discussed within archival literature.
22. Wickham, interview; see also Wickham 2015, 199.

23. Laurence Ward, interview with author, 3 May 2017.
24. Sarah Dellar, interview with author, 14 November 2017.
25. Erin Lee, interview with author, 25 February 2021.
26. This was discussed, for example, at Oslo City Archive (Johanne Bergkvist, interview with author, 8 September 2017) and Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham (although here exhibitions were also recognised as the 'prime way of reaching a wider audience' and as 'valid' as the search room) (Mark Dorrington, interview with author, 10 March 2017; Mark Dorrington, email to author, 23 March 2017).
27. Ward, interview. A similar idea was noted at the Brotherton Library in Leeds: Lawrence-Francis and Wilson, interview.
28. Wickham, interview.
29. British Records Association 1972, 107–8; see also Weir 1991, 16.
30. Ham 1975; Cook 2013.
31. Prescott 2008, 49.
32. Lynch n.d. [c.2014], 6.
33. This definition is derived from the Inspiring Learning for All framework, developed by the UK Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 2008 as a strategic tool for evidencing impact and improving operational performance. MLA was established in 2000 as Resource, a non-departmental government organisation with responsibility for promoting innovation and improvement in museums, libraries and archives. It was renamed in 2004 and abolished in 2012 with sectoral responsibility for archives transferring to The National Archives.
34. These included, for example, Amsterdam City Archive (Stefanie van Odenhoven and Ludger Smit, interview with author, 24 October 2017), the Folger Shakespeare Library (Shuan Carmichael-Ramos, interview with author, 20 July 2017) and the US National Archives (Corinne Porter, interview with author, 17 July 2017).
35. See Falk and Dierking 1992, xiii; Weil 1999, 229; Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 5–7; Bedford 2014, 29, 38; Bitgood 2014, 11.
36. Graburn 1997, 3–4; Greenhalgh 1989; Bedford 2014, 53.
37. For similar comment around museums, see Bedford 2014, 16.
38. Emma Howgill is an exception in discussing the 'cognitive… affective… [and] psychomotor' forms of learning and the 'heavy bias towards linguistic learning' towards which displays of archives lean (Howgill 2015, 182).
39. Ward, interview.
40. British Library 2018a, 7.
41. British Library 2018b, 10.
42. Examples include the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester (Stella Halkyard, interview with author, 19 December 2017) and the National Theatre (Merritt and Lee, interview).
43. Lefebvre 1991.
44. Ward, interview.

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Chapter 4

Exhibition-Making in the Archive: Fragment, Context, Performativity

The letter, dated 18 August 1875, is written in an ornate but clear style so that a child of six can read it. 'No letter from my own dear little boy – but never mind, there will be, some of these days. You must learn quick and write one with your very own hand to Papa'.[1] Far from home on government business, the politician George Brown still missed his family.

The letter, one of several, is part of the exhibition *Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150* at the Archives of Ontario, which I am visiting on a warm Saturday in summer. The archive is fairly quiet today and I have much of the exhibition to myself. The exhibition uses archival material to tell the stories of individuals and families and relates these to broader political, cultural and social issues. As I visit the different exhibits, I experience the personal lives of different Canadian citizens 150 years ago, all recounted through the archives on display.

In this chapter, I will consider what it means to exhibit the archive. I focus on how exhibition draws attention to or harnesses certain features of the archive and, in turn, how these features characterise and distinguish archival as opposed to other types of exhibitions. I have grouped these features into three key themes: firstly, the archive as fragment, as something personal and intimate; secondly, archives in context; and thirdly, the performative archive, and how its materiality and presence are harnessed to afford responses in visitors.

The Archive as Fragment

Several of my conversations with archivists and designers considered how exhibition-making is understood within the specific context of the archive. At Amsterdam City Archive, exhibitions are designed to be 'typical for an archive', focusing on archival sources: its date, who wrote it and who is featured in it: the many stories of individuals that can be told.[2] What emerges from this observation is the centrality of the archival document as the focus of display, alongside the stories and narratives that unfold from it. Nancy Hovingh at The National Archives of the Netherlands described two different types of archival exhibition: a 'treasures' type exhibition, in which 'most of the attention will go to the showcase and letting the object shine as much

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as possible – and of course telling the story which it holds', and a second type of display which focuses more on narrative and story. Hovingh commented that, in this second type,

> you also give attention to the context: the total experience, the other objects and the variety in it, the coherence with the other objects… The basis is the same: the original object and what it contains, but the scenes in which the object is placed is different. This offers a more total experience which has a strong base in authentic documents.[3]

Hovingh argued that this 'total experience', drawing on different senses and emotions, can be more effective in stimulating a sense of the past. I will return to questions around materiality and performativity later; what I want to focus on here is the way in which the archive can be used to tell stories, both individual, personal accounts recounted directly in the archive and also the broader themes and narratives to which these accounts relate. This is understood as a key feature of archival exhibitions at Amsterdam City Archive. The exhibition *Rapenburgerstraat 1940–1945* (23 February – 17 June 2018), for example, explored the effects of the Second World War on a single street in a Jewish neighbourhood of Amsterdam (Figure 4.1). Exhibitions Co-ordinator Stefanie van Odenhoven explained, 'a volunteer has made a database of all the houses in that street, they have recorded everyone who

Figure 4.1 Rapenburgerstraat 1940–1945. Photo: Liselore Kamping/Amsterdam City Archives.

lived there using sources from our archives. We are going to present that to show you can take one street and [find] all the lives of the people who lived there'.[4] In one sense, this exhibition demonstrates the research potential of the archive. But going beyond this, it also reveals the importance of storytelling in archival displays and how exhibitions do this by fragmenting these narratives into their constituent, archival parts.

One of the characteristics of the archive that emerges here, then, is the shift in scale that it affords. Changing scale, focusing on the detailed and the individual, facilitates new perspectives, revealing interpretations and interconnections that can only be seen at a more microscopic level.[5] In this sense, the archive reveals the personal and the intimate that otherwise become occluded within wider metanarratives.[6] Moreover, as a selective record of the past, the archive is only a fragment; yet, it acquires all the meaning and significance of the events that it records: it acts as a sign for them, attaining a greater sense of agency or intensity.[7] Here, then, the archive takes on the entirety of that moment of history: it both signifies and acts for it. In this atomised reading of the past,[8] scale is reduced to a micro-historical level; the archival fragment not only points to the wider context, but also acquires an agency of its own.

In this deconstructed perspective, then, exhibition accentuates this fragmentation: through the display of specific instances, the individual accounts recorded in the archive, it gives presence to the personal and the granular. Such perspectives may feed into wider contextual narratives and frame new relationships and meanings (more on which, below), but what I want to emphasise here is how exhibition itself articulates the archive as both signifiers of broader narratives and as individual fragments with an intensity of their own.

Exhibitions that focus on personal accounts and localised narrative suggest the influence of historiographical turns towards the local, the personal and the micro-historical, as well as the rise of popular history, which typically focuses on personal and community narratives, and of heritage. Microhistory and historical biography are typical of such approaches, designed to give agency to the lives of people other than (just) political or social elites.[9] Drawing on the shifts in scale that the archive affords, exhibition design thus works to give presence to different perspectives and voices that are often flattened within the wider trends of history.

Here, then, I return to the *Family Ties* exhibition at the Archives of Ontario (September 2016 – May 2018) to consider how personal narrative and scale emerge in exhibition design. *Family Ties* was designed as part of the 150th anniversary of Confederation in Canada in 2017 but the Archives were

> wary of mounting an exhibition commemorating [the anniversary] with a political or nationalist approach, given the criticism of such narratives within the larger cultural heritage industry. In short – we were tasked with mounting an exhibit which spoke to the anniversary, but weren't willing to re-tread a narrow vision of the past.[10]

In other words, the exhibition sought to avoid presenting a metanarrative that collapsed experience into a broad and singular perspective, and which risked eliding complex and controversial politics into a singular discourse. Instead, the exhibition focused on the lives and experiences of individual families, telling their personal stories and linking these into wider themes relevant to the anniversary. In this way, the exhibition could ground its perspective in a more nuanced and complex understanding of Confederation, whilst pointing to its wider implications, especially in terms of its impact on Indigenous Peoples.

The exhibition presented the stories of four families, each of which pointed to wider themes and narratives. George Brown was part of an upper middle-class family who lived in Victorian Toronto and whose story spoke of the political context of Confederation. Nasa McCurdy and his family told the story of immigration into Canada in the mid-1800s and, in their case, the flight of free Black Americans to Canada after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act (1861), as well as the continued discrimination they faced. Correspondence between Rose Wolverton and her brothers detailed the experience of Canadians who fought in the American Civil War and the impact of communication and rail travel. The tragic consequences of Confederation on Indigenous Peoples and the establishment of the residential schools system were discussed in the story of Chief Shingwaukonse and his descendants. The information and records for this section of the exhibition were provided by the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre.[11]

Focusing on family storylines revealed narratives that were largely unknown, including that of Canadians fighting in the United States and later defending the country from the threat of American invasion, for example. It also gave presence to individual experiences and perspectives, such as the role of women as family historians.[12] The use of different scales worked as part of the exhibition design strategy (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Individual letters and *cartes de visite* were shown in display cases and suspended on the display boards: at the smallest scale, these archives required the visitor to draw close, to lean over cases, and suggested the intimacy of these personal accounts. At the same time, large scale images of archives were printed onto wallpaper material and applied to exhibition panels. Enlarged photographs of George Brown and his wife Anne, and Chief Augustin Shingwauk and his wife, gave presence, impact, even confrontation: they worked on a larger-than-bodily scale. A vastly enlarged copy of a census return dominated one panel: it gave greater visibility to the personal narratives recounted in it, expanding these stories into the public space of the exhibition gallery.[13]

These shifts in scale give presence to perspectives that often go unnoticed in the greater narratives of history. At the National Archives of the Netherlands, exhibitions are used to tell the 'great [story of] history' through 'smaller, personal stories'.[14] They also play with notions of public and private, and a sense of revelation. At Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the

Figure 4.2 The Browns, *Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150* exhibition, Archives of Ontario. Photo: © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2016–18.

Figure 4.3 The Wolvertons, *Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150* exhibition, Archives of Ontario. Photo: © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2016–18.

unique characteristic of their archival collections is perceived in the intimate and the personal, the 'in-between things, personal letters, photos, as well as government documents'; this is directly related to the 'personal stories that we can offer'.[15] Likewise, at Amsterdam City Archives: 'we have the stories of individuals, of the thousands and millions of inhabitants of Amsterdam, each of which we can use to tell a story'; this 'personal way of approaching the public' is understood as a distinguishing characteristic of the archive.[16] These affordances, I argue, emerge from the nature of the archive itself as fragment, the granular detail of the individual and the everyday.

Encountering Archival Voices

Focusing on the personal and the intimate gives greater presence to the voices of those whose experiences are recounted in the archives. These voices are accentuated through exhibition technique that brings the visitor into an encounter with the experiences and lives of others.

The exhibition *Dead Central: In Memory of a Lost Cemetery* (25 May 2019 – 3 May 2020), on display at the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney, used theatrical design and audio narration to create an immersive experience designed to generate a sense of emotion and empathy around its subject matter. *Dead Central* told the story of Sydney's Central Railway Station, which was built on the site of Devonshire Street Cemetery and opened in 1906. The exhibition employed a dramatic scenography of high walls, long passages and low lighting to create an imaginative space that would draw the visitor into the gallery: it was designed to 'bring the visitor in immediately, to capture their imagination and take them on a journey'.[17] The exhibits on display included glass plate negatives, photographic prints and epitaph books that recorded inscriptions on the headstones in the cemetery (Figure 4.4).

A key focus of the exhibition was the sense of personal sadness resulting from the loss of the cemetery. The audio narration was used to express this: visitors were invited to listen on their smartphone or tablet. An immersive audio scenography was generated by the sound of horses on cobblestones, the cutting of wood and the digging of earth, the clanging of iron gates and the tolling of church bells. The narration itself was performed by actors in the roles of Josephine and Arthur Foster, the couple who documented and photographed the cemetery before it was demolished to make way for the railway station. Actors also quoted from contemporary newspapers and letters and, to capture the pathos of the story, read out the inscriptions on the graves; as senior curator Elise Edmonds explained, this gave 'the impression that people were reading out their own headstones'.[18] In this sense, the act of demolishing the cemetery becomes a personal event: the audio narration pointing to its impact on the lives of those who experienced it.

What the audio narration works to do here, I suggest, is create a sense of encounter with the individuals whose stories are recounted in the archival

Figure 4.4 Dead Central. Photo: Joy Lai/State Library of New South Wales.

record: with Josephine and Arthur themselves, but also those who wrote letters to the newspapers, the reporters, the government officials, and the many people who were buried in the cemetery. Alongside the sense of intimacy created by the exhibition design, the vocal performances work to generate a sense of personal connection.

Personalising the Archive

What emerges from these different accounts is an idea of personal stories as a way of making historical narratives more accessible and meaningful for contemporary audiences: as Nancy Hovingh at the National Archives of the Netherlands explained, 'the documents are vested with numerous stories. We have attempted, as much as possible, to regale the visitor with personal tales too'.[19] Likewise, according to Madeleine Trudeau at LAC, creating a story or narrative around collections helps to 'draw people in', especially when 'a lot of people don't know what archives are'.[20]

Furthermore, they help visitors to identify with and relate to the archives; as Karijn Delen, Exhibitions Project Manager at the National Archives of the Netherlands commented, people are able to make personal connections with the exhibited material since they can relate personal stories to their own experience and backgrounds.[21] Reducing scale to the level of the personal makes broader historical narratives more accessible and relatable. They also create a sense of empathy, as in the case of *Dead Central*, for instance, as

visitors come into contact with the lives of others as articulated through the archives; this is something I will return to in Chapter 5. Such approaches reflect the use of narrative in museum exhibitions, designed to create a personal sense of engagement and interpretation.[22]

The idea of visitors bringing their own personal histories, experiences and identities into the gallery has itself been harnessed as a design strategy for archival exhibitions. The technique of inviting visitors, staff members and others to select exhibits based on their own interests and to articulate how they feel and respond to them has been used, for instance, at Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives,[23] Derbyshire Record Office[24] and the National Theatre in London.[25] At the National Archives of Luxembourg, the exhibition *Têtes Chercheuses* (14 October 2016 – 28 February 2017) not only showcased the archive as a research institution but also reframed the narrative to focus on the researchers themselves (Figure 4.5). Designer Beryl Koltz, independent curator for the National Archives, commented, 'for certain people, when some documents are shown, even if they are around a given theme, [they] may be dry for them'.[26] With this exhibition, the intention was to provide a different way of presenting these archives, 'through the eyes of the researcher'.[27] In this way, the experience of using archives was displayed

Figure 4.5 Têtes Chercheuses. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Archives of Luxembourg.

through a personalised account that documented the act of research itself and which aimed to articulate the 'passion' of the researcher, thereby bringing a degree of emotion and personality to the process.[28]

At *Têtes Chercheuses*, a large panel displayed a portrait of each of the thirteen individuals or groups of researchers, accompanied by text explaining their research and a film through which the visitor 'enter[s] into the individual's world, where they work', thereby creating an 'immersion' which presents the researcher's experience of the archive 'through their own eyes'.[29] The text itself focused in particular on the moment when the researcher decided to pursue this interest: the point at which it became a passion for them (in childhood, in some cases).[30] The different types of researcher varied from academic historians to filmmakers and artists, whilst the areas of study included the Jewish minority in Luxembourg, adult education, forest management, genealogy and beer. Opposite the panels, display cases featured a selection of the records the researchers used in their work, with written descriptions by the researchers themselves alongside a small number of their own belongings, such as mugs, spectacles and caps, some of which appeared in the films and photographs.

The exhibition was designed to personalise the archive and make it more accessible; as Koltz explained, it 'tells a social story, the parallel between their own lives and their research'.[31] The large-scale photographic portraits dominated the exhibition; they framed the researchers themselves as the subject of the exhibition and reoriented the research as personalised journeys of discovery.

Têtes Chercheuses was also designed to show how the archive, as a place for research, is open to everyone.[32] But it also points to the nature of the archive itself as active in shaping human experience, identity and knowledge. The personal accounts showed how the researchers' passions and interests have been shaped by the archives; in a sense, the researcher and the archive become entwined. This was represented not just through the descriptions in the interpretation, but also in how the personal belongings were mixed with the archival documents on display. More generally, the focus on research likewise gestures to the active nature of the archive: rather than simply presenting a narrative illustrated by archival material, the exhibition showed *how* the archives are used to construct histories through the process of research. In this sense, I suggest, the exhibition drew attention to how archives themselves enable society to know about its past, a theme I will revisit in Chapter 5.

The Archive in Context

I am on a tour of the Library of Congress. Exhibition Director Cheryl Regan and I are visiting the exhibition *Echoes of the Great War: American Experiences of World War I* (4 April 2017 – 21 January 2019). The library is busy today with American families who have come to the capital on holiday, international

tourists and other visitors. It is July; it is incredibly hot in Washington DC, but here in the library it is much cooler as we make our way to the ornate Southwest Exhibition Gallery on the second floor. The exhibition was designed to mark the United States' entry into the First World War. The gallery is divided into a series of rooms, each of which provides a loosely chronological and narrative theme around American experience of the conflict. We stop at a display that explores Home Front contributions to the war effort. Here, Cheryl explains how the use of juxtaposition within exhibition enables connections to be made between disparate collections. She points to a letter dated 7 August 1917 written by Anna Howard Shaw, chair of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense. In this letter, Shaw writes that the Department of Agriculture is distributing a series of posters, the first of which, entitled Waste No Food, should be displayed in post offices and courts. Shaw hopes that the posters will also be displayed in schools, libraries and grocery stores, and writes to the State Chairmen to ask how many posters could be distributed in their respective states. Cheryl points out that Shaw's letter is displayed in the exhibition alongside the poster and a photograph showing its display in the interior of a grocery store (Figure 4.6).

We move on to another part of the exhibition, which examines American fighting on the Western Front. Here, the diary of Private First-Class Irving Greenwald, which recounts the start of the seven-week Meuse-Argonne Offensive in September 1918, is displayed alongside a map detailing the positions on the front line. Cheryl describes how these items are housed in different institutions – even a researcher would not be able to see them together – and so, the space of exhibition works to bring the items together and allows visitors to 'get up close and be in the presence of these things'.[33]

This conversation at the Library of Congress references the nature of exhibition as encounter and its role in shaping and producing new contextual readings of the archive. Exhibition not only creates an encounter between individual and archive; it also reformulates the interrelationships *between* archives that, in turn, generate new meanings and understandings. In the case of the Library of Congress, this seems to point to a unique capacity of exhibition itself to do this: to articulate existing relationships, or create new ones, that are not otherwise typically obvious to visitors (including researchers), and which are accomplished through the physical bringing together of archives into a single space. These new arrangements may be informational, generating learning and knowledge from the juxtaposing of archives, but they may also tap into something more emotional or affectual. What is important here is the idea of presence: of bringing together archives whose connections are strengthened by their mutual display and which form a site of encounter and experience.

Underlying this idea is the importance of context that shapes and defines meaning for archives. This was discussed at the National Archives of Australia where, at the time of my visit, plans were well underway for two new

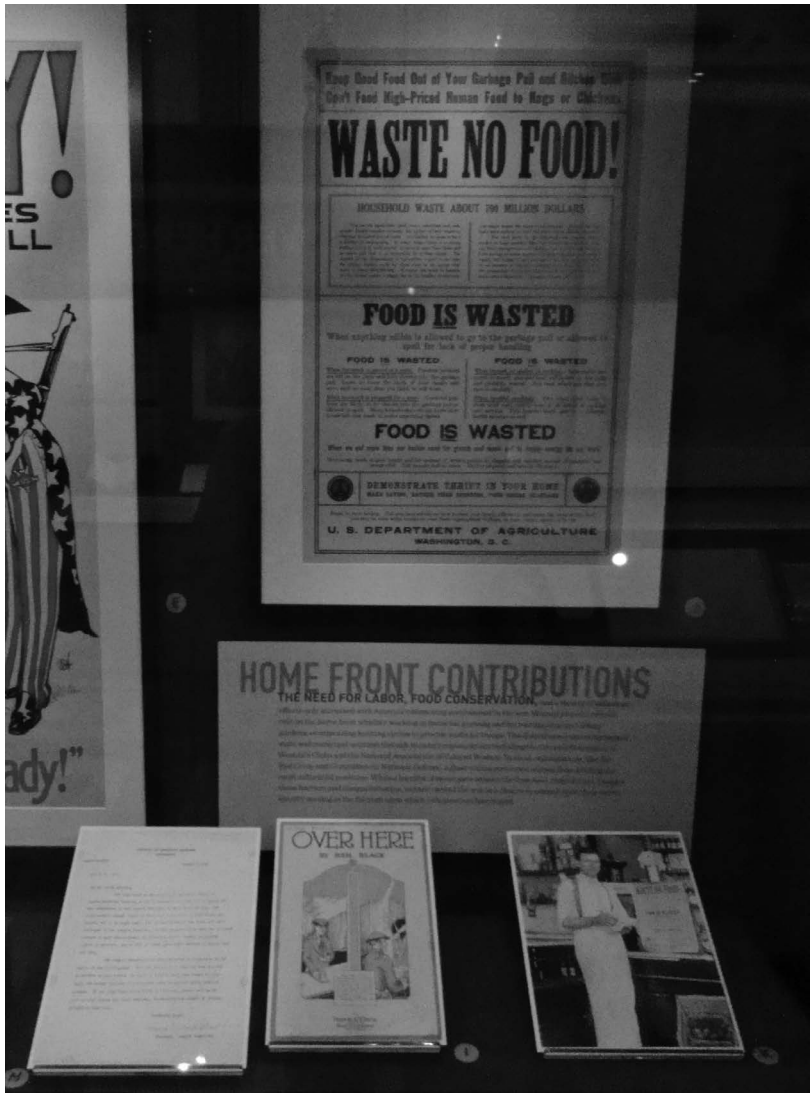

Figure 4.6 Echoes of the Great War, Library of Congress. Photo: Author.

permanent galleries. Here, Senior Curator Anne-Marie Condé described how these new galleries were to be 'strongly archival' and would, therefore, 'emphasise context and how connections are made', since 'archives don't have meaning unless they are in context'.[34] Condé illustrated how this worked through the example of a document discovered by one of the curators. A message had been released via carrier pigeon from a lighthouse on an island

off the coast of Tasmania, requesting the urgent attention of a doctor. The curator checked the context of this message: it had been written during the war, and perhaps the injured man – Edwin Green – was on war service. The curator checked the service records and found that this was the case; furthermore, she learnt that Green survived the war. In the *Connections/Mura gadi* gallery, the pigeon message is displayed in a showcase and the various different contextual elements of the story are drawn together through a large digital wall.[35]

Several writers have identified a concern with the decontextualising effect of exhibition: the archive is removed and isolated from the other records in its *fonds* and the contextual meanings that derive from this.[36] Similar questions have been asked in museums, where objects are isolated, taken out of context and transformed into pieces of art.[37] For archives, however, this is considered especially significant, since archives derive their meaning from the contextual relationships established between individual records and the processes that led to their creation.[38] Yet a reading of the archive as dynamic and fluid, possessing multiple provenances and processes of creation, and constantly reinterpreted and reused, points to context as something far from static or fixed; rather, something always being reshaped and remade.[39] These types of exhibition, then, reveal context as a dynamic and fluid concept that generates new forms of meaning. Interestingly, whereas the Library of Congress used physical arrangements to bring archives together and generate new contextual meanings, at the National Archives of Australia, both physical and digital media are employed. Digital media works by expanding the possibilities for generating new arrangements and orders of archives, bringing disparate collections into conversation in a single (digital) space. The digital wall in the *Connections/Mura gadi* gallery is interactive, enabling visitors to create their own arrangements and contexts (Figure 4.7). In this sense, the digital – both onsite and online – offers the potential to bring visitors into a more active, creative role in shaping new meanings between exhibited archives.

This personalised approach to making connections was also a feature of the onsite exhibition *Velvet Iron Ashes* at the State Library Victoria in Melbourne (Figure 4.8). This exhibition played on the idea of drawing connections between seemingly unrelated items but, interestingly, enabled the visitor to create their own contexts and relationships. The exhibition was based on the idea of browsing for information within a research environment and the unexpected and serendipitous discoveries that such behaviour can lead to. This idea even influenced the design of the exhibition gallery, which used card catalogues in drawers as interpretive captions, for example (Figure 4.9). The exhibition included books, artefacts, artworks and other items from the library's collections on a wide range of subjects including confectionary entrepreneur Macpherson Robertson, the 1934 air race from London to Melbourne, Ukrainian immigrants to the Latrobe Valley in Victoria and the tragic story of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station.

Figure 4.7 Digital wall, *Connections/Mura gadi* permanent exhibition, National Archives of Australia. Photo: Sammy Hawker.

Figure 4.8 Velvet Iron Ashes. Photo: Patrick Rodríguez/Rodríguez Photography/State Library Victoria.

Figure 4.9 Velvet Iron Ashes: exhibit showing interpretive captions based on a card catalogue. Photo: Patrick Rodríguez/Rodríguez Photography/State Library Victoria.

Perhaps the most curious feature in the exhibition was the Map-o-Matic Machine, a digital device that allowed visitors to select two different exhibits within the gallery and then generated a tour around the exhibition linking the two items together (Figure 4.10). The Map-o-Matic Machine had a steampunk design: it resembled a brightly coloured ice cream cart and featured two rotating dials that visitors turned to select their two exhibits. The digital screen on the top of the machine suggested cogs, springs and pulleys working inside to generate the connections, which emerged on a slip of paper from a slot on the side. This provided a map and tour of the gallery.

The tour had (to an extent) been shaped by the visitor themselves: they could choose the objects which interested them, and the tour would give them a personalised route through the exhibition that would differ from other people's. By creating spatial routes through the gallery (shaped around visitors' interests and choices), the exhibition recontextualised and reframed the exhibits in different ways.

What emerges from across these different examples, then, is how exhibition works to reconstruct new contexts for the archive, in which new meanings are generated through the interrelationships of different exhibits. Context here is understood as fluid and malleable, reflecting the dynamic potential for archives to acquire new meanings in different and varied settings. In physical exhibitions, importance is given to presence and placement, whilst digital collections amplify the potential to reshape and reassemble the archive in

Figure 4.10 Velvet Iron Ashes: the Map-o-Matic Machine. Photo: Patrick Rodríguez/ Rodríguez Photography/State Library Victoria.

different ways. Here, then, the medium of exhibition itself is active in generating new knowledge and meaning.

The Performative Archive

It is a cold but bright day in spring; the honey-coloured buildings in Oxford are gleaming in the sun and pink blossom delicately laces the trees. Inside the Bodleian's Western Library, the exhibition gallery is dark, and the carefully lit exhibits and text panels seem to glow, drawing my gaze towards them. I am visiting the exhibition *Designing English: Graphics on the Medieval Page* (1 December 2017 – 22 April 2018), which focuses on the construction and design of medieval manuscripts, especially on the presence and use of the English language (Figures 4.11 and 4.12). As I visit each fragile scroll and volume, the interpretation draws my attention to their materiality in several different ways. It considers manuscripts as physical objects, whose practical design and construction are shaped by the materials of which they are made, such as the sermons of MS Junius 85, written on parchment offcuts, irregularly shaped and featuring holes. With these exhibits, I learn from the materiality of archives how manuscripts were made, and about the people and society who made them.

Figure 4.11 Designing English, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. Photo: Greg Smolonski (Photovibe).

Figure 4.12 Designing English, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. Photo: Greg Smolonski (Photovibe).

With other exhibits, I experience the performative character of archives. When I approach King Alfred the Great's manual for clergymen, I witness how it 'speaks': it records that Alfred 'sent me to his scribes north and south'. Here, this book is given a performative voice, but elsewhere I see how the design and content of manuscripts encourage performativity through handling and use. A mid-fifteenth century actors' roll 'would be handy for learning your part: you could cover lines up as you learned them', whilst the changing use of coloured ink in the musical notation of a Christmas carol helps the singer switch between English and Latin (it also 'makes the book look festive when used in church').

I also read about how the different uses of manuscripts incorporate different senses as well as emotions. The poems featured in MS Junius 11, written in the late tenth or early eleventh centuries, are designed to be read aloud, whilst 'punctuation marks the rhythm visually'; as the caption notes, 'poetry is not purely sound; it depends on layout'. I am invited to imagine myself interacting with these manuscripts. A tiny, late-fourteenth century Book of Hours was designed to be held in meditation, its form 'express[ing] that intimacy'; I am encouraged to 'Imagine holding this in your hands – your arms close to your body, your eyes to the page'. There is a suggestion of physical movement in the archives themselves that encourage bodily responses: the letters of John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady* (late fifteenth century) 'trace the margins ticklishly', whilst for the notebook of Walter Pollard, c.1444–5, the 'ephemeral words were less likely to be lost on folded sheets', as though they might become detached and fall away.

This exhibition uses interpretation to focus on the material and tangible character of manuscripts; to accentuate their presence within the gallery space, as both textual and physical objects – as object-information. The interpretation points to the different kinds of responses that the material archive affords: intellectual knowledge; sensory and emotional reactions; bodily feeling, behaviour and movement. The archives themselves *perform*; they have the capacity to instigate or stimulate physical and intellectual responses from their users.

How important is it to display the material archive? This question folds into an idea of what it means to exhibit something original and the affectual responses, both informational and physical, that the encounter with an original item is designed to provoke.[40] The degree to which this matters seems to vary and perhaps relies on the visitor's perception of what it is they are seeing.[41] In the conversations I had with archivists and designers, the primacy of the authentic, original archive and its value in an exhibition setting emerged as a contested issue. On the one hand, Laurence Ward at London Metropolitan Archives and Sarah Dellar, Interpretation Manager at the UK National Archives questioned whether seeing the original item produced different responses in visitors compared to seeing copies.[42] On the other hand, the importance of staging encounters with the 'real thing' was emphasised at

Amsterdam City Archives,[43] the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) (the National Library of the Netherlands),[44] the National Library of Australia[45] and Heritage Quay;[46] whilst Alan Crookham, Head of The National Gallery's Research Centre, questioned why people would visit museums and galleries if their exhibits had no 'resonance', since they could access digital reproductions at home.[47]

What is interesting here is the degree to which the idea of an encounter with an original archival document is harnessed within the exhibition space to create a certain type of experience. In this context, then, it is interesting to consider again the 'treasures' type exhibition described by Nancy Hovingh at the National Archives of the Netherlands, where design is harnessed to give full attention to the item on display. This kind of technique is arguably typical of earlier archival displays: in 1971, G.A. Chinnery argued for exhibitions of visually interesting documents, ones that caused 'oohs and aahs' among its audience, since text-based documents were considered too difficult to read and therefore unattractive to the public.[48] Treasures-type displays remain popular and will often privilege the record's material properties, as at the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds; and may seek to instil a sense of awe and wonder, as in the case of the *Schatzkammer* or Treasury at the City Library and Archive in Trier, for instance.[49] For Hovingh, the importance of the original, authentic document is key: whether displayed as a 'treasure' or as part of a narrative exhibition, original material is believed to strengthen visitors' engagement with the archives and their connection with the past.[50]

These comments echo the notion of 'historical sensation',[51] the affordances generated by objects (including archives) that gesture to or stimulate some idea of the past. They also speak to a notion of authenticity. For Walter Benjamin, the authenticity of an object is grounded in its 'here and now', the spatial and temporal dimensions that define an original object, in contrast to a reproduction. For Benjamin, an object's authenticity emerges from its capacity to act as a witness to history over time, which establishes its 'authority' and 'weight'. Benjamin used the term 'aura' to describe the essentiality of an object's authenticity: its unique presence and the context in which it was (and continues to be) made and used.[52] This idea of authenticity might help explain the differing values and perceptions with regard to exhibiting original archives. Rather than something that inheres within an object, authenticity is instead a socially constructed category, and the degree to which an object might be felt to possess it is indicative of the sense of value that is generated around it (as well as our relationship to it).[53] One study suggests that, whilst an original object may instil feelings of authenticity, the way in which these objects are presented and experienced, for example through recreations and multi-sensory interpretation in a gallery setting, seems to influence and even amplify these feelings.[54] Whilst acknowledging that responses to exhibits are different for everyone, this suggests that exhibition design is active in shaping the emotional and affectual responses to exhibited archives (and the values

and meanings that are generated about them), including how the display of an original archive is experienced.

What seems to emerge from my conversations with archivists and designers is that some exhibitions are designed to enhance the experience of encountering an authentic, original archival document but, in others, it is less important. It was perhaps most notable in exhibitions of well-known or iconic records. At the Library of Congress, the exhibition *With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition* (12 February – 10 May 2009) included Lincoln's Farewell Address in Springfield, his autobiography and the Gettysburg Address. Exhibitions Director Cheryl Regan described how visitors queued to enter the gallery and would even kiss the glass of the display case.[55]

What is interesting is how different display techniques are used to convey a sense of authenticity, and thus work to accentuate the performativity of the archive. In the example of *Designing English*, it was the interpretation that worked to focus the visitor's attention on the archives' materiality and how they stimulate bodily affordances. In certain cases, the architecture and design of the gallery are designed to produce a certain kind of effect in some visitors, for example, in the display of the American foundational charters at the US National Archives. Here, the space of the exhibition, the Rotunda, is designed almost like a shrine and the ritual aspect of filing past these documents adds a performative character to both the visitor and the archive (Figure 4.13).[56] The National Theatre in London has used music to create an immersive

Figure 4.13 The Rotunda, US National Archives. Photo: Jeffrey Reed/National Archives and Records Administration.

Figure 4.14 Kijk (Look)! Amsterdam 1700–1800. Photo: Mike Bink/Amsterdam City Archives.

experience, designed to 'transport' the visitor and 'evoke the period'.[57] And at Amsterdam City Archives, a vivid scenography influenced by the vibrant eighteenth-century cityscapes on display gave the exhibition *Kijk (Look)! Amsterdam 1700–1800* the appearance of a stage set (Figure 4.14). In each of these cases, the design of the exhibition works to encourage responses based on the archive's age, design, association with historical events or some other aspect.

These are themes that I will return to in Chapter 7. But I want to mention briefly how this idea of performativity seems to work within a digital context. In one sense, the display of a digitised image is a reproduction: as Benjamin argues, to reproduce the original is to reduce its aura, replacing its uniqueness with abundance.[58] Yet as a digital object, in and of itself, it possesses affordances of its own: to make features that cannot be discerned by the eye visible through enlargement, for example.[59] Importantly, it is exhibition design again that works to generate and produce this performativity. The affordances of digital exhibition design enable different types of interaction,[60] and these point to a performativity within digital objects themselves, capable of generating their own types of response in visitors.

The Performative Visitor

I want to consider one further exhibition which amplifies the performativity of the visitor themselves in their encounter with archival material. This is the exhibition *I Am Archive* at Croome Court, a National Trust property

in Worcestershire, UK (from 18 September 2017), which displays copies of records from the estate's archives held at The Hive, the county archive in Worcester. This exhibition harnesses an understanding of the archive as a site of research and discovery; its introductory caption encourages visitors to reflect on how, through all the documentation that people generate in their daily lives, they collect their own archive.

In one sense, this information explains what an archive is to those unfamiliar with the concept. This is particularly important in that the audience for this exhibition, situated as it is in a heritage setting (a stately home) rather than an archive, is likely to comprise people less familiar with an archival setting. But it also points to the individual and personal acts of archiving that typify everyday life and, in this sense, involves the visitor in a collective understanding of what it means to 'archive'. The exhibition invites visitors to explore the archive and discover what it contains, and this agenda has informed its design and interpretation. Designed by erm., a design collective comprising architects and theatre performance designers by profession,[61] the principal feature of the exhibition is a circular structure that mimics the shelving in an archival strong room (Figure 4.15). Visitors are encouraged to take boxes from the shelves, open them, and take out and explore the loose (copy) archival documents and other objects within them that tell the story of the estate. Rather than placing documents behind glass, then, the exhibition encourages a participatory response from visitors that references the nature of the archive as a research institution. The visitor in effect takes on the role of researcher and participates in a process of discovery.

I Am Archive uses the spatial and embodied capacity of exhibition to explore the idea of the archive as a site of discovery and research. It introduces a sense of physical movement, activating the whole body in a singular gesture of performance. The act of reaching for and opening boxes introduces a corporeal,

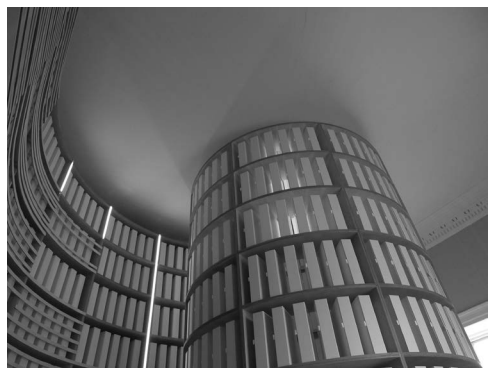

Figure 4.15 I Am Archive, Croome. Visitors can take boxes from the curved shelves. Photo: erm.designs. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Trust.

proprioceptive character.[62] It also reflects the sometimes-unexpected nature of archival research in that the visitor does not know what they will find in the different boxes. This sense of the unusual and the surprising can also be seen, for example, at *Signs – Books – Networks: from Cuneiform Script to Binary Code*, the permanent exhibition at the German Museum of Books and Writing of the German National Library in Leipzig, where visitors open drawers to reveal often unexpected displays, accompanied by music and sound effects (including a group of model bleating sheep in a display about parchment) (Figure 4.16).

But the design of *I Am Archive* also employs the spatial medium of exhibition to reference the collective nature of archiving. Again, the introductory caption comments on how everyone generates information and knowledge about themselves. The performative nature of the exhibition likewise suggests this idea. As co-designer Max Jones explained, 'the central feature of the installation, "the infinity archive", immerses the visitor within the archive, inviting them to consider themselves as a body in this infinite knowledge vein… linking past, present and future'.[63] Moreover, by taking boxes from shelves and removing items from them, the visitor in a sense

Figure 4.16 Signs – Books – Networks: from Cuneiform Script to Binary Code. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of the German Museum of Books and Writing of the German National Library in Leipzig.

mimics the archivist in retrieving material from storage: the visitor enacts and thus becomes the archivist, employing the physical, gestural movement of retrieval. As such, the exhibition collapses the bifurcation between 'archivist' and 'user', articulating instead the common experience of archiving, thereby involving and associating the visitor in the generating of knowledge.

Conclusion

Looking back across this chapter, several themes emerge. Archives are understood as sites of narrative and story, focusing on the specific and the individual: the personal, often everyday histories that reference and point to the bigger narratives of the past. In this sense, the archive is a fragment that both articulates and represents the past. Likewise, context is seen as something fluid and dynamic, open to ever-changing interpretations. And, as object-information, the archive is a material entity that performs through its various affordances. All of these themes give a suggestion of what it means to exhibit the archive.

Throughout, there is a sense of the archive as a site of information and knowledge, a category that underpins many of the conceptual and interpretive aspects of exhibitions. These range from the serendipitous, discovery-led nature of the research institution for *Velvet Iron Ashes* at the State Library Victoria, to the researcher-led interpretation that documented the nature of using archives in the exhibition *Têtes Chercheuses* in Luxembourg and the idea of visitors as researchers that seems to emerge at *I Am Archive* at Croome. Although this concept echoes established readings of the exhibition as a space of learning, it also goes beyond this, I suggest, to inform not only a learning-based encounter but also an experiential engagement with archives, one that articulates the personal, the affectual and the bodily.

In a similar way, the idea of the archive as a site of discovery and research also seems to inform much about the design of archive exhibitions. It runs as a motif through many exhibition design features, such as the card catalogue information captions at the State Library Victoria, for example. It can also be seen in exhibitions that point to the strong rooms and storage spaces of archives that are usually off-limits to public audiences. The design of *I Am Archive* at Croome employs this motif; it is also present in exhibition spaces that resemble vaults, such as those at the Hong Kong Public Records Office and the *Public Vaults* exhibition at the US National Archives, as well as at Amsterdam City Archives which, housed in a former bank, uses its erstwhile art-deco vaults to display its treasures exhibition: the visitor steps through an enormous, circular steel door to enter (Figure 4.17). But this idea extends further into spaces that merge exhibition design with real storage areas, ranging from windows that allow visitors to glimpse the strong rooms of Heritage Quay to the Thomas Jefferson Library at the Library of Congress, where visitors can walk amongst the bookshelves. At the Southbank Centre in London,

Figure 4.17 The Treasury, Amsterdam City Archives. Photo: Alphons Nieuwenhuis/ Amsterdam City Archives.

a working archive storage area incorporates a space for archivists and volunteers to process collections alongside exhibition cases that present thematic displays. In one sense, these exhibitions reference and reinforce the nature of the archive as a site of information and learning, but they also point to a transformative potential of exhibition in reshaping understanding of what takes place within the archive. Merging the public and the behind-the-scenes, the display space and the storage space, begins to collapse the boundaries between the public and the professional, and suggests a reordering of archival experience. The research capacity of the archive becomes enfolded within an experiential understanding of the archive: to *experience* the archive is to learn, discover and understand; it is also to engage, to respond, to become enfolded and immersed within it.

Here, then, it is possible to argue that exhibition enables new perspectives on the archive: on how archives are understood as fragmentary, fluid and performative entities that afford and engage in diverse ways. It also suggests a foregrounding of the space of the archive as experiential, one which harnesses and employs the research capacity of the archive. In this sense, then, I argue that exhibition helps transform our perception, understanding and experience of the archive, of what it means to engage with and use archival material.

Crucially, it is the spatial, located and temporal medium of the exhibition itself which enables this. In all of these readings, the archive is given presence: it is an informational and material entity, the object-information, specifically located within a given space and time. Reframed as an encounter, a

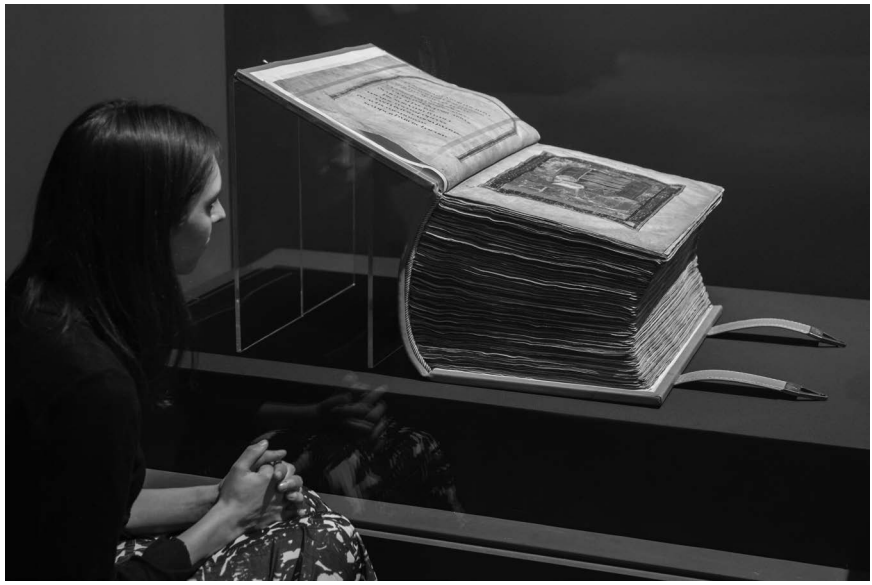

Figure 4.18 Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms, British Library, showing the Codex Amiatinus (MS Amiat. 1, on loan from the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence). Photo: © Sam Lane Photography/The British Library Board. Reproduced by kind permission of the MiC.

meeting point between individual and object, exhibition works to generate experience within a spatial and temporal moment. This was perhaps most strikingly articulated at the British Library's *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* exhibition (19 October 2018 – 19 February 2019), in which the Codex Amiatinus, a Northumbrian Bible that was taken to Italy in 716, 'returns to England for the first time in 1300 years' (Figure 4.18).[64] The interpretation amplified the artefactual presence of the codex and thus framed the exhibition as a unique and specific moment in space and time, shared by visitor and exhibit. In this sense, the physical presence, the contextual arrangement, the interpretive content and the spatial design and architecture together are designed to accentuate a performativity to the exhibition as an encounter, an experience between person and archive.

Notes

1. Brown 1875.
2. Ludger Smit, interview with author, 24 October 2017.
3. Nancy Hovingh, email to author, 31 August 2017.
4. Stefanie van Odenhoven, interview with author, 24 October 2017.
5. Ricoeur 2004, 210.
6. Edwards 2022, Chapter 3.

7. Edwards 2001.
8. See Ankersmit 2005, 167.
9. See Zemon Davis 1983, 1; Ginzburg 1992, xiii; Zemon Davis 1995, 212–6. It is worth acknowledging that microhistory (and New Historicist approaches to history) have been criticised for their 'over- or misinterpretation of archival sources' (Buchanan 2011, 47).
10. Alison Little, email to author, 14 August 2019.
11. Little, email.
12. Little, email.
13. Little, email: Alison Little explains how the census 'was incredibly helpful when teaching school workshops in the space'. On scale and exhibition, see Lugon 2015, 387.
14. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
15. Jennifer Roger, interview with author, 7 July 2017.
16. Smit, interview.
17. Elise Edmonds, email to author, 31 March 2020.
18. Edmonds, email.
19. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
20. Madeleine Trudeau, interview with author, 7 July 2017.
21. Karijn Delen, interview with author, 25 October 2017. Similar comments were made at The UK National Archives (Juliette Johnstone, interview with author, 14 November 2017) and Nationwide Building Society (Sara Kinsey, interview with author, 15 August 2018).
22. Bagnall 2003, 87; Greenberg 2005, 227; Bedford 2014, 59.
23. Thompson et al. 2017.
24. Mosley 2014.
25. Erin Lee, interview with author, 25 February 2021.
26. Beryl Koltz, interview with author, 20 January 2017.
27. Koltz, interview.
28. Koltz, interview.
29. Koltz, interview.
30. Koltz, interview.
31. Koltz, interview.
32. Romain Schroeder, interview with author, 20 January 2017.
33. Cheryl Regan, interview with author, 19 July 2017.
34. Ann-Marie Condé, interview with author, 31 October 2019.
35. Condé, interview.
36. Carter 2008, 197. See also Carter 2011, 164; VanderBerg 2011, 259; Roussain 2014, 167. The General International Standard for Archival Description defines 'fonds' as: 'The whole of the records… organically created and/or accumulated and used by a particular person, family, or corporate body in the course of that creator's activities and functions' (International Council on Archives 2000, 10).
37. Alpers 1991, 26–7.
38. See, for example, MacNeil 1994, 8–9; Ketelaar 2003, 18.
39. Nesmith 2005, 261; Nesmith 2007, 4; Craven 2008, 19–21; Ketelaar 2008, 12; Evans et al. 2015.
40. Lester 2006, 89, 94–6; see also Lester 2018. This question echoes calls within museums for greater attention to the primacy of objects and an openness to the forms of experience which their materiality can afford: see Dudley 2010, 4.
41. Colborne 2010, 55–6.
42. Laurence Ward, interview with author, 3 May 2017; Sarah Dellar, interview with author, 14 November 2017.

43. Smit, interview.
44. Erik Geleijns, interview with author, 25 October 2017.
45. Peter Appleton, email to author, 24 April 2020.
46. Sarah Wickham, interview with author, 25 January 2018.
47. Alan Crookham, interview with author, 5 May 2017.
48. British Records Association 1972, 107–8.
49. See Greenblatt 1991.
50. Hovingh, email, 31 August.
51. Huizinga 1960, 54.
52. Benjamin 2010, 13–6.
53. Kratz 2011, 22.
54. See Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2015, 6.
55. Regan, interview.
56. See Ferriero 2016, 6; Kamps 2016, 12.
57. Lee, interview.
58. Benjamin 2010, 14.
59. Benjamin 2010, 14.
60. See Lester 2006.
61. Max Jones, email to author, 16 October 2021.
62. Dudley 2014, 301–4.
63. Jones, email.
64. British Library, n.d.

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Chapter 5

Exhibitions as Sites of Activism: Reflecting, Challenging, Harnessing

When I leave, the sun is already half-set; it is late in the afternoon on a very cold day in January and the light is fading; it could almost snow. I briskly wend my way up the Rue du Saint-Esprit towards the Old Town, the bare trees framing the buildings, their windows already lit for the evening. The streets around me are quiet; there are few people about: I have the opportunity to reflect upon the exhibition *Blackouts/Trous de mémoire* that I have just visited at the National Archives of Luxembourg. The exhibition, although simple in design, touches on many different themes of personal experience, memory and loss, and wider issues around the nature of the archive itself.

In this chapter, I explore themes of contemporary exhibition practice that situate archival exhibitions as sites of activism. Beginning with a discussion of archives in relation to empathy, I move to consider how archives are entangled with power and politics, and the ways in which contemporary exhibition practice works to unpack ideas and meanings around these issues. I examine this through three broad lenses. Firstly, I consider exhibitions as spaces to reflect upon the nature of the archive as active in shaping certain narratives and discourses about the past. Secondly, I examine how exhibitions harness participatory practice to challenge these discourses and the archive's role within them, introducing different perspectives, viewpoints and ways of thinking about the past. Thirdly, staying with participatory modes of exhibition-making, I consider how archival exhibition is being used to address social needs in the present, gesturing towards the idea of exhibition as a site of liberatory potential.

Exhibitions, Archives and Empathy

I begin by considering the exhibition *Blackouts/Trous de mémoire*, on display at the National Archives of Luxembourg (10 July 2016 – 28 February 2017). This exhibition used a participatory form to explore how understandings of the past are constructed. The designer, Beryl Koltz, explained to me that the exhibition was designed to show that 'History is made from little histories' – that the idea of the past is formed from our own individual and

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personal memories and stories.[1] Echoing the micro-historical and fragmentary nature of the archive as discussed in the previous chapter, this exhibition sought to make the idea of history and memory more 'tangible'.[2] Archive Communications Officer Romain Schroeder described how, in a more practical way, the exhibition was designed to raise awareness of the value of memories, as well as the importance of archives and recordkeeping in documenting the past.[3]

In the exhibition, the visitor was invited to contribute an experience in which some piece of information or knowledge is missing or forgotten. The visitor was also encouraged to reflect on how they felt about this loss: does it cause regret, doubt or pain? The contribution was written onto a circular disc, white on one side and black (to represent the 'blackout' caused by this lost information) on the other. Contributions could also be submitted via social media, which were then printed onto the discs by archive staff. The discs were hung onto a gallery wall in the archive, which 'gradually expanded with each new contribution',[4] whilst visitors were encouraged to turn over the discs and read the contributions made by others (Figure 5.1). Many of the contributions were quite factual and focused on missing documents, but others were very personal: many contributors explored the 'link between historical events and the story of their own families'.[5]

Figure 5.1 Blackouts/Trous de mémoire. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Archives of Luxembourg.

One of the contributions that I read during my visit told the following story.

> Shortly before my grandfather became ill with Alzheimer's, I took a walk with him. I had my minidisc and a stereo microphone with me and asked him about his experiences in the war. He talked about lost family members, resettlement, the police school, things like that. I have never listened to this recording. The minidisc is still at home, but I don't have the heart to listen to it.[6]

I was moved by the poignancy of this short narrative: the painful, personal history; the close family relationship; a tragic sense of impending loss – not just loss of memory, but loss of family. Here, knowledge of the past is deeply personal, closely attached to a sense of who we are and how the past shapes us; its value is defined through the emotional attachments that are placed on a sense of self and of those around us.

Blackouts had a distinctly emotional character, and this was a clear design feature of the exhibition: as Koltz opined, emotion can help 'touch people, to provoke changes… to change the eye of the public on archives'.[7] What this example suggests is how the exhibition, solely comprising the words, thoughts and meanings of its participants, articulated an empathetic encounter with another person's situation. Alluding to the natural entropy of loss that affects all our lives, the exhibition derived its power from its ability to bring the visitor – me, in this case – into an encounter with another person and to comprehend the tapestry of memories and emotions that define their experience. The exhibit derived its meaning not so much from its narrative as from the value that the writer has placed upon it. Here, then, knowledge of the past – and, by extension, the archive – is defined and shaped by the personal and social value it affords, as much as by the information that it expresses.[8]

Although this does not appear to have been an intention behind the exhibition, its focus on lost or missing information alluded to notions of silences: the voices of the 'other', the marginalised and those without power, who are routinely missing from the archive.[9] In some respects, the exhibition might attract questions around why certain documents are not included in the archive and, whilst this might be interpreted as a 'criticism', the archive also recognised that it 'is essential to show the gaps in memory that are there'.[10] The concept of the archival imaginary is useful here; that is, the affectual, emotional meaning that is derived from what records *might* contain when access to them is not possible; of what people imagine them to be, and the real 'weight' that the imagined record carries even when the record itself is not actualised. The imaginary archive serves as a site that evidences or captures the emotional and affectual response to a past event (rather than the event itself) and, as such, generates meaning that carries great significance for those affected by it. The archival imaginary is indicative of those communities who have been failed by the silencing of recordkeeping practice, and for whom the imaginary carries as much value or weight as the record itself would do.[11] By inviting its audience

to articulate that which is missing or lost, and the emotional weight that it carries, *Blackouts* gave presence to that which can only be imagined.

Archives as Active in Shaping the Past: Reflective Exhibition-Practice

The *Blackouts* exhibition was designed to show how easy it is, without proper care and attention (given to the archive), to lose our history. Through its participatory character – by inviting the audience to write and display their personal accounts of what is unknown or lost – the exhibition encouraged its visitors actively to consider their role in the preservation of the past. This concept was designed to stress the importance of archives,[12] but it also gestures to how the archive itself is socially constructed and thus is active in shaping how – and who – society remembers, and thus what – and who – it chooses to forget.

Rather than simply using the archive (just) to tell a certain narrative or story, then, the medium of exhibition is here used to reflect on the nature of the archive and its effect on our understanding of the past. The visitor is brought into a reflexive space to critique and question the process of 'archivization',[13] of how society chooses to formulate and document its own history.[14] In the case of *Blackouts*, this took the form of a participatory design concept. At the US National Archives, this idea emerges through the use of juxtaposition.

Located in the US National Archives' David M. Rubenstein Gallery, opened in 2013, *Records of Rights* is a permanent exhibition focusing on human rights. The exhibition concerns the people who have not enjoyed the rights expressed in the United States' foundation charters, displayed nearby in the purpose-built Rotunda gallery, and their struggles to be granted those rights.[15] The gallery is divided into three areas with an interactive touch table in the centre. Each area tells a particular story and displays a selection of documents, photographs, sound and film footage. In the centre of each section are two documents that are designed as a focal point;[16] the juxtaposition of these exhibits is used to show how the different struggles have unfolded through time.

In the Civil Rights section, the 1868 resolution proposing a fifteenth amendment to the Constitution is displayed. The amendment asserted people's right to vote, irrelevant of their race, colour or servitude. Ratified in 1870, it is displayed alongside the 1965 Voting Rights Act, drawing the visitor's attention to the century that almost passed before African Americans were finally enfranchised (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). In the Women's Rights section, the 1919 resolution proposing the nineteenth amendment, concerning women's right to vote and ratified in 1920,[17] is juxtaposed alongside the 1972 resolution proposing the Equal Rights Amendment, which remains unratified.[18] In the Immigrants' Rights section, the 1884 Statue of Liberty Deed of Gift, which implies a history of welcoming immigration, is displayed alongside the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited all Chinese immigration until the act was repealed in 1943.

Figure 5.2 Records of Rights, showing the fifteenth amendment (1870) and the Voting Rights Act (1965). Photo: Jeffrey Reed/National Archives and Records Administration.

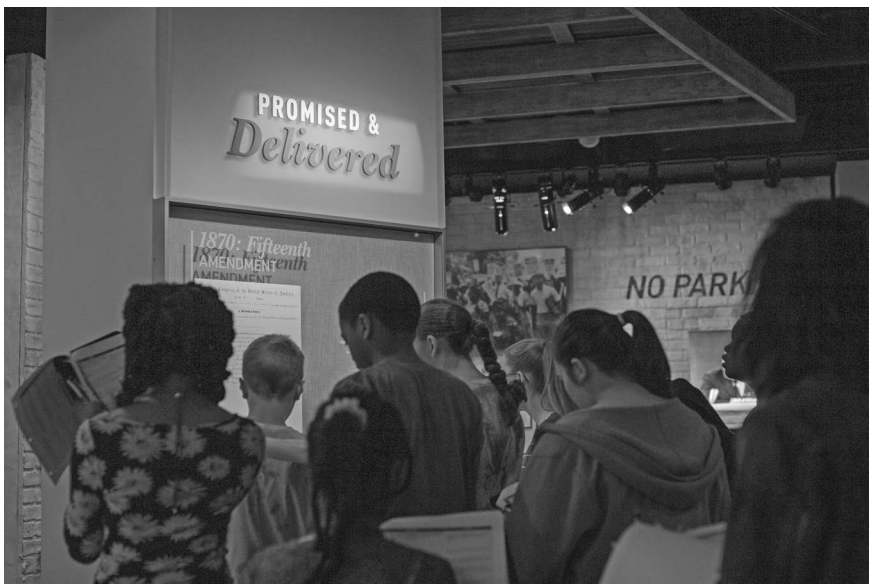

Figure 5.3 Records of Rights. Photo: Jeffrey Reed/National Archives and Records Administration.

The use of these juxtapositions enables new readings to be established in which a more nuanced critique of their historical significance is possible; through this method, established discourses can be questioned and challenged. The use of juxtaposition to generate new perspectives in this way was also a feature of the Bodleian Libraries' semi-permanent *Treasures* exhibition in Oxford, where documents were paired to create new interpretations. Some of these were designed to show a common theme, others to highlight the influence of one work upon the other. But several also worked to question and destabilise established attitudes and ideas. The caption that accompanied Magna Carta spoke of 'freedom and the rule of law' that 'are enshrined in English law and the American Constitution'. Exhibited next to this were ephemeral fragments from the Suffrage Movement, commemorating protests and rallies from the campaign for women's right to vote in the early twentieth century. Here, then, the freedoms enshrined in Magna Carta are reformulated or, as Head of Exhibitions Madeline Slaven expressed it, 'interpreted as the Rights of Man and the Rights of Women' (Figure 5.4).[19]

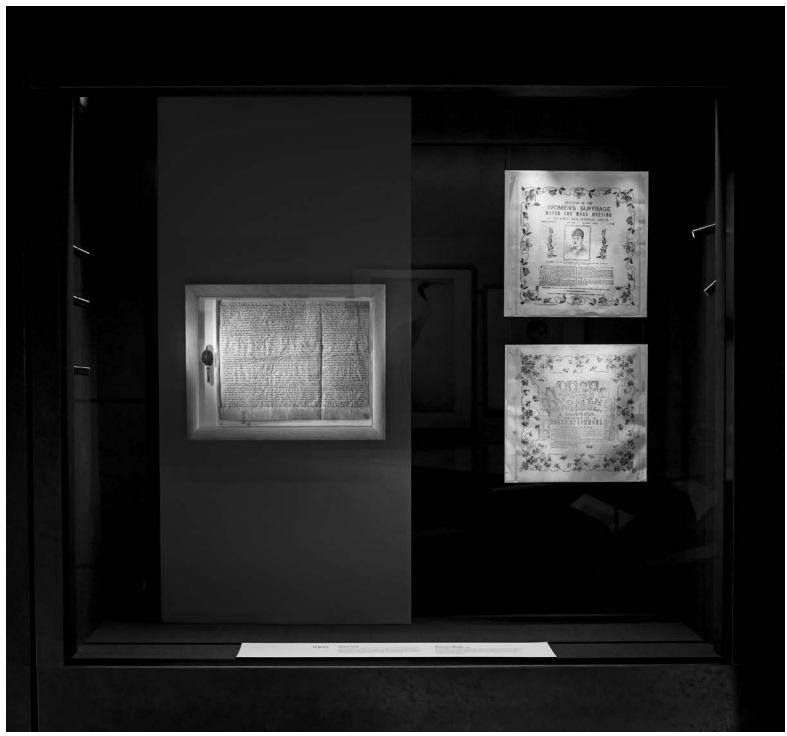

Figure 5.4 Bodleian Libraries *Treasures*: Magna Carta and Women's Suffrage. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

These pairings generate new interpretations, reframing the narratives within the archive in different and often provocative ways. In the case of the US National Archives, juxtaposition draws attention to the ways in which archives themselves are complicit in shaping how society perceives and understands itself. The document's content conveys meanings and messages about the past through which present-day attitudes are shaped. Narratives gather around the archive that not only reflect how society chooses to conceive itself but also shape how society develops and evolves. To critique these concepts through exhibition is to challenge or disrupt the conventional narratives framed within the archive and to repurpose them in new ways.

Narrative and Perspective: Participatory Exhibitions That Challenge the Archive

Along the walls of the narrow gallery is a series of display panels showing photographs and films; I stop at each in turn. Here is a locomotive being lifted by cranes in the largest railway workshop in Kenya. Here, a film shows the use of weights and measures in Zimbabwe. And here, a crowd in Banyang, Cameroon, watches as a man does the high jump.

The photographs and films are part of a large archive that documents the British Empire and Commonwealth. The image of the locomotive was taken in 1960 as a publicity photograph for the East African Railways and Harbours Administration in Nairobi: created within a context of imperial administration, it was presumably designed to showcase British technological engineering in Africa. *Weights and Measures* was an educational film made by the Central African Film Unit in Zimbabwe in 1959. The photograph of the high jump was taken on Empire Day in 1954. Each of these photographs and films works to convey a message of British colonial power and therefore shape understanding of what British imperialism means.

Yet the exhibition, of which these images form a part, offers different perspectives. *Empire through the Lens* is on display at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, which I am visiting on a warm day in June. Each image has been selected by a different person and is accompanied by text on the panel that explains why it was chosen, revealing personal insights into its subject matter. The reasons for their choice vary widely, but many uncover perspectives that emphasise the extractive and exploitative nature of colonisation and the human cost of such an endeavour. Several of the discussions surface the racialised meanings bound within the images.

The archive, as a socially constructed entity, is bound up in power and politics, typically generated and harnessed by the elite and the state.[20] As such, it works to produce a certain narrative and generate certain ideas about the past, ones largely framed by those in power. As a westernised system, the archive is entwined with European governmental bureaucracy and administration, and is thus also embedded in imperialism and expansionism, and

the ongoing reaches of colonialism. The archive is likewise harnessed in the forming of national narratives and is thus implicated in how the past is framed and understood in the present.[21]

The medium of exhibition is likewise itself enfolded with power, as processes of selection and interpretation give presence to certain perspectives and voices and omit or silence others.[22] Exhibition design generates or produces certain forms of value, frameworks through which political statements (knowingly or otherwise) are expressed and communicated.[23] For archival institutions, then, a key concept here is the use to which exhibition is put within the power structures of the archive. Exhibition-making can be used to preserve and reinforce such elite narratives (especially when considered through a lens of supposed 'neutrality') and, through modes of appropriation and representation, compound ongoing processes of colonisation.[24] Yet it also offers the potential to critique, challenge and disrupt them, notably through collaboration, harnessing alternative perspectives and viewpoints that point to the culpability of the archive in shaping certain narratives of the past. Such activist potential suggests a space to work through the layers of politics that imbue the processes of recordkeeping and to give voice to those who have been excluded from archival practice.

Here, then, I want to focus on how collaborative or participatory forms of exhibition-making can work to generate new meaning around archives; new perspectives that question or challenge the discourses of power that they produce. Whilst recognising the slippery nature of what 'participatory' activity means,[25] and questions and assumptions concerning its value,[26] the point here, I argue, is that participation involves a pluralising of perspectives and an active turn towards different interpretations of the past. It points to a radical reordering or decentring of archival practice,[27] a process of shifting power and representation in terms of how the archive – and thus the past – is interpreted, analysed and understood.[28]

Empire through the Lens (30 September 2017 – 31 August 2018) exemplifies such a multi-perspectival technique whereby the selection and interpretation of exhibits were distributed amongst different people, in this case 27 individuals including historians, artists, photographers, the families of colonial officers and community and religious leaders. Each was invited to select a single item from the 500,000 photographs and 2,000 films that comprise part of the archive of the former British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, which closed in 2013 and is now held at Bristol City Archives.

In the gallery, each display panel presented an individually selected photograph or film. It included a large copy of the image, referencing the notions of scale discussed in the last chapter, each image standing for an individual and personal interpretation of the wider history of empire. Beneath the picture, a second photograph showed the person who selected the item, which served to give greater presence to their perspective,[29] along with a written discussion explaining their reasons for choosing it; in some instances, these

Figure 5.5 Empire through the Lens at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in 2017–18. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Culture & Creative Industries.

were elaborated further with audio recordings. The display panels also featured a short biography of the individual, as well as a list of key events that happened around the time the image was taken (Figure 5.5).

Introducing different perspectives reframes the discourses generated within the archive, shaping these complex histories through lenses of (sometimes personal) insight and analysis. Rather than simply (re)presenting the account as recorded within the archive, these selections and interpretations revealed different points of view, often surfacing the problematic and the difficult, and giving space to what may otherwise remain unsaid.

Similar techniques have been used elsewhere. For the exhibition *Highlights in Perspective: From Act of Abjuration to Abdication* at the National Archives of the Netherlands (March 2019 – 5 January 2020), fifteen documents were chosen to represent significant moments in Dutch history (Figure 5.6). Questioning whether these documents hold the same degree of significance for everyone, and thus challenging how archives are used to frame national narratives, the exhibition also included interviews with individuals associated with these events, in which they offered their own personal perspectives. This idea also emerged in the exhibition *Rebellion and Freedom* (from 5 June 2021) which reframed an understanding of the Dutch Golden Age by displaying the Act

Figure 5.6 Highlights in Perspective, National Archives of the Netherlands. Photo: Herman Zonderland.

of Abjuration and the Union of Utrecht, commonly seen as foundational documents of the Dutch republic, alongside records that recount the 1763 slave uprising against the Dutch in Berbice and the 1795 Batavian Revolution (Figure 5.7). The exhibition was designed to contrast the story of national formation alongside that of colonial oppression and to pluralise the histories and experiences that make up collective understanding and memory of the Netherlands.[30]

The exhibition *[Under]Exposed* at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), the National Library of the Netherlands, in development during 2020 and 2021, also planned to use different voices and perspectives to unpack the histories of slavery and colonialism in the Netherlands. The plan for *[Under]Exposed* was for guest curator Lisa Lambrechts to select forty items from the library's collection which would be displayed in the individual, free-standing display cases within the exhibition gallery. Each display case has an accompanying digital screen on which interpretation relevant to each item would be presented. The interpretation would comprise interviews with a wide range of people from outside the library, including the descendants of enslaved people, as well as historians, each of whom would offer their perspectives and views on the collection and the themes emerging from it. As Anouk Janssen, Team Manager of the Collections Department at the KB explained, by giving presence to these different perspectives, the exhibition would 'highlight the

Figure 5.7 Rebellion and Freedom, National Archives of the Netherlands. Photo: Arenda Oomen.

underexposed stories in [the] collection and also the stories that simply aren't told in [the] collection, because [the] collection is a collection of books made by White men'.[31] In this sense, the exhibition works to challenge the collection as a patriarchal, white, and therefore elite narrative, by showing how it only tells one particular story:

> we are really challenging the collection with those different views… [we are] saying there are lots of gaps in this collection, this is not *the* history, *the* history doesn't exist; there is not one story, there are many stories… what we wanted to do is to offer some new stories, some other perspectives which aren't *the* perspectives or *the* story; it's just a starting point for a new conversation.[32]

This project was in development during my conversations with Janssen and, due to personnel commitments and the intention to create a different and more permanent work, the exhibition ultimately did not go ahead; rather, still committed to examining this topic, the KB planned to produce a publication instead. Nonetheless, *[Under]Exposed* remains a vital and important project for discussion, since its design and planning reveal the potential of exhibition to disrupt the archive and to enable different and alternative perspectives to be heard.

Exhibiting Alternative Ways of Knowing about the World

The design strategy of *[Under]Exposed* at the KB points towards exhibition's potential to confront the archive and its entwining with political power by harnessing alternative voices and points of view. The use of interpretive labels to present different perspectives around the collections was a key part of this. But the exhibition's design intended to go further by drawing visitors' attention to the fact that history and knowledge extend beyond the remit of books, thus implicating the *medium* of books and archives itself within the lens of colonisation. The exhibition thus planned to bring alternative ways of viewing and experiencing the world into the gallery space, a form of encounter, in effect, between different recordkeeping traditions and knowledge cultures.

Staying with collaboration as a way of generating new perspectives and insights about the past, here I want to expand the lens to consider how participatory forms of exhibition-making can be used to question the nature of archiving itself. The design of *[Under]Exposed* aimed to confront how the KB's collection of books and manuscripts, by its very nature, excludes other forms of knowledge, including intangible heritage such as oral traditions and performance. These forms of cultural expression reflect the idea of the gestural document, that is, a document of codified and phrasal gestures, including dance, that communicates meaning and preserves a cultural context, as well as represents the past.[33] Tonia Sutherland has argued that the privileging of written documentation as emblematic of 'Eurocentric ideologies and paradigms', ideologies of white supremacy, imperialism and colonialism, has silenced non-Western knowledge systems, practice and beliefs, and calls for an expansion of archival theory and practice to embrace alternative knowledge systems, including gestural and embodied records, as a form of decolonial praxis.[34]

In this sense, then, *[Under]Exposed* was designed to challenge the medium of the library (and, by extension, the archive) as a form of colonial practice.[35] To do this, it planned to incorporate a specially commissioned film designed, as Anouk Janssen explained, 'to highlight the perspective of the enslaved, with dance and music'. The library asked a dancer and a musician to choreograph a performance and compose music that would reflect the oral traditions of Curaçao and the experiences of enslaved people, including their resistance to enslavement. As Janssen further explained,

> the medium of the book is the medium of the coloniser, and the medium of the film, or at least the dance and music, and more intangible heritage, that's the history or the means of the enslaved… that's the point we want to make, if you don't have the book or writing at your disposal, you have different means, and that's what the film reflects.[36]

The film was recorded at a military fortress on the coast of Zeeland where, in the past, ships had set sail for Africa and the Caribbean as part of the slave trade.[37] For the filmmakers, themselves of Curaçaoan heritage, the project represented 'a recognition of their part of history'.[38]

The exhibition design concept planned to project the film onto a video wall that runs along one length of the gallery. The video wall itself is of enormous size and, within the dark interior of the gallery, its brightness and scale create a strong impact. When I visited the library in 2017, the gallery was hosting the library's *Highlights* exhibition, for which a collage of ever-shifting images taken from the library's collections was shown on the video wall, accompanied by an ethereal, musical score: it created a certain atmosphere to the exhibition, a vivid and bright kaleidoscope of imagery that brought a sense of movement and sound to the dark and static display cases (Figure 5.8). At the time of my conversations with Janssen, decisions as to how the film would have been shown in *[Under]Exposed* had not been made – how it would be cut, at what scale it would be shown, what interpretative content would be placed around it. However, the capacity of the video wall to create an immersive experience of performance, movement and sound can work, I suggest, to communicate ideas around different forms of knowledge and cultural expression that speaks on an affectual and bodily scale, thereby decentring the discourses of colonisation recounted in the library's collections. Although ultimately unrealised, these design strategies reveal the potential of exhibition in confronting the archive and foregrounding

Figure 5.8 The KB exhibition gallery. Photo: Jos Uljee/KB.

alternative knowledge systems and the complex and varied readings of the past that they communicate.

Working with community Elders, as well as curators, performers and artists from different communities, points to a shift in power and representation, giving validity to other ways of knowing besides the archival record, and generating different and multiple interpretations of the past. This can be seen, for example, in the exhibition *Sydney Elders: Continuing Aboriginal Stories* (6 October 2018 – 22 March 2020) (Figure 5.9), curated for the State Library of New South Wales by Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones in collaboration with four Sydney Elders – Uncle Chicka Madden, Aunty Esme Timbery, Aunty Sandra Lee and Uncle Dennis Foley. Photographs and drawings from the State Library's collections were displayed alongside the Elders' own works (including, for example, three ceramic fish made by Uncle Chicka), and the captions recounted the Elders' knowledge and memories about the subjects in these items. Four large video screens displayed short films and interviews with the Elders, giving them greater presence in the gallery and working to foreground their perspectives. As Jones writes, 'the exhibition brings into view the Aboriginal knowledges, histories and voices that are locked away in collections'.[39] Some of the stories recounted the lasting and damaging impact of colonisation on the lives of Aboriginal People; others expressed memories of life and work in the changing and developing

Figure 5.9 Sydney Elders: Continuing Aboriginal Stories. Photo: Joy Lai/State Library of New South Wales, with kind permission from Jonathan Jones and Uncle Chicka Madden.

city. Here, exhibition articulates the knowledge of Aboriginal People and works as a space to share these stories.

The importance of collaboration also emerged at Library and Archives Canada (LAC), whose work is prioritised according to government policies. Reflecting upon the complex and challenging processes of exhibition, and the power that it has to shape narrative, was an important aspect of conversations here. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2009 to document and listen to the accounts of survivors of the residential schools' system that operated in the country for more than 150 years and to foster a process of education, reconciliation and healing.[40] In terms of exhibitions, the TRC mandated that LAC will assist in telling the stories of Indigenous Peoples.[41] Curators here have acknowledged the importance of working with Indigenous curators and artists 'who are willing to collaborate with us and guide our stories'.[42] The exhibition *Pathways: Following Traces of Indigenous Routes across Ontario* (18 August – 28 October 2018), curated in partnership with and staged at Toronto Public Library, explored 'land and water routes across what is now Ontario [which] reveal layers of Indigenous knowledge, resistance and presence that connect from time immemorial to the present and future'; the exhibition also featured works by contemporary Indigenous artists.[43]

Can an exhibition decolonise the space of the library or archive? To reflect, critique, include and diversify all point to a practice that calls for greater understanding and justice, but one that perhaps does not encompass the radical, transformative capacity of decolonisation as called for by writers such as J.J. Ghaddar, Ricardo Punzalan and Michelle Caswell. Arguing that accommodating and representing different narratives within the white, elite and colonial structure of the archive reinforces an assimilationist and conformist agenda, they call instead for wider social and structural change that disrupts established concepts and practice embedded within colonial systems, transforms the power structures of the archive and foregrounds non-Western ways of knowing.[44]

A perspective that points to pluralist practice is helpful here, based on an understanding of pluralism that encompasses a recognition and respect of complex and varied worldviews, and of the different knowledge infrastructures that hold these views, whilst acknowledging the limitations derived from the positionality of individual experience.[45] What seems to be key here is a greater call for collaborative and participatory practice in which power and control over knowledge, culture and narrative are harnessed by individuals and communities situated within those knowledge systems – for the archive to abdicate power and control, not as a right of which the archive can dispose, but as a right to be taken by the community, by the colonised. In this sense, the *process* of exhibition itself is key, where this process, for the archive, goes beyond 'inclusivity', of employing 'decoloniality' itself as a colonising tool, and instead speaks to systemic institutional and foundational change.[46]

The participatory design strategy of these exhibitions points to their transformative potential as spaces in which those whose stories have been effaced by the archive can be told: it anticipates a space that is not 'given over', that appropriates or assimilates, but is 'taken', harnessed and used; in which power lies with the colonised, and not with the coloniser. It points towards the possibility of institutional change.

Exhibitions as Sites for Change in the Present

It was a warm spring day in late October when I visited the exhibition *Living Language: Community, Culture, Country* at the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney (13 July 2019 – 3 May 2020). *Living Language* examined the many different languages and dialects of Australia's Aboriginal People, and how their knowledge and understanding of the world is encoded within them (Figure 5.10). It was co-curated by the library's Indigenous Engagement team with a reference group of Elders, leaders and language custodians who guided the exhibition and shaped how it represented their language groups and communities. The exhibition told of how these languages were part of a thriving culture that had existed for thousands of generations but were threatened and damaged by the arrival of Europeans.

Many of the themes that I have discussed earlier in this chapter also emerge in this exhibition. Echoing the discussions around *[Under]Exposed*

Figure 5.10 Living Language: Community, Culture, Country. Photo: Joy Lai/State Library of New South Wales.

at the KB, this exhibition, I argue, also worked to challenge the archive. Many European colonists observed and recorded the languages of Aboriginal People and some of these lists of words and places, many now part of the library's collections, were displayed in the exhibition. These lists were often documented by settlers without acknowledging the individuals who provided the knowledge and, in effect, detached language from the knowledge that inheres within it. Within the exhibition, interpretive captions explained the contexts within which these lists were made. These accounts were often framed by modes of exploitation: William Gardner, who documented lists of words from the Anaiwan People's language in around 1854, for example, was, according to the caption, 'interested in the land's natural features and in finding productive farming land'. As the interpretation elucidated, these accounts provide a record of Aboriginal languages but there is a tension here between these perspectives.

The exhibition also recounted Aboriginal acts of resistance to the assimilationist policies of the government. Between the 1910s and the 1970s, thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their families and brought up in children's homes where they were taught to reject their heritage and adopt White people's culture.[47] As part of this policy, these children, known as the Stolen Generations, were forbidden from speaking their languages. The exhibition also explained that whilst there was no government decree prohibiting Aboriginal People from speaking language, they were often met by severe punishments and repercussions for doing so. Yet it also recounted how:

> In gathering stories for this exhibition we heard of people talking language to themselves in locked rooms. We heard of siblings travelling long distances so that they could chat with one another. And people remember their grandparents staring up at the stars and speaking quietly in language. It is through the resourcefulness, bravery and resilience of our Elders that younger generations have the opportunity to make our living languages spoken and heard again.

This leads me to the key point that I want to focus on here, that is, how *Living Language*, as suggested through its title, not only discussed the experience of Aboriginal language through a lens of the past but also framed much of its content and design around language in the present, notably ongoing work to reclaim and restore language. This positioning emerged immediately on entry, where the visitor read in the introductory caption how

> This exhibition celebrates some of the extraordinary language revitalisation work taking place throughout New South Wales. It asks us all to listen to the ancient knowledge and wisdom our languages carry, and to work towards a future where our languages are treasured by all Australians.

Throughout the exhibition, then, the knowledge of Aboriginal People was foregrounded, including their work to revitalise language for new generations. A wall-size projection at the entrance to the exhibition showed an interactive map produced by First Languages Australia, an organisation working to educate around and advocate the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Titled 'Gambay', meaning 'together' in the Butchulla language of the Hervey Bay region in Queensland, the map displayed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages using the names and groups preferred by the community.[48]

The exhibition captions recorded this process of reclamation and restoration, some of which uses archival sources; the Anaiwan People, for instance, are reclaiming their language and restoring their original placenames, using William Gardner's wordlist as one of the few available sources of the local language. A film was included showing Raymond Ingrey and Naomi Silva teaching Dharawal language to children at the Gujaga Childcare Centre and Yarra Bay House in the La Perouse community in June 2019.

The contemporary and ongoing importance of language emerged strongly in the exhibition design, particularly in the relationship and connection between language and country, the lands and waters that are closely tied to culture and community. Huge images depicting contemporary views of country were displayed along the walls of the exhibition, each identified in its Aboriginal language: Gumbaynggirr Country; Gadigal Country; Yuwaalaraay Country. Each image transitioned the visitor, in effect, from the presentation and discussion of one language to the next, but its size also gave an immersive sense of country and, again, asserted its connectivity to language.

A series of three-quarter-length life-size video portraits of language custodians was also featured in the exhibition, each custodian discussing language and its relationship to country. These presentations again foregrounded Aboriginal ways of knowing and seeing the world and generated a sense of encounter for the visitor. Importantly, they provided a real sense of language as living, as something active and vital in contemporary society.

What emerges here, then, is how exhibition repurposes the space and the material of the archive in a process of social value within the present. It gestures towards the notion of exhibition as a space of liberatory potential, of harnessing archives to address or respond to contemporary needs, including matters of justice. By repurposing the archive as a site for action in the present,[49] exhibition itself is reframed as a mechanism for social change. Once again, key to this reframing is the participatory nature of exhibition as a site in which people can express their own experiences, values and meanings. Here, then, exhibition gestures towards a space of collaboration and exchange, as a site of sharing and healing.[50]

Processes of Participation: Exhibitions Addressing Contemporary Needs

An important theme that emerged in several collaborative exhibitions is the significance of the co-productive *process* itself and what this means to its participants. It represents a process of sharing that also speaks to personal and social needs within contemporary society.

Norfolk Record Office in the United Kingdom worked with Together for Mental Wellbeing and the Restoration Trust on the Heritage Lottery-funded Change Minds project, a 'transformative archival adventure' for people with mental health conditions.[51] Participants on this project used asylum records to research local people, attended creative workshops and curated exhibitions of artwork, books and poetry at various venues including the archive's gallery. The project aimed to support engagement with art, culture and heritage in a process termed 'Culture Therapy', and to explore the relationship between archival heritage and health and wellbeing.[52] In this project, exhibition played a part alongside other activities to harness archival material for the support and wellbeing of individuals within the community and, in this sense, indicates a reframing of the processes of exhibition-making as a way of enabling and supporting contemporary change.

The Oslo City Archive exhibition *When the Ends do not Meet: Poverty in Oslo Before and Now* was a collaborative project shaped around a present-day framing of the issue of poverty. It was specifically designed to 'discuss people's voices today' rather than simply presenting narratives about the past,[53] in other words, to draw attention to contemporary issues through a lens of historical narrative. *When the Ends do not Meet* was a touring exhibition that was on show in city libraries (Figure 5.11). The exhibition did not aim to present

Figure 5.11 When the Ends do not Meet: Poverty in Oslo Before and Now. Photo: Oslo City Archive.

a history of poverty, but rather to talk about different issues connected with this theme, and to use historical material to link with present-day stories. Importantly, it aimed to use the exhibition as a way of changing contemporary attitudes around poverty and to address contemporary stigmas.

To do this, it sought to demonstrate that the relationship between people who experience poverty and those who do not is the same today as it was in the past.[54] Archivist Unn Hovdhaugen explained that some 200,000 people received poor relief in the Norwegian capital between 1878 and 1930: for a small city like Oslo, this was a significant proportion of inhabitants; consequently, it was normal for people to receive assistance in this way.[55] The ancestors of most people today would have received some form of poor relief and so poverty is a part of everyone's story: 'this is not a marginalised history'.[56] What is suggested here is an attempt to break down a sense of the divide in contemporary society between those who have and those who do not: to show that poverty is threaded throughout society and affects everyone, whether directly in the present or historically through the experience of people's ancestors. Contemporary issues of poverty, begging and homelessness are indicative of political and social inequality; harnessing the archive as a way of discussing these issues and seeking to change opinion around them represents an activist perspective that is rooted in a cause for social justice.

This harnessing of historical information, then, represents a repurposing of archival material as a way of addressing a contemporary issue. It was part of a wider initiative that involved the archivists working on three collaborative projects that resulted in content for the exhibition: these were shaped by the participants' own experiences and stories.[57] The first of these projects involved a group of people who were supported by a charity for people experiencing homelessness by selling magazines to passers-by in the street: they were invited to document their experiences by taking photographs with cameras provided by the archive. Secondly, a family from a Romany community described their experiences of the Poor Law, which was used to enforce assimilation of minority people up until the 1980s, and which has echoes in contemporary debates around the banning of begging.[58] The exhibition sought to dispel established macro-historical notions of poverty which are contradicted in the micro-historical detail of the archival record.[59] But crucially it also enabled individuals to document their own experiences: not to be spoken *for*, but to speak themselves, to let their own voices be heard. Rather than reducing issues of poverty to statistical data, the exhibition gave a place for individuals to record their own experiences about their lives; to share their own stories, and therefore decide how they are shown and presented.

The third group of collaborators comprised service users at the *Fattighuset* or Poor House charity. The archivists wanted to talk to these individuals about their experiences of poverty and, whilst they did conduct interviews, they found that the service users were interested less in discussing their own

experiences and more in talking about archives, and how they might access personal records which they had not previously been permitted to see.[60] What emerges perhaps most clearly here is the significance of the exhibition process itself and how this process is shaped by those issues that matter most to its participants. Indeed, as Hovdhaugen remarked, the *process* of exhibition-making is important, more so than the product that results from it.[61] In this sense, exhibition is repurposed as a process that, in itself, reworks the space of the archive as a site of social change.

Whilst these processes may not radically de-centre the archive,[62] they do indicate a turn towards the user, the process of exhibition-making becoming a dialogue shaped by the users' needs. The importance of citizens' rights is a key thread here, of harnessing the archive for the benefits of those it serves; as archivists Johanne Bergkvist and Unn Hovdhaugen commented, it is important that archives serve the needs and rights of citizens. Here, exhibition acts as a way to inform people of their rights as citizens to access information from the archive.[63]

When the Ends do not Meet thus represents a deliberate harnessing of the archive for a socially just cause. Using exhibition to draw parallels with contemporary events has the potential to make the archive relatable and accessible but, more than this, it echoes the active agency of the archive in shaping contemporary society. Furthermore, the participatory process is here framed around the needs of participants and, in this sense, gestures towards the transformative potential of exhibition to harness the archive in response to contemporary social need.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have examined the role that exhibition can play as a site of activist potential, thinking through the transformative capacity of exhibition within the context of social change. Moving across three broadly interconnected spheres, I have considered how exhibition provides a space to reflect upon the nature of the archive and how it influences and shapes our understanding of the past, before examining its role in confronting the archive as complicit in modes of power that marginalise, silence and oppress. From here, the chapter moved to consider the role of exhibition in harnessing the archive as a site of liberatory potential within contemporary society. What emerges across all of these discussions is the importance of participation and collaboration, not just as a means to diversify narratives of the past but also as a driver in shaping potential processes of transformation in the present.

The importance of exhibition as an encounter is again relevant here, in particular, an encounter with other people, their perspectives and views. The idea of empathy, which framed the opening discussion to this chapter, is once again important here. The exhibition *Blackouts* at the National Archives of Luxembourg was designed to stimulate an emotional response to questions

of memory and loss; and this, I argue, is conveyed through an empathetic encounter rooted in the experiences of the people whose contributions formed the exhibition. This sense of empathy also emerged, for example, in the exhibition *Where the Ends do not Meet* at Oslo City Archive, where the experiences and stories of those marginalised by society were given presence and the space to be told and to be heard. For the archive, the participatory capacity of exhibitions such as these calls for an empathetic approach rooted in the care and respect of others.[64]

There is a transformative potential here in what it means to experience the archive. The space of an exhibition produced through participatory means is a negotiated space: it is a space in which archival power must be ceded or abdicated, thus producing reflective spaces, counter spaces, spaces of alternative understanding and ways of knowing. All these types of spaces point to a re-ordering or de-centring of the archive, in which knowledge and understanding are far from assured, concrete and fixed, but open to negotiation, challenge and reframing. Here, then, the exhibition is a site of debate, a space of conversation, an encounter with other understandings and experiences, but also a space of emotion and empathy. It points to a transformative role in reframing what it means to be in the archive.

Notes

1. Beryl Koltz, interview with author, 20 January 2017.
2. Koltz, interview.
3. Romain Schroeder, interview with author, 20 January 2017.
4. Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 2016.
5. Koltz, interview.
6. Translated from German.
7. Koltz, interview.
8. See also Roeschley and Kim 2019, 46. On radical empathy and archives more generally, see Caswell and Cifor 2016.
9. Cook 2001, 23–4.
10. Schroeder, interview.
11. Gilliland and Caswell 2016, 56–7, 71; see also Caswell and Gilliland 2015.
12. Schroeder, interview.
13. Derrida 1996, 17.
14. On reflexive approaches to exhibition making, see McMaster 1996; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000, 17; Färber 2007, 219; Witcomb 2013, 257, 259.
15. Corinne Porter, interview with author, 17 July 2017.
16. Porter, interview.
17. The first women's suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress in 1878; the exhibit displays the resolution of 1919.
18. This resolution was first introduced in Congress in 1923.
19. Madeline Slaven, interview with author, 20 February 2017.
20. Cook 2001, 27.
21. Ghaddar and Caswell 2019; see also Stoler 2009, 20.
22. Macdonald 1998, 1.
23. See Kratz 2011.

24. On a general discussion of these concepts in recordkeeping, see Ghaddar 2016; Ghaddar and Caswell 2019.
25. Flinn and Sexton 2019, 626; see also Black 2005, 185; Kean 2013, xiv–xvi; Martin 2013, 8.
26. Nuala Morse, Morag Macpherson and Sophie Robinson (2013, 92) discuss how participatory forms of engagement are often designed to overcome barriers but their claims to democratic empowerment can be constrained by institutional control.
27. Huvila 2008, 25; see also Carter 2006, 231; Iacovino 2010, 362–3.
28. Flinn and Sexton 2019, 626–8; see also Cook 2013, 114–5; Simon 2010, i–ii; Johnson 2017, 145–6.
29. Edwards n.d., para.8.
30. Exhibition-maker, interview with author, 1 June 2021.
31. Anouk Janssen, interview with author, 14 April 2021.
32. Janssen, interview, 14 April.
33. Sutherland 2019, 177–8.
34. Sutherland 2019, 179.
35. See Stoler 2009.
36. Anouk Janssen, interview with author, 20 April 2021.
37. Janssen, interview, 14 April.
38. Janssen, interview, 20 April.
39. Jones 2018.
40. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015. For discussions relating to archives, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and wider issues in Canada, see Nathan, Shaffer and Castor 2015 and Ghaddar 2016; see also Linden 2018. On the importance of storytelling within Indigenous communities, see Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi 2009.
41. Madeleine Trudeau and Jennifer Roger, interview with author, 7 July 2017.
42. Roger, interview.
43. Library and Archives Canada 2018; Roger, interview.
44. Ghaddar 2016; Punzalan and Caswell 2016; Ghaddar and Caswell 2019, 72, 78–9.
45. Nathan, Shaffer and Castor 2015.
46. See Kassim 2017; Wajid and Minott 2019.
47. See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997; Iacovino 2010, 354.
48. The map can be accessed online at https://gambay.com.au (accessed 25 August 2021).
49. Duff et al 2013, 319–20, 330; Caswell 2014a, 209; Caswell 2014b, 314; Caswell 2021.
50. Within the context of trauma, Eric Ketelaar (2008, 16–7) argues for the importance of 'shared stories' as agents of forgiveness and healing.
51. Change Minds 2017a; Nick Sellwood, interview with author, 25 April 2017.
52. Change Minds 2017b; Sellwood, interview. For the exhibition, see Change Minds 2017c.
53. Johanne Bergkvist, interview with author, 8 September 2017.
54. Oslo Byarkiv/Unn Hovdhaugen 2016, slide 3.
55. Unn Hovdhaugen, interview with author, 8 September 2017.
56. Bergkvist, interview.
57. Events were also staged around the exhibitions in the libraries, including lectures and debates about poverty: Bergkvist and Hovdhaugen, interview.
58. Bergkvist and Hovdhaugen, interview.
59. Johanne Bergkvist described how the history of workhouses and enforced labour in Norway is typically ignored in wider historical narratives, but archival material shows that this was, in fact, part of the country's history (Bergkvist, interview).

60. Bergkvist, interview.
61. Hovdhaugen, interview.
62. See Huvila 2008, 25.
63. Bergkvist and Hovdhaugen, interview.
64. See Caswell and Cifor 2016.

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Chapter 6

Archives+, Manchester: Reshaping Space

It is a busy day today at Archives+. I hurry into the Central Library in Manchester from the bright but cool autumnal day outside, straight through the entrance and into the archive, the large, circular, open space on the library's ground floor. The café is buzzing with people meeting and chatting over a hot drink. Several families with young children are talking together. A school party is having a tour of the exhibition. Individuals and couples look at the displays of maps, documents and photographs of the city. Students sit in groups on the floor or alone on the comfy chairs dotted about the place. There is lots going on today, everybody using the space as they want: to study, engage with archives, learn, meet, socialise.

Archives+ provides a helpful example here to investigate the reshaping of archival spaces to create new and different experiences, and the role that exhibition can play within this. A partnership of archive services based in Manchester's Central Library, Archives+ saw the bringing together of several archives into a single location and the creation of a large interpretation space, including an exhibition, as its main public offer. The creation of Archives+ was part of a wider refurbishment and transformation programme involving the city's Town Hall buildings and the Central Library; it opened to the public in 2014.

My inquiry in this chapter considers spatial and organisational change within the archive. I examine the initial concepts that developed around Archives+ and the consultation processes that were employed, before turning to the interpretation and design strategy for the exhibition. I am particularly interested in how this work indicates a turn towards user-centred design and the wider implications of this on experience within the archive. I argue that Archives+ indicates or points to potential new ways of thinking about the archive as a meeting place, a space for discussion and debate, and of exhibition as an encounter between different people, their perspectives and views.

An Overview of Archives+

The first attempt at a major redevelopment of Manchester's archives was the Mackie Mayor project, which was presented to the city council in 2006.[1]

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This project proposed to restore the disused Mackie Mayor Building, a Victorian market building located in the Northern Quarter of the city centre and convert it into the Manchester Heritage Centre. Also termed the Marketplace, the Heritage Centre would comprise a partnership of five previously separate archives: Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO), operating in a building in the Ancoats district of the city; Manchester Archives and Local Studies (MALS), based in the Central Library (both operated by and either wholly or partly funded by Manchester City Council); the Manchester Registration Office Historical Records Service; the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (part of the University of Manchester); and the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society (MLFHS). Capital costs for the project were to be derived from Manchester City Council's capital fund (£4 million) and contributions from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) (£1,600,000), with an application being made to the National Heritage Lottery Fund of £7,108,000, totalling £12,708,000.[2] The project received support from the council[3] but the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was unsuccessful. According to Kevin Bolton, the former manager of MALS and, later, Archives+, the HLF deemed the bid to be strong but it faced considerable competition;[4] whilst Katharine Carter, former county archivist with responsibility for GMCRO, commented that the substantial amount requested and the large-scale HLF investment that Manchester City Centre had already received were also factors.[5] Despite this lack of success, this project represents an early incarnation of the Archives+ partnership which was later established in Manchester Central Library.

After the failure of the Mackie Mayor project to secure financial backing from the HLF, a new opportunity to develop an archive centre was presented with the redevelopment of Manchester's Town Hall Complex, which included the Central Library. This large-scale refurbishment programme was agreed upon at a meeting of the City Council's Executive Committee on 11 February 2009, following a series of earlier reviews and proposals.[6] Although this programme was concerned with developing and refurbishing these buildings,[7] it also prioritised the introduction of service improvements for customers and more efficient ways of working for staff.[8] The Central Library was in a physical state of disrepair, whilst much of the building was inaccessible to the public, with a confusing internal arrangement.[9] Moreover, the building was felt to lack 'a suitable learning environment', requiring a more 'appropriate approach to attitude, layout, control and customer engagement'.[10] The entire project had a budget approval of £155 million,[11] with between £50 and £60 million allocated for the library.[12] The library also established a Development Trust to assist in fundraising to support additional activities as part of the capital project.[13] Ryder Architecture was appointed as architects for the refurbished Central Library.[14] The work took five years, with the Central Library reopening to the public on 22 March 2014 (Figure 6.1).[15]

Figure 6.1 Manchester Central Library. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of Archives+ Manchester Central Library.

The decision to include a new combined archive service within the Central Library is mentioned in the earliest council reports concerning the Town Hall refurbishment, which notes 'the opportunity to locate the County Records Office within Central Library [alongside MALS], to maximise the benefit of improved public access to a unique collection about Manchester'.[16] This new archive service retained the partnership model established for the Mackie Mayor project, although several new partners now joined the scheme: the North West Film Archive (NWFA, part of Manchester Metropolitan University); the British Film Institute (BFI); and Family Search (formerly the Genealogical Society of Utah). Several of the partners (MALS, GMCRO, the Race Relations Resource Centre, MLFHS and NWFA) would physically relocate to the new archive service in the Central Library, whilst the others would provide support and access to their resources, for example through the creation of a BFI Mediatheque within the archive.[17] A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the different partners in April 2011, outlining their agreement to establish a project board and steering group, arrangements concerning rent and service charges, and their commitment to the project's collaborative aims.[18]

The proposed location of the new archive service within the Central Library varied during the project planning but was eventually located on the ground floor of the refurbished building. An important aspect of the new

archive was an interpretation and activity programme, including a large-scale exhibition. For the development of this new programme, a successful round one application to the HLF was made in April 2011, indicating initial support from the HLF and the allocation of £72,500 development funding to assist the project in moving to the second round (with Manchester City Council providing £22,388 match funding).[19] The development phase began in September 2011,[20] whilst the following month Mather & Co was appointed as exhibition designers.[21] The activity plan consultant contract was awarded to Janice Tullock Associates in November 2011;[22] whilst Barker Langham, who had provided ongoing support during the earlier stage, was appointed as the business plan consultant.[23] Extensive audience consultation about the project's plans was conducted between November 2011 and May 2012. The second-round application to the HLF was made in June 2012 and successfully secured a grant of £1.55m; whilst match funding from Manchester City Council amounted to £500,000.[24] The archive received its 'permission to start' from the Heritage Lottery in November 2012;[25] the work was completed for the library reopening in the spring of 2014.

Vision, Aims and Planning: Towards User-Centred Design

Although there were pragmatic economic and political drivers behind the development of the new archive provision, based primarily around buildings and service delivery,[26] a key feature of Archives+ (Figure 6.2) was public engagement.[27]

Figure 6.2 Archives+, Manchester Central Library. Photo: Mather & Co.

The round one application to the HLF opens its vision statement with: 'Archives+ will create new ways for more people to discover the richness and relevance of archive heritage, share their own stories and have a personalised experience of history that enables them to make connections between their own roots and different aspects of Manchester's shared history'.[28] This opening sentence is omitted in the round two application, but its sense is still conveyed in how the vision here is articulated:

> Archives+ will bring together and integrate Manchester's largest and most important archives and records. It will create user driven, freely accessible resources for people to engage with histories in a dynamic new type of public space and lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the whole region.
>
> Archives+ will raise awareness of and provide easy access to Manchester histories for the broadest possible audiences, including existing and new ones. The exhibitions and digital access engagement facilities in the transformed Library and in its on-line presence will create a bridge for users into the partners' collections and the histories within them.[29]

The vision statement continues by describing the different ways in which audience development will be shaped, including a breakdown of the different parts of the exhibition spaces, the principles on which this is based and the activities and learning that will be introduced. It also recognises the value of the collections and their essential role in this work.

The round-two application also includes a list of refined project aims:

> The project aims are to:
> Create a new public face for Manchester's history, bringing together archive partners and providing signposts to other heritage resources and sites.
> Provide unique opportunities to discover, share, celebrate and create the stories of Manchester's history and communities.
> Enable people to feel they've made a connection with Manchester and its history and been touched by the experience.
> Create a strong sense of place, rooted in welcoming the complexity and multiplicity of stories that together make the history of Manchester and shape the way we are today.
> Deliver the project using innovative design solutions and cutting-edge technology and to ensure input from the widest possible range of co-creators.
> Bring targeted new and expanded audiences to Archives+ through marketing and the provision of exciting and innovative activities and resources.
> Use the power of heritage as a catalyst for lifelong learning.
> Demonstrate that archives are for everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or any other factor.[30]

References are also made to the need for improved and increased storage space; better environmental standards; and high-quality storage, preservation and conservation facilities.[31]

The first point emerging from this documentation is how several of the aims are concerned with increasing use, and an aspiration to develop and diversify audiences. Analyses of the individual partners' audiences before the creation of Archives+ indicate that the majority of archive users were over 55, largely White and most likely to access information online rather than in person. They also note that the onsite audience was 'loyal', regularly visiting the archive and spending several hours using the search room for research purposes. Most of these users were therefore regular visitors, with only a fifth being first-time users; in other words, the archives were not attracting substantially large numbers of new visitors but were instead catering to an established audience who nonetheless represented only a narrow proportion of the general population.[32] There were some variations across the different partners: the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, for example, had a strong educational audience and a much higher number of users from ethnic minority communities.[33] Whilst the use of archives in the north-west was slightly higher than the national average, at just over five per cent of the population in 2010/11, the audience demographic nonetheless largely mirrored that of archive users nationally, which 'do not reflect the make-up of the wider population, with only 5% of them under 24 years old, and less than 2% classing themselves as non-white'.[34]

An important institutional driver for the Archives+ project, then, was to diversify the audience, to 'address the fact that the existing audience does not reflect the make-up of the general population',[35] by considering the various barriers to access and use. The Archives+ project eventually focused on four key target audiences, reflecting the demographic of the local population. These audiences were: schools (key stages 2, 3 and 4); young people aged 14 to 25; families with children of primary school age; and heritage tourists. Two further audience groups were identified: ethnic minority communities; and non-city centre residents in Manchester; these were integrated across the other four target groups. Existing audiences (over 55s, library users and family history researchers) were also included as an integral part of the wider archive usership.[36] As a partnership of different archives and societies, Archives+ had the capacity to draw together and share each partners' audiences through the integration of their different collections, as outlined in the vision.[37]

Hand-in-hand with the need to attract a broader and more diverse audience is the need for greater visibility. This concept emerges in the vision and aims: Archives+ 'will raise awareness' of archives; it will create 'a new public face for Manchester's heritage'.[38] Visibility was a key factor for several of the archives and societies joining the Archives+ partnership. The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, for example, was established by Professor Lou Kushnick in 1999 as an open-access library at the University of Manchester,

focusing on race relations. One of the key drivers in establishing the centre was the importance placed on having a community focus. Although it was an effective library space and the centre did engage in community work, its location meant it was not readily accessible. A desire for increased visibility and access was a key part of the centre's involvement in Archives+.[39] Likewise, in addition to declining membership numbers, largely driven by an increase in online resources, and increased rent on its existing building, MLFHS cited the access which Archives+ would provide to the general public and the chance to raise the society's public profile and work as key factors in joining the project.[40]

The need to attract greater numbers of users acquires a sense of urgency when seen from an economic perspective. According to Neil MacInnes, the City Council's Strategic Lead for Libraries, Galleries and Culture, the cost of running a service like MALS for such a small number of visitors was not sustainable, and this situation would only become more acute with increased budget pressures.[41] There was concern within the city council regarding how their archive services could be designed as vital for contemporary society and, in turn, resilient to financial reductions.[42] Such a position represents the pragmatic and real-world context in which many cultural institutions are situated.[43]

But it was also recognised that such work was important and essential in its own right.[44] This emerges in a growing interest in the *kinds* of experience that visitors themselves want to have within the archive. Such an idea focuses less on institutionally driven agendas that stress visitor numbers and more on a sense of how visitors themselves can create value and meaning with archives, as implied through the project aims that speak of visitors making a 'connection with Manchester and its history'[45] and to facilitate a 'personalised experience of history'.[46] This suggests a space open to new forms of experience and engagement, recognising that established forms of provision do not seem to represent how larger numbers of people might want to engage with archives. Dave Govier, former Collections Manager at Archives+, described how attention at MALS had been focused on search room users but, in fact, less than one per cent of library visitors were using the search room. He argued that it 'would be wrong of us to spend 30 or 40 per cent of our time on providing an excellent service for such a tiny proportion of people'.[47] Such a view suggests that whilst visitor numbers might in themselves provide a helpful barometer of use, they cannot be the only indicators for change. Put another way, making alterations that reinforce existing provision cannot, in themselves, reinvigorate an archive if those provisions do not reflect what audiences themselves want and need.

An important part of this thinking was described by Kevin Bolton. He discussed a meeting that took place during the development of the Mackie Mayor project between himself (then the manager of MALS); Vicky Rosin, the assistant chief executive for cultural services and the former head of libraries; Nicky Parker, at that time the current head of libraries; and Katharine Carter. The group had been challenged by the HLF to produce something that was more

radical than the original proposals. Bolton described how, looking back, this proved to be a critical moment. He credits Katharine Carter with suggesting how they might use the space differently. Rather than thinking about what archives are and how people used them, they should instead think about key target audiences and, crucially, what they might want to do within the archive space.[48] In essence, the conversation seems to have shifted away from thinking about archives as a resource to thinking about audiences with an interest or purpose. It reflects thinking about what the archive is for, rather than what it is or does.[49] This approach gives greater agency to the user, gesturing to a sense of the archive shaped and defined by users themselves, in contrast to a space designed to be inhabited and used in specific and predetermined ways. This sense of enabling visitors' engagement seems to underlie much of the project development: 'The ultimate aim of the work under this Manchester Archives+ project is not necessarily to drive footfall into the building or to the reading room, but to connect to users in a way which is most appropriate to them'.[50]

What then emerges from this thinking is a turn towards a 'user-driven' approach to service delivery.[51] This approach underpinned much of the development at Archives+; as Dave Govier commented, 'this was a consistently important part of what Archives+ would be, listening to how users react to unmediated material and how that experience would be part of what we created'.[52] A key part of this thinking emerges through the extensive consultation process which helped shape the design of the new archive.

The project team drew on a number of existing pieces of audience research including both national findings and projects undertaken by individual Archives+ partners before the project planning began. These included an investigation into digital initiatives and social media networks, designed to open up a process of public co-production and curation.[53] These projects appear to be quite ad hoc in nature, and a number of further consultation exercises were carried out at different stages of the project.[54]

The Archives+ Outline Activity Plan, developed for the round one application to the HLF, reports that 'significant consultation has highlighted key barriers to the involvement of people in the project'; these barriers are described alongside a broad range of activities designed to remove them.[55] The barriers are quite broad in scope and include practical issues such as limited opening times and poor public transport links, but some of them reflect more problematic issues around archives themselves. Besides a lack of relevance, awareness or access to archival material, concerns were raised that 'archives [are] seen as "establishment" or intimidating'.[56] This issue surfaces an underlying problem: that archives themselves are conceived as exclusive and elitist, something reflected within the sector's narrow audience profiles.

For the second-round application to the HLF, a detailed Activity and Interpretation plan was produced by Janice Tullock Associates. A more detailed audience consultation exercise was carried out to help shape the activity and exhibition plans and make sure they were responsive to the needs

of the project's target audiences.[57] Focus groups met which reflected three of the project's four key target audiences (including the 'integrated' audiences) and comprised a group of teachers based in Wythenshawe; a group of young people; a group of families who visit museums; a schools-based focus group including families originally from Somalia; a group of youth workers; and the City South Manchester Housing community group.[58] The Heritage Tourists target audience was not the subject of a focus group but the consultation exercise drew on existing research for this audience.[59]

The findings are summarised in an appendix to the Activity and Interpretation Plan, along with recommendations for the project.[60] Some of the findings and recommendations suggest practical changes to service delivery and, in a sense, reflect responses to the more practical barriers identified in the round-one application; for example, an extension of opening hours, baby-changing facilities and space to navigate pushchairs. Whilst these are important, and show a recognition of audience need, they do not in themselves fundamentally alter the kinds of things the archive offers. In other words, taken on their own, they presuppose that what these visitors want to do is not that different from what existing audiences do. In this sense, they reinforce established notions of the archive and how it is used.

The focus group report also includes a number of recommendations that suggest more fundamental changes to the archive. These generally derive from those target audiences who were less represented in the archives before its redevelopment, especially young people and families. These findings reflect some of the more integral issues identified in the round-one application, namely the exclusive and establishment nature of the archive, and represent a call for transformation in terms of what the archive is for.

Firstly, there are recommendations which indicate that the archive should be designed so that it offers something relevant and meaningful to its audiences, ranging from the general ('Archives+ should be relevant to young people and their lives') to the more specific ('the exhibition themes need to be outward-looking, provocative, and to give the collections an opportunity to develop to reflect today's interests'; 'the opportunity for families to share information with children about their own culture would be of interest').

Secondly, and closely linked to these ideas of relevance, are findings that indicate users' interest and need to shape access to and experience of archives themselves. They are expressed through a personalisation of the archive, and audience involvement not just in sharing and creating content, but also in decision-making too: 'Co-creation for schools is important. Schools should be given the opportunity to actively contribute to Archives+'; 'Young people can contribute to decision-making and develop ownership from doing so'; 'Children and families would enjoy the opportunity to contribute information about themselves in the exhibition or associated activity'; 'People want to make individual connections between themselves, their experience and their locality'. Importantly, the community exhibition space, which the focus

groups identified as 'an opportunity to host exhibitions created by both communities and individuals', 'should be a space for individuals and communities and shouldn't be seen as a poor relation of the main exhibition space'.

Thirdly, some of the recommendations suggest spaces designed to be used in new ways, reflecting audience expectation: 'Families want a place where they can interact and have a good time together as a group – engagement in historical themes is a bonus'; 'Archives+ needs to provide social spaces for young people to feel "at home"'; 'If the exhibition is seen as a fun, educational place for families to spend time they will be motivated to visit'.

Finally, there are recommendations that indicate the importance of attitudinal change. These range from the comment that 'Young people need to feel welcome', to the broader 'Staffing and training needs for staff in the exhibition spaces needs to be reviewed to ensure that ALL staff provide not only a warm welcome, but are also able to engage with local communities and act as "enablers" and encourage visitor engagement. Visitor engagement should be part of ALL job descriptions and personal training plans'.[61]

What emerges here, then, is a user-oriented interpretation of what the space of the archive should be; of how communities and individuals conceive the archive in a way that is meaningful to them. These themes reappear in the Archives+ vision and aims. Here, the theme of a participatory archival experience is indicated through references to sharing and co-creating, as well as the 'complexity and multiplicity' of historical narratives, which 'shape the way we are today'.[62] The idea of the archive shifting away from a bureaucratic, administrative resource to a site of personal meaning-making is reflected here in the way in which an active audience seeks to relate histories and narratives to their own lives. Moreover, the influence of popular forms of history and heritage, focusing on the local and the personal, is also evident.

The socio-political re-framing of the archive that emerges through this exercise has an inevitable influence on the production of space.[63] An active approach to user involvement redraws the power relationship between archivist and user. A consultative process, actively listening to users' reactions, as Dave Govier put it,[64] indicates a move towards a more equitable relationship in terms of how archives are understood and used. Value is placed on the perspectives of people and how *they* want to experience the archive. Such a process produces a certain kind of space: here, one that is indicative of a flatter and more democratic approach to archive-making.

The Space of Archives+: Reformulating Experience

The main part of Archives+ takes the form of an open-access space in which visitors are invited to engage with archival and local history material in a number of different ways. These include the interpretive exhibition; the video 'pods', with access to film and sound material; and a local studies library space. A study space with access to microform family and local history material and

Figure 6.3 View across the centre of Archives+. Photo: Mather & Co.

an enclosed search room are located deeper in the building. Open on one side to the library's entrance, elevators and stairs, Archives+ also features a café and a small shop (Figure 6.3).

This arrangement embodies a spatial refiguring of the archive. From an institutional perspective, it is driven by a need for visibility, to showcase the partners' collections in a coherent and accessible way;[65] in one sense, this echoes a promotional use of archives, but it also suggests creating spaces of encounter in approachable ways. Indeed, for audiences, it provides a form of access with reduced barriers and regulations. Larysa Bolton, Heritage Collections Officer at Archives+, described the space and the exhibition as a way to change negative conversations of what is restricted and unavailable to positive conversations of access and engagement.[66] The space, therefore, introduces a sense of accessibility and familiarity into the archive: without knowing anything about archives, people can immediately engage in an informal and comfortable way. As Dave Govier commented, 'we have still got the search room and set up for deep researchers, but the energies of Archives+ are going into creating an immediacy of archives experience';[67] similarly, Kevin Bolton commented, 'someone would walk into the library and without asking anything would engage immediately'.[68] Moreover, organised groups such as school parties are able to visit and engage with the archives without the need to make an appointment.[69]

What emerges here, then, is a flattening of hierarchical relationships; the power structure that emerges through an invigilating staff and a requesting user[70] is, to an extent, relaxed here to a more open type of experience.[71]

Figure 6.4 Archives+: the exhibition and café. Photo: Mather & Co.

Expressed differently, the user seems here to acquire a greater degree of agency in terms of how they access, engage with and use archival material, in a sense shaping what happens within the archive around their own concept of what is meaningful to them. This reshaping of experience was an important part of developing Archives+. Paul Wright, Citywide Services Manager, described a need to transform how the archive engages with its users, both in terms of design and practice. Commenting on a more traditional arrangement, he described 'three staff sat behind a counter waiting for me to approach them… you need a lot of cultural capital to walk across the foyer and ask a question… if there is a customer standing there, you sense they are asking, do I belong here, am I allowed here, what do I need to do?'[72] The space of Archives+ is designed to break down this view of the archive, to enable people unfamiliar with archives, or marginalised by them, to be able to visit and use them.

Several techniques are used to help accomplish this, including designer Mather & Co's blending the exhibition with the café, rather than actively separating them, and arranging the interpretation in a graded way from open engagement to more focused study (Figures 6.4 and 6.5).[73] The strategy created by Mather & Co describes the concept of a personal journey which the visitor takes on entering the main interpretation space of Archives+:

> This is the opportunity to tell the visitor with a specific question exactly where to find it and suggest other items that may be of interest. It is the place where a casual visitor can browse and engage with a topic of

Figure 6.5 Archives+: the exhibition space leading the visitor into the building. Photo: Mather & Co.

> interest to them. It is the place to further lead visitors along a "bread crumb trail" of content which takes them deeper into the archive's content with simple, clear steps.[74]

Reflecting the trend described at the National Archives of the Netherlands and elsewhere, this underlying principle recognises the different purposes that a visitor to the archive might have.[75] Some visitors may want to research, whilst others may have a more general interest in archives or, perhaps, 'history' or 'heritage'. Again, this represents a pluralising of experience within the archive, an opening up to encompass not only a transactional process but also an experiential one. What is interesting at Archives+ is how the consultation process revealed a need for certain forms of experience and how the archive has been designed to accommodate these. As Govier commented, 'you can wander wherever you want… you can dip in and out to different depths'.[76] Thinking about experience in this way reframes the user as active within space, rather than purely as an abstraction. By bringing an understanding of the user into a spatial configuring of the archive, the kinds of relationships and experiences that can happen there arguably begin to change.

The Exhibition

The exhibition forms a significant part of Archives+. A key goal of the exhibition is to act as a 'shop front', a way of interesting people in the stories told in the archives whilst acting as a showcase for the different collections.[77]

Figure 6.6 Exhibit of maps, Archives+. Photo: Mather & Co.

The second-round application to the HLF described the exhibition, alongside digital programmes, as a 'bridge for users into the partners' collections and the histories within them'.[78] In this sense, the exhibition acts to increase visibility and to 'show that archives are relevant to everyone'.[79] According to Neil MacInnes, the archives 'belong to the city and the people'.[80] In reference to a Luftwaffe bombing map showing Salford Quays, or a 1945 vision of Manchester in 2045, MacInnes described how the general public 'don't get to see this' (Figure 6.6).[81]

A priority for the project was to make the collections more visible to those unfamiliar with the research environment of the archive. In one sense, this suggests a more traditional use of exhibition as a form of outreach, but it also points to a reading of value in archival collections as a source of culture, history and heritage. Its high-profile location on the ground floor of the library gives the archives increased visibility but also represents a harnessing of the archive collections as a way of instilling a greater sense of cultural purpose for the library and the city more generally.[82] MacInnes described how he wanted to 'embed the archive service across the whole library offer'.[83] Govier described the archives as providing a 'narrative, a focal point' for the new library,[84] whilst Kevin Bolton commented that the archive's location recognises its unique potential as a statement for the city and for the library.[85]

Likewise, the archives' presentation feeds into an established discourse of urban identity. Katharine Carter described how the archives were understood as a way of instilling or restoring a sense of 'civic pride', a concept

threaded throughout the entire town hall refurbishment project.[86] As a presentation or showcase of local heritage, the exhibition is designed to act as a visible articulation of civic pride.[87] In this sense, then, the collections are made to perform in the construction of a cultural and communal identity rooted in the specific place of the city. The collections become entwined within the formulation of civic space; the site of the library and archive harnessed as a space that articulates what it means to be a part of the city. Here, then, the making of the archive and its capacity for generating wider social engagement can be understood, in the sense described by Walter Benjamin, as a historicising of (urban) space, a located expression of history within the highly visible spaces of the city.[88]

The exhibition, then, is understood as active in notions of civic pride, harnessing collections in a process of community and personal identity- and meaning-making. In this sense, the exhibition can be perceived to function as a way of shaping social value in terms of how identity is understood and defined.[89] The consultation exercises revealed how users wanted the exhibition to be relevant and meaningful to them, in particular, 'to make individual connections between themselves, their experience and their locality'.[90] In turn, the exhibition is designed to enable people to relate to the archives: 'to make connections between their own roots and different aspects of Manchester's shared history'.[91] Here, then, the exhibition is designed as a space for people to generate value and a sense of belonging through the expressions of personal and communal identity articulated through the archival material on display. Through the presentation of different community histories, the exhibition points to the diversity of the city but, rather than essentialising identity into specific categories, I argue that the exhibition instead works to articulate a wider sense of belonging. Identity here is socially constructed: individuals using archival material to place themselves within broader historiographical and geographic contexts, allowing them to use their own experiences and memories to construct meaning around the archives. In this sense, recordkeeping acts as a 'kind of witnessing', working to articulate and evidence individual experience and presence within the world, to document and thus memorialise an individual and collective sense of being and our situatedness in relation to others and the world around us.[92] Acts of recordkeeping transform personal histories into sites of collective memory.[93] Here, then, the exhibition actively harnesses archives to generate a sense of personal meaning based around ideas of individual, communal and civic identity.

The presentation of different communities, histories and localities (Figure 6.7) are thus designed to enable people to draw on their own experiences and memories. This, in turn, again articulates the archive as a site of diverse histories, yet one which generates a sense of collective identity and thus arguably seeks to build a sense of belonging, of what it means to be a part of Manchester. Snapshots of lives in the parish records of Oldham in the

Figure 6.7 The Manchester Communities exhibit, Archives+. Photo: Mather & Co.

1760s sit alongside personal accounts and photographs of Kosovar refugees establishing new lives in Manchester in the late 1990s, for example; accounts of their experiences give a deeply human perspective to these narratives and work to produce a sense of affectual encounter with the experiences and lives of others. In this sense, I argue, the exhibition works to bring distinct and diverse voices into a shared space of encounter, a space again designed to generate a sense of collective identity.

A key element of this process is the contributary aspect of the exhibition design. This opens the archive to a more pluralised reading of history and an outward-looking sense of personal and community identity.[94] This idea is already apparent in the construction of Archives+ as a partnership of different archives and societies. Understood as a 'hub' or a 'one-stop shop',[95] Archives+ brings together a diversity of records, thus becoming a 'multicultural collection'.[96] In terms of research and study, this indicates a historiographical shift in terms of the types of history that can be studied and written through the integration of diverse collections.[97] For the exhibition and interpretation space, the diversity of collections opens up numerous perspectives and narratives about the past. Furthermore, the exhibition was designed to enable visitors to participate in and contribute their own histories, thus continuously pluralising the narratives presented within it. In this sense, the exhibition works to enable people to shape their own understanding of their history. At the same time, it gives value and presence to the diversity of histories that exist outside the 'official' archive that, in turn, work to reshape the narratives and perspectives contained within it.

Interpretation Strategies

Integral to this process are the two key pieces of interpretation that helped develop the design of the exhibition. The first of these was the Manchester Manifest, an interpretation framework resulting from a consultation exercise conducted for Renaissance North West (part of the UK regional museums development programme) and Manchester City Council in 2010. It concerned the existing provision of history interpretation within cultural and learning institutions across the city and was designed to reinvigorate such provision through a networked 'infrastructure' of physical and digital heritage sites and events.[98]

By focusing on the unique attributes of Manchester as a defined location, the framework gave emphasis to the notion of place, rooting understanding and knowledge firmly within the landscape of the city. In this sense, the Manifest references the historicising of space and notions of civic pride which shape how Archives+ and its collections are understood and utilised. The Manifest introduced six principles that sought to emphasise personal histories and voices, activating individuals rather than cultural institutions as narrators of history. Cultural organisations instead become key locations within a widespread network in which these histories can be expressed and shared. The Manifest also sought to acknowledge the sometimes challenging and complicated character of history, as well as utilising the city's heritage to explore present-day issues.[99] The six principles, then, can be understood as shifting attention away from a structuralist and modernist approach to telling history to something more complex, polyvocal and postmodern, in which concepts of place are tightly interwoven with multiple personal perspectives. They articulate an increasing need to position the individual centrally within historical and cultural interpretation, setting such 'personalised' experiences against a context defined by place. Moreover, the Manifest likewise represents a shift away from 'official' or 'institutional' accounts of the past to recognise and amplify the perspectives and narratives that define individual and collective value and meaning, and which in many cases have been omitted or silenced by cultural institutions. In this sense, the Manifest articulates a shift in power and a reframing of institutional purpose away from driving a certain narrative of history to one that facilitates or enables a more community- or personal-driven perspective.

The Manifest was produced during the early stages of the Central Library's refurbishment. It identified the transformed library and archive, along with city museums, as a key location, a 'hub' or 'gateway' through which this redefined cultural offer could find expression.[100] Likewise, the Archives+ project was described as directly contributing or being integral to the strategy outlined in the Manifest.[101] As 'the missing piece of the jigsaw for Manchester's heritage offer',[102] the archive would also play a role in directing audiences to other collections across the city.[103] In this sense, the

Manifest facilitated or influenced an understanding of what the Archives+ project would look like.

Following the successful first-round application to the HLF in early 2011, the council devised a brief for an exhibition interpretation concept and, in June 2011, commissioned the Centre for Museology at the University of Manchester to produce this strategy.[104] The concept developed and built on the ideas outlined in the Manchester Manifest as well as the Outline Interpretation Plan which was produced for the HLF first-round application.[105] Extensive research was carried out by the Centre for Museology including interviews with the partners. They also held activity sessions which aimed to understand how people related to and understood different archive collections from across the partnership. These activity sessions were run with university students, families with children and two individuals from ethnic minority communities.[106]

This interpretation concept developed a 'holistic approach' which privileges the archive 'as object, context or instance of interaction', rather than 'as destination'.[107] It described and drew across three related themes, the 'everyday', 'relational' and 'emotive' archive, to unfold the different ways in which archives are experienced and used:[108] 'instead of being "targeted" at (institutionally-driven) *users*, [this approach] takes its cues from the diversity of *uses* arising from the research'.[109] An important theme which emerges from this strategy is the stress placed on personal experiences of the archive, the 'user-generated ways of accessing archival material that can stimulate interest and a sense of discovery';[110] and a familiarising with the process of archive-making, 'claiming the archive' through a shared history and participating in the creation of archives.[111] As with the Manchester Manifest, this focus on personal perspectives echoes the user-driven approach to archive delivery emerging from the consultation exercises and discussions described above. Focusing on use shifts attention onto the purpose of the archive, of what it is *for*, and by emphasising a participatory claim over the archive, reshapes value in terms of how to create and engage with it. Whilst both strategies emphasised the importance of user-generated content and co-production, the Centre for Museology recognised several concerns which would make 'hard implementation' of these concepts difficult, including a lack of familiarity, experience or skills in this area and an initial resistance to them. The report recommended 'an open-ended "soft implementation" in areas where this practice can develop "organically"'.[112]

The final interpretation strategy employed at Archives+ drew on and adapted both of these concepts. In particular, the Archives+ Activity and Interpretation Plan noted how the exhibition will enable visitors 'to make a strong personal connection… through the stories they tell about individuals but also the relevance of the material to people living today'.[113] The design included the opportunity for user-generated content through software that 'allows visitors to feedback, respond, get creative or upload their own stories and memories and add to the archive collections'.[114]

The exhibition proposals designed by Mather & Co built on this idea of a personalised, participatory and self-directed experience.

> The content will be personal, inquisitive, questioning and thought-provoking so that it invites a response in the user. The entire experience will take the form of a personal journey – one that the visitor initiates and directs as they navigate through the space. Each visitor is interested in different content, so this approach will allow maximum participation and engagement. It is also important the visitor can view, contribute to, vote on, comment on, and select content that they want to see.[115]

The design incorporated interactive exhibits that followed a 'spectrum'[116] ranging from 'closed interactivity' to 'user generated' content.[117] Different exhibits were designed which could be located at different points along this spectrum, from the informative family history exhibit to the participatory 'Manchester Reflections'.[118] Certain exhibits invite visitors not only to comment on the content but to share their own memories and stories.

According to Sarah Clarke of Mather & Co, user-generated content enables the archive to 'have a dialogue with visitors': rather than people just looking at archives, the exhibition was designed to 'start a debate'.[119] The designers used collections relating to such topics as race, religion, women's rights and immigration to 'promote different debates' and consider their relevance today, although Clarke noted that the degree of interaction (and thus the extent of exhibits at the 'user generated' end of the interactive spectrum) was controlled by the council, which was concerned about the kind of comments the discussion might attract.[120] A number of exhibits introduced the idea of a personalised experience of the archive, such as the 'I like' stations, where visitors can select items based on their personality and character, and the 'My Neighbourhood' screens, where visitors can explore the streets or buildings local to them (Figure 6.8).[121] The role of the archive in instilling a sense of identity, of community and civic pride is apparent here, a performativity of archive collections in shaping personal and social narratives.

Clarke also described how the exhibition was designed to encourage visitors to recognise gaps in the archive's holdings and to offer to fill these by donating or lending their own material to be copied. The Manchester Communities exhibit, for example, was not designed 'to be exhaustive, because there are gaps in the collections': if a visitor sees that they are not represented, they would be encouraged to contribute their own content.[122] An incident of this nature was described by Julie Devonald, manager of the Race Relations Resource Centre, who discussed how 'a group of women came in and one asked us, where's the carnival? She said we needed it. She donated her photographs of the carnival and we scanned them into the virtual archive'.[123] Here, then, the archive acts as a space where communities and individuals can articulate their own narratives and histories; as Archives+ Community Officer Siobhan

Figure 6.8 'My Neighbourhood' screen, Archives+. Photo: Mather & Co.

O'Connor and Learning Officer Angela Rawcliffe described in relation to events and activities, in Rawcliffe's words, 'it's about getting people to add their voices to those that are already "known"'.[124] The co-productive capacity of the exhibition design enables visitors to contribute their own histories: this not only diversifies the narratives told in the archive, but also shapes the archive itself as an account of the past, one that has personal meaning and value for its audience. The exhibition *itself* works as a site that reframes the archive as a space of personal and collective memory and meaning.

Finally, the exhibition also includes separate units for the display of temporary material on loan from the collections of outside organisations, including community archives.[125] These have included objects from the Manchester Chinese Centre, to celebrate Chinese New Year, and the Homeless Library, a project in which homeless people in Greater Manchester and Stockport made alterations to books or created their own to reflect their experiences of homelessness. A community exhibition space was created on the lower ground floor of the Central Library giving community groups a space to present their own displays.[126] Subjects resulting from the interests of visitors and researchers are also used for displays, such as the Barton Airfield, the city's original airfield site.[127]

Bringing visitors' voices into the space of the archive is designed to create an experience that has increasing relevance and meaning for individuals. It also represents a personalisation of the archive and of history more generally, suggesting the influence of personal and popular forms of history and

heritage in the way in which the archive presents itself to a wider audience. These collaborative approaches are an important part of partnership working and making connections with different communities across the city.

But by opening up the concept of different voices and perspectives, and suggesting a sense of debate, the exhibition also introduces a plurality into the physical space of the archive. The participatory and collaborative nature of the exhibition suggests a shift in how visitors can physically experience the archive: something less didactic and authoritative, more dialogic, interpretive, imaginative. In terms of how archives themselves might be understood, it demonstrates that the archive is not absolute, that other viewpoints and perspectives have equal validity, whilst recognising the gaps and silences, the voices missing from the archival record. The exhibition, then, indicates less a site of authority and a fixed reading of the past; more a collaborative space interested in the histories and stories of its visitors and wider communities. It shapes the archive around the meanings and values of its audiences and, in this sense, is designed to instil a sense of sharing and belonging. The exhibition thus has the potential to reinterpret recordkeeping as a pluralised act. It has the capacity to reshape the archive as a site of pluralism, a space in which diverse remembrances of the past can be shared.

To exemplify these ideas, I want briefly to consider one specific exhibit (Figure 6.9). Archivist Sarah Hobbs described the Homeless Library installation

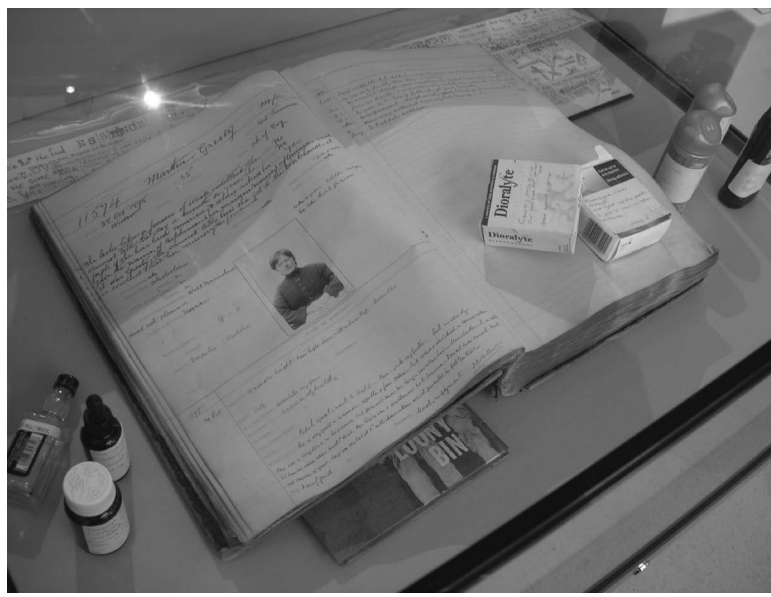

Figure 6.9 The Homeless Library, Archives+. Photo: Author. Reproduced by kind permission of Archives+ Manchester Central Library.

as 'a productive collaboration, allowing people to see archives in different ways'.[128] The display featured a case book from the archives' Prestwich Asylum collection: '[the case book] was open, but things from the Homeless Library were dotted around so you couldn't look at the case book itself too closely'. At this point, then, the display seems to be problematic: the case book, as a research object, is obscured and cannot be read. But Hobbs goes on: 'but it doesn't matter, it's there – you can still get something out of it, it's a different context, making connections with a modern-day group of people'.[129] So, in this reading, the archive is reactivated in a different way. Through this juxtaposition, it becomes a site of interpretation. It draws links between present-day attitudes towards people who are homeless compared to nineteenth-century attitudes towards people with a mental illness, challenging perceptions of these issues by shifting the contexts in which they are understood. Furthermore, the administrative bureaucracy reinforced through the 'official' archive is recast when the voices of those 'outside' are brought into the same space. The case book was displayed open on the record for Martha Gresty, who was in the asylum in 1898. She has no voice; the account is written *about* her from the perspective of doctors and officials, and the archive thus reinforces a sense of power over her. Yet the items from the Homeless Library that were displayed alongside express the voices of those who are typically rendered powerless and invisible within society, and whose voices are absent from the archive. In this sense, the exhibit worked not only to challenge the official institution of the archive and its holdings by giving presence and voice to those omitted and marginalised but also to reframe the space of the archive as a site of confrontation and disruption; a place to provoke, challenge and debate past and contemporary attitudes and perspectives. Importantly, it is the space of the exhibition itself that offers these potential readings; the exhibition performs in breaking down hierarchies and introducing alternative voices and perspectives into a reading of both history and contemporary society.

Reformulating the Archive: Indicating New Roles

The pluralising character of the exhibition suggests a potential shift in the role of the archive towards a site of debate, of encounter with other experiences, viewpoints and perspectives. This form of debate emerges through the interpretation and design of exhibits, which harness archives as sites of conversation, discussion and confrontation around past and contemporary issues. But it also indicates the potential of the archive to act as a space to meet other people, including those with diverse and different backgrounds, identities, experiences and beliefs. It becomes a 'shared space to learn from and to leave lessons'.[130] For a site such as Archives+, with each partner able to share its audience and its potential for diverse visitors and different community groups,[131] this social possibility is especially pertinent. In this reading,

personal and social relationships – with archivists as well as other users and visitors – become privileged. This indicates the potential of the archive as a meeting place, a site of social encounter.

For Archives+, the (more straightforward) idea of a social space was an important aspect of how the project was understood and framed. As described above, the audience development focus groups revealed a desire for a welcoming, social, homely space and a place for families and other groups to socialise and spend time together, and these were incorporated into the design concept through its blended spaces, which seek 'to create a social and free space for visitors to gather with friends and work in' (Figure 6.10).[132] Describing the contact between users and volunteers of MLFHS, Larysa Bolton commented, 'It's not just about accessing documents… making a new friend is more valuable than retrieval [of original documents]'.[133]

The idea of creating a space for informal gathering and socialising – a place for people simply to spend time in – is underpinned by the concept of the 'third place', a philosophy deliberately harnessed by the library's management to move the whole of the Central Library 'away from the traditional image of walls full of books to be the "third space" [sic] – a place for people to come together, to learn, create and enjoy'.[134] The third place is a concept first coined by the American urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg in 1989, which he defined as a 'realm of experience [that] is as distinct a place as home or office'.[135] According to Oldenburg, unlike the English pub, the

Figure 6.10 Archives+ as a social space. Photo: Mather & Co.

French café, the Viennese coffee house or the German *biergarten*, American society (at that time) had few social spaces, resulting in reduced productivity in the workplace, as it became an ersatz social space, and increasing isolation and materialism in the home.[136] The 'third place' offered an alternative social space, an essential social experience rooted in a physical, public place that provides stimulation and creativity, forms of affiliation and association, and that can contribute to individual and communal good.[137] A distinctive character is its organic growth; it is 'largely a world of its own making, fashioned by talk and quite independent of the institutional order of the larger society'.[138]

Extensive literature has questioned whether a library can truly perform the function of a third place;[139] yet its appropriation by the Central Library management clearly demonstrates their desire to reshape the service according to its social principles.[140] Importantly, the archive is understood as playing a role in defining the Central Library as a third place: architect Lee Taylor described Archives+ as 'the public heart of the building, "the third place"'; 'a truly public space where people would want to come and meet, study and relax'.[141] In this context, Mather & Co's blended space performs an important function in creating 'one large social space that can be used for eating, drinking, interacting, socialising and engaging – in groups or alone'.[142]

The concept of the third place emphasises users' experiences, fashioning their own activity in a way that is relevant to them. Although Oldenburg's theory argues that a third place evolves organically, the library is designed to encourage users to shape their own experiences in ways meaningful to them. This is reflected in the concept of 'varying ambience' throughout the library, the idea of there being 'a space that suits most people, from the formal glory of the reading room to modern suites of computers; comfy sofas to read in; quiet spots and study areas; bustling cafés'.[143] This ethos is carried into the archive, where the notion of a blended space gives the user a degree of freedom to shape their experience as they wish, to appropriate spaces for their own use.[144]

The turn towards a space that is understood as socially activated, with areas that recognise user choice and that possess an informal and social character, has implications for what an archive can be. In this sense, the space of the archive begins to resemble the characteristics of what Jeremy Till defines as 'slack space', open to the sociality and agency of the individual, and thus to the flexibility and informality of 'lived' experience. Slack space provides

> a frame for life to unfold within. It is space that something will happen in, but exactly what that something might be is not determinedly programmed… Slack space is thus manifestly designed, but probably not overdesigned. It allows the user to make choices within its frame.[145]

The idea of the archive as a 'slack space' suggests an approach to archive-making in which different forms of experience and use are welcomed. Rather than tightly prefiguring how users must behave, the archive in this reading represents something less hierarchical and more fluid, shaped by the experience of the user themselves. In this sense, the archive is a lived space, open to new and different forms of appropriation and use.

The shift towards a space driven by user-centred design also demands changes in working practice; to provide services that respond to user need. As Paul Wright commented, 'the way we use spaces determines how we behave, how we identify ourselves with others'.[146] A more pro-active approach to customer engagement included such improvements as new library desks, redesigned from large, dominating counters ('like something off the Starship Enterprise') to smaller, two-staff 'push me-pull me' counters to encourage approachability;[147] portable technology that meant staff would no longer be 'fixed to a static service desk, allowing them to engage better with customers through floorwalking and meet/greet'; and staff training in customer standards.[148] The move to temporary accommodation during the refurbishment provided an opportunity to facilitate new ways of working.[149]

A turn away from the search room as the core site of public engagement to other forms of activity necessitates a 'cultural change' among staff.[150] Such a shift recognises the importance of this work but also reveals the tensions that arise as a result of such change.[151] Such tensions perhaps emerge from established notions of professional responsibility, of what it means to work with archives, and point to the complex spaces of negotiation and developmental progression that accompany such transformative processes. Kevin Bolton discussed this cultural change both in attitudinal and practical terms. For Bolton, the exhibition and interpretation space represents a form of engagement that is meaningful to certain audiences; in other words, it prioritises what users themselves want to do. In this sense, then, it is not a priority to see exhibition visitors become search room users – this may not reflect how *they* want to use the archive. Bolton described how a translatable increase in search room use was an objective at the start of the project, and that other archivists often expect the success of the exhibition to be measured in this way, but this has, in fact, become less important. He observed that exhibition visitors and social media users are (and should be recognised as) archive users, just as much as someone who uses the search room.[152] Bolton described how, in 2016, more school children visited the archive than search room users.[153] His argument concerns *who* core users are understood to be and hence ultimately how activity should be prioritised, not just in terms of public engagement, but in the entire work of the archive.

As part of such a cultural change, then, the archive's work becomes repurposed for new objectives and requires staff to think differently.[154] The archive utilises volunteers to catalogue collections, but what is key here is how, as

Bolton described, 'it's not about the catalogues, it's about the volunteers… this person has now gone and got a job; it's made a huge difference to that person's life'.[155] Bolton commented on how the archive seeks to align with council priorities regarding health and wellbeing.[156] Siobhan O'Connor described events and volunteering opportunities designed to help people get into work, improve their skills and build confidence in leaving the house and participating in society.[157] Dave Govier discussed the broader socio-political influences and pressures that are shifting society into a more digital context and which demands new skills. He described how Kevin Bolton had worked outside Archives+ upskilling people in the branch libraries and training staff in ways that enabled them to help and support customers.[158] In this sense, the archive is seen not only as vital and transformative to the life of the individual and to society more widely, but also transformative in itself as an institution responding to social need.

Conclusion

There are a number of key conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion of Archives+. The first of these is an approach to archive design which focuses on the choices of the user. This concept emerges most prominently in the way in which the archivists and designers conceived and described their vision for Archives+, rooting this vision in how users want to engage with archives. This kind of thinking indicates a different sort of relationship between the institutional archive and its users and inevitably emerges in how the space of the archive is produced.[159]

An important conclusion here, then, is the relationship between the politics of use and the spaces designed to enable this use to happen. The partnership model of Archives+ indicates a spatial refiguring of archival provision, providing a visibility to archival collections and incorporating diverse histories and communities. Further, Archives+ reveals how archives themselves and the processes that lead to their (re)formation are located; they are rooted within topographical contexts, a sense of 'place' and a way of activating notions of civic pride. The reconfiguration of the archive, especially in terms of its users, drives spatial change.

Exhibition plays a key part in this refiguration. Through its interpretation and participatory design, the exhibition, I argue, works to generate a sense of personal and collective identity rooted in a sense of place. This in turn is active in shaping an idea of personal value and collective belonging. Through its participatory nature, the exhibition also works to reshape the archive as a site of knowledge: it recognises different voices and alternative perspectives and brings these into a shared space and a collective historical narrative. The exhibition thus suggests a move towards a more interpretive and pluralist understanding of the archive. Although it may be possible to perceive an assimilationist agenda here, the exhibition arguably points to

notions of belonging: as Julie Devonald commented in relation to the Race Relations Resource Centre, 'Archives+… is where Black history should be, in the Central Library, not a separate archive'[160] – the archive and the exhibition work to give presence to many identities and histories. Here, then, the exhibition again works as a site of encounter, not just with archives, but with other perspectives and viewpoints, thus opening up the potential of the archive as a space for discussion, debate and new understandings of past and contemporary society.

Moreover, the design of Archives+ points to a reshaping of the archive as an informal social space in which individuals and groups can gather and meet. In addition, the archive itself is repurposed to engage with individuals in ways that demonstrate increasing alignment with personal and social need. Consequently, the archive becomes activated in new ways as an essential feature of contemporary life.

In this sense, then, I argue that Archives+ represents a turn towards the archive as a user-led space. As with all such projects, the finished design is a negotiated space, reflecting the developmental processes and tensions that such transformative change entails. A degree of institutional control over the exhibition and the limited ability for visitors to curate it, as discussed earlier, for example, reflect the fact that the archive perhaps does not quite accomplish all its goals. Yet, even so, the intentions behind the project anticipate a greater embedding of the user's voice and perspective within the entire workings of the archive. It indicates the potentiality for greater conversation between archivists, users and potential users around how archival provision, in all its forms, should happen. Crucially, exhibition can play a fundamental part in this process, opening up potential new dynamics and agendas for how the space of the archive is conceived and perceived by its users: of thinking through what the archive is for, and how people want to experience and live it.

Notes

1. Manchester City Council 2006a.
2. Manchester City Council 2006a, 1, 2, 6. Additional revenue contributions would be made by the City Council and the project's partners. These figures were higher in the HLF application, with a total project cost recorded here of £13.7 million (Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2006], 31–4). AGMA was superseded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2011. The Heritage Lottery Fund was rebranded the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019.
3. Manchester City Council 2006b, FGP/06/28; Manchester City Council 2006c, Exe/06/100.
4. Kevin Bolton, interview with author, 20 April 2017.
5. Katharine Carter, interview with author, 31 August 2017.
6. Manchester City Council 2009b, 17.
7. Manchester City Council 2008a, 9.

8. This was a key factor from the very outset; the council report of July 2008 notes, for example, the need to create 'better access to and delivery of services to residents and visitors' (Manchester City Council 2008a, 3). See also Manchester City Council 2011c, 20.
9. Kevin Bolton, interview; Neil MacInnes, interview with author, 20 May 2017; Paul Wright, interview with author, 31 May 2017; Lee Taylor, email to author, 27 October 2017.
10. Manchester City Council 2008b, 7.
11. Manchester City Council 2009c, 1.
12. Kevin Bolton, interview; MacInnes, interview; Wright, interview.
13. This first appears in Manchester City Council 2012b, 93 and is further elaborated in Manchester City Council 2012d, 7. Details relating to the success of the trust, the funds awarded to it and the types of activity supported are given in Manchester City Council 2013b.
14. See Ryder Architecture n.d.
15. Manchester City Council 2014, 5.
16. Manchester City Council 2008a, 5.
17. Manchester City Council 2011b, 5.
18. Manchester City Council 2011a; Manchester City Council 2011d, 17; Barker Langham 2012, 9.
19. Hilton 2011; Manchester City Council n.d. [c2011d], 2; Manchester City Council 2012e, 50.
20. This follows receipt of the HLF's Permission to Start letter: Smith 2011.
21. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011d], 1–2.
22. Manchester City Council 2011e, 2.
23. Manchester City Council 2011f; Manchester City Council 2012a, 2.
24. Manchester City Council 2012e, 50–2.
25. Smith 2012.
26. Manchester City Council 2006a, 3; Carter, interview; MacInnes, interview; Kevin Bolton, interview.
27. Carter, interview; Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2006], 6–8; Manchester City Council 2008a, 5; Manchester City Council 2011d; Manchester City Council 2012c, 10; Manchester City Council 2012e.
28. Manchester City Council 2011b, 9.
29. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10.
30. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10. These aims also appear in the round-two supporting documentation, such as Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 3.
31. Manchester City Council 2012c, 14.
32. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 14–8. These data are taken from a number of different surveys and estimates compiled by the individual Archives+ partners around 2010–11.
33. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 10–1.
34. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 16.
35. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 23.
36. The HLF stage 1 Application identified eight audiences, including lifelong learners and the Central Library Audience as well as the six listed (in a slightly different format and scope) (Manchester City Council 2011b, 15); by the time of the HLF stage 2 Application these were refined to the groups listed, plus students (Manchester City Council 2012c, 16). They are also described in their refined version (but not including students) along with the developmental and consultation process and an analysis of barriers to access in Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 23–30; and in the evaluation to the project: Davies and Tullock 2018, 12.

Audiences' interests and needs are also reported in Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011b]; and a discussion of barriers to access and how these would be addressed are detailed in Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 14–9.

37. At the same time, there was concern among partners and users over a loss of individual practice and identity and a disconnect from established communities and audiences: see Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 7–9; extensive meetings helped address this, resulting in careful branding, as well as a degree of separation between the partners. The partners also did not become employees of the City Council but remained as distinct entities.
38. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10.
39. Julie Devonald, interview with author, 1 June 2017; Julie Devonald, email to author, 8 January 2018.
40. David Muil, interview with author, 6 June 2017; Leslie Turner, interview with author, 12 June 2017; David Muil, email to author, 10 January 2018.
41. MacInnes, interview.
42. Dave Govier, interview with author, 2 March 2017; Larysa Bolton, interview with author, 2 May 2017.
43. See Greenhalgh 1989, 74.
44. Carter, interview.
45. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10.
46. Manchester City Council 2011b, 9.
47. Govier, interview.
48. Kevin Bolton, interview.
49. See James, Johnson and Hunter 2018, 2.
50. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 13. This text goes on to cite other types of activity: 'online, through social media, off site projects or visits to the exhibition'. Although off-site and online activity is important, the focus of this discussion is on onsite delivery.
51. This concept is referred to in Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 4.
52. Govier described how he was involved in audience focus groups and partner sessions which examined the collections (Govier, interview).
53. See Museums, Libraries and Archives 2011; also Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 8 and Manchester City Council 2012c, 8. Details of the archive's other social media and digital work is given in Manchester City Council 2011d, 19–20. For details of other projects, see Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 7–8 and Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 8–9.
54. For details, see Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 6, 8–9, 11.
55. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 14.
56. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 14.
57. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 26.
58. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 26–7.
59. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, 30.
60. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix A.
61. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix A, §5–6, original emphasis.
62. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10.
63. Lefebvre 1991.
64. Govier, interview.
65. Carter, interview.
66. Larysa Bolton, interview.
67. Govier, interview.
68. Kevin Bolton, interview.
69. MacInnes, interview.

70. See Ketelaar 2002.
71. Archives+ does include a search room modelled on established lines but my argument here is that this does not represent the only or, indeed, primary means of access.
72. Wright, interview.
73. Mather & Co 2012; Larysa Bolton, interview; Lee Taylor, email.
74. Mather & Co 2012, 18.
75. Katharine Carter defined two separate audiences, a research audience and a more general audience 'who may or may not be able to engage via a public exhibition, display [or] archive interpretation' (Carter, interview).
76. Govier, interview.
77. Carter, interview.
78. Manchester City Council 2012c, 10.
79. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix D, §6.4. An important part of Archives+ is the extensive events and activities programmes it provides in community spaces outside of the Central Library (Devonald, interview; MacInnes, interview; Kevin Bolton, interview; Siobhan O'Connor and Angela Rawcliffe, interview with author, 6 June 2017; Philip Cooke, interview with author, 31 May 2017). Julie Devonald, for example, described a Bangladeshi Women's project involving an embroidery artist and photographer: 'This is what archives are about… it is not for us/for them, but for all of us' (Devonald, interview). Neil MacInnes also commented, 'we are not waiting for people to come to us, but promoting the offer there, showing the content and encouraging people to interact with it'. He used the example of Shakespeare's second folio, seen only seven times between 1934 and 2010 but 15,000 times between 2010 and 2014 (MacInnes, interview). These are important ways for people to engage with archives in an accessible and meaningful way. My interest here relates to the space of the archive itself and the role of the exhibition within this.
80. MacInnes, interview.
81. MacInnes, interview.
82. MacInnes described how archives are not generally as prominent in other services, suggesting 'we don't value what the archive has to offer and the uniqueness of the material it contains' (MacInnes, interview).
83. MacInnes, interview.
84. Govier, interview.
85. Kevin Bolton, interview.
86. Carter, interview. Neil MacInnes described a 'sense of pride' in the collections (MacInnes, interview). The reports describing the restoration and refurbishment of the Town Hall Complex reference the architectural and heritage significance of the buildings and a sense of civic pride: see, for example, Manchester City Council 2008a and Manchester City Council 2009a.
87. Carter, interview.
88. For a summary of Walter Benjamin's arguments see Schwartz 2001.
89. Kratz 2011, 21–2. On the problem of the term 'identity', its 'under-theorizing' and 'slipperiness', see Flinn and Stevens 2009, 19–20. On essentialist and socially constructed understandings of identity and the political implications for archives, see Kaplan 2000, 144–8, 151; Schwartz and Cook 2002, 15–7.
90. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix A, §6.
91. Manchester City Council 2011b, 9.
92. McKemmish 1996, 175; see also Upward and McKemmish 2001.
93. Upward and McKemmish 2001, 24, 31–2. For discussions of memory as socially constructed and implications for archives, see Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 2009, 76; Cook 2013, 101.
94. Flinn and Stevens 2009, 22.

95. Manchester City Council 2006a, 4; Manchester City Council 2012c, 7, 10; Manchester City Council 2013a, 6; Manchester City Council 2014, 5.
96. Sarah Clarke, interview with author, 5 October 2017.
97. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011c], 7: it notes that 'the bringing together of such a diverse range of archive providers would offer considerable scope to diversify audiences and encourage users to access new fields of study and research that they traditionally may have been unaware of'.
98. Independent Cultural Consultants 2010, 5, 8–10.
99. Independent Cultural Consultants 2010, 3–5. For commentary on how the Manifest became a key aspect of the Archives+ planning process see, for example, Manchester City Council 2011b, 9–10 and Manchester City Council 2012c, 7, 11.
100. Independent Cultural Consultants 2010, 5.
101. Manchester City Council 2011b, 12; Manchester City Council 2012c, 7.
102. Manchester City Council 2011b, 9. This statement is also included in the council reports: Manchester City Council 2011d, 19; Manchester City Council 2012e, 53.
103. MacInnes, interview.
104. Manchester City Council n.d. [c.2011a]; Barker Langham 2012, 10.
105. Barker Langham 2012, 10.
106. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 5–6; Kostas Arvanitis, interview with author, 2 February 2017.
107. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 16.
108. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 17–8, 23–5, 26–8.
109. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 32, original emphasis.
110. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 18.
111. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 26–8.
112. Arvanitis, Hartley and Rees Leahy 2011, 12–3.
113. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix D, §6.1.
114. Tullock, Davies and Parsons 2012, Appendix D, §6.4.
115. Mather & Co 2012, 1.27.
116. Clarke, interview.
117. Mather & Co 2012, 1.27.
118. Mather & Co 2012, 1.27.
119. Clarke, interview.
120. Clarke, interview. Clarke noted that the council wanted to include the debate and for it to be challenging, but not open to abuse. She also commented that the least controlled exhibits have not entirely been achieved.
121. Mather & Co 2012, 1.27; Clarke, interview.
122. Clarke, interview.
123. Devonald, interview. This same incident was also mentioned by Neil MacInnes (interview).
124. O'Connor and Rawcliffe, interview.
125. Siobhan O'Connor commented that 'we are getting people to add material into the community display, and then they encourage their family and friends to come in, it expands the audience to people who would not usually come in' (O'Connor, interview); Sarah Hobbs, interview with author, 6 June 2017.
126. Examples include *Stories of Sacrifice* (7 February 2018 – 31 March 2018), the British Muslim Heritage Centre's exhibition on the First World War; and *See My Dunya* (12 January 2019 – 23 March 2019), an exhibition celebrating Somali heritage in the city.
127. MacInnes, interview.
128. Hobbs, interview.
129. Hobbs, interview.

130. Lee 2021, 162.
131. Clarke, interview.
132. Mather & Co 2012, 1.11.
133. Larysa Bolton, interview.
134. Manchester City Council 2012b, 94; Carter, interview.
135. Oldenburg 1999, 15, original emphasis.
136. Oldenburg 1999, 3–13. A helpful summary of Oldenburg's argument is also provided by Lin, Pang and Luyt 2015, 147.
137. Oldenburg 1999, 43–85.
138. Oldenburg 1999, 48; see also 60.
139. See, for example, Vårheim 2007, 424; Montgomery and Miller 2011; Aabø and Audunson 2012; Lin, Pang and Luyt 2015.
140. As Stuart Ferguson (2012) comments in relation to the concept of social capital, whether or not the library really is a third place, the use of this language nonetheless demonstrates the management's aspirations regarding the role the library should have.
141. Taylor, email.
142. Mather & Co 2012, 1.10.
143. Manchester City Council 2011c, 19. Philip Cooke, Citywide Services Manager, commented on how 'everyone finds their own favourite space. People are not told where to sit… people can find their own way around and can use their own space' (Cooke, interview); Wright, interview.
144. Paul Wright discussed the blended space of the archive, how visitors can 'take a coffee anywhere in the building' (although not into the archive search room): Wright, interview.
145. Till 2009, 134. See also Marshall 2005, 176, who argues for slow and free spaces that are 'open-ended and multi-layered' within the museum. Archives+ is perhaps an indicative turn towards, rather than a full realisation of 'slack space': Paul Wright commented that, whilst there are free spaces throughout the library, there was also a tendency to overdesign or overfill other spaces; the centre of Archives+, for example, was originally conceived as an open seating area but this was replaced by an interactive exhibit (Wright, interview).
146. Wright, interview.
147. Wright, interview.
148. Manchester City Council 2013b, 12, 20; Taylor, email.
149. Wright, interview; Kevin Bolton, interview.
150. Govier, interview.
151. Tensions, for instance, gathered around the blended spaces, which, for example, introduce food and drink into different parts of the archive and library spaces; the shift away from collections management to public engagement; and between onsite storage and conservation space on the one hand and public engagement space on the other.
152. Kevin Bolton, interview. Katharine Carter commented that encouraging visitors into the search room was never a driver for developing the interpretation space; and likewise argued that 'we shouldn't think that we can only class someone as an "archive user" or "engaged with heritage" if they have filled in an archive request slip and sat down with an archive for half an hour; engaging with archives through our interpretation spaces is still "engaging with archives"' (Carter, interview); Cooke, interview.
153. Kevin Bolton, interview.
154. Kevin Bolton, interview. Neil MacInnes described an experimental approach to new ways of working (MacInnes, interview).

155. Kevin Bolton, interview.
156. Kevin Bolton, interview; Cooke, interview.
157. O'Connor, interview.
158. Govier, interview.
159. Lefebvre 1991.
160. Devonald, interview.

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Chapter 7

The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen: Encountering the Archive

Here in the Royal Danish Library, I am lying down on a wooden bench, my eyes closed, listening to the words of the Quechua writer, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. My head rests on a shallow wooden support. Gradually my breathing seems to slow, and I relax as the voice resonates deep in my ears. Although I am aware of the other people in the gallery, they seem to become distant to me. There is a sense of stillness, of time slowing; I am enfolded in this moment with the words of the writer. When I do rise and seek out the volume itself, displayed in the large case in the centre of the gallery, I can still hear his voice, sense him sitting, writing his account of the disastrous effects of the Spanish conquest on the Indigenous Peoples of the Andes. The volume, with its delicate writing and fine line drawings, embodies those words on the page.

When I finally leave the gallery, stumbling somewhat into the daylight, I have lost all sense of time. Outside, in the pale September light, a boat lazily plies across the glittering water of Copenhagen harbour. Inside the library, visitors are chatting in the café; students are plugged into their laptops; a few impromptu business meetings are taking place. The library is busy with activity. I am back in the hubbub of a large cultural organisation, but part of me is still enfolded in the encounter with the archive.

In this chapter, I examine the nature of exhibition as a spatial and phenomenological encounter. To do this, I will consider the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, whose experimental design and artist collaborations have pushed the boundaries of what it means to exhibit books and archives. I begin by placing the work of exhibition design and practice within the wider context of the library, considering how exhibition has become embedded within the cultural life of the institution over the last twenty years. Following this, I consider how, through evolutionary practice and innovation, the library has refined its approach to exhibition-making, beginning with a general understanding of exhibition as a spatial medium, before moving to examine how the library has approached the display of archives and rare books. Finally, I explore the spatial, temporal and experiential capacity of exhibition in the archive by considering two examples in more detail.

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Shifts in Practice: A Cultural Agenda at the Royal Danish Library

The Royal Danish Library is the National Library of Denmark and Copenhagen University Library. Its main site occupies a harbour-front location on the island of Slotsholmen in central Copenhagen (Figure 7.1).[1] Originally founded in 1653, the earliest library building on this site dates to 1906 and was designed in a neo-Romanesque style by H.J. Holm. A small extension, designed by architect Preben Hansen and known as the Hansen Building, was added in 1968. The Black Diamond extension to the Royal Library was designed by the architects Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen following an international competition in 1993 organised by the Danish Ministry of Culture and the Royal Library. This extension was opened in September 1999 and doubled the size of the existing building, amounting to 40,000 square metres. The Black Diamond is a modern, rhomboid structure clad in black granite and glass, and is connected to the earlier buildings by a bridge over the Christian Brygge road; the Hansen Building extension was enclosed within the structure of the Black Diamond.[2]

The building of the Black Diamond can be seen as part of a continual process of development that began with the appointment of Erland Kolding Nielsen as Director General of the Royal Library in 1986.[3] The impetus for the building project lay in the need for additional and improved working space for staff and users and more storage for collections, and this lack of space was

Figure 7.1 The Black Diamond, Copenhagen. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

the driving force behind attracting financial and political support. Indications of this support were first given by the Ministry of Culture in 1992.[4]

The development of the Black Diamond had two significant aims in terms of its engagement with the public. The first of these focused on existing users through the creation of large reading rooms, which would be open for longer and would have better ICT infrastructure.[5] Five additional reading rooms were included in the new library, with 386 additional study seats and storage space for 221,000 reference works, periodicals and microfilm.[6] The second aim concerned the creation of a place for cultural activities, such as exhibitions and events, that would in effect open up the building to the wider public.[7] The Diamond includes the Queen's Hall, a 5,600m^3, 600 seat auditorium for live music performances and conferences; two exhibition spaces; and five meeting rooms.[8]

The development of a cultural offer represented a new understanding of what a national library ought to be: the Diamond aimed 'to create a completely new type of national library with a strong emphasis on cultural activities, such as exhibitions, concerts, events';[9] whilst the architects described the project as representing 'a break away from the traditional library structure in that it will house a wide variety of different cultural facilities'.[10] Significantly, what this new space points towards is recognition of a wider audience than just those who use the library for research and study. As I discussed earlier in relation to other institutions such as the National Archives of the Netherlands and Archives+, the creation of this space reveals a perception of distinct audiences with diverse interests and therefore indicates a shift in understanding in terms of who the library is designed *for*. Research and scholarship remain important, but the concept of other audiences who sit outside this reading and yet want to experience archives is here recognised.

In some respects, this represents an attempt on the part of the library to raise its profile and to establish itself as something attractive to and better known by a larger number of people than just its existing group of users.[11] From an organisational perspective, this seems to speak to an economic context and the pragmatic realities of operating public cultural institutions within the context of the market. However, it is also possible to perceive here a sense of social and cultural value, a notion that 'open[ing] up [the library] to the world outside'[12] and 'invit[ing] more of Copenhagen and Denmark into the building',[13] are as much about experiential encounter as they are about visitor statistics. This can be seen in the work of Erland Kolding Nielsen who, writing in the late 1990s, argued for national libraries to place greater emphasis on their cultural importance, which had remained a 'low priority' compared to their role as places and resources for research.[14] Yet he argued that this aspect of their role has declined as rare books, archives and manuscripts have been published in scholarly editions and made available online, thereby making them accessible elsewhere, whereas 'their value as historical and cultural relics has not been reduced'.[15] In fact, they have become more widely known because of these alternative forms

of circulation, meaning more people 'want to be able to see *and experience* the originals'.[16] Kolding Nielsen's argument, then, can be understood as a response to wider forms of (often digital) access that identifies a wider, cultural role for the archive or library that brings to the surface the tangible and the material. The digitisation of information has in effect forced cultural institutions to re-evaluate their role and purpose. When asked by the Danish Ministry of Finance what the value a half-billion Danish kroner investment in the library would be to the wider population,[17] Kolding Nielsen commented that:

> The question forced us to think about the problem complex [sic]: If the Gutenberg bible may not be touched and if there are no facilities to exhibit it, what value does it then have to preserve and keep it? The larger and more fundamental question can of course be formulated like this: *Is the raison d'etre* [sic] *of a National Library the information dissemination aspect alone, to be an information reservoir?* Or is it something other and more [than] that? Do we not also have a duty to the people who do not use us for study and information retrieval? [18]

At the same time, Kolding Nielsen's arguments for developing the library as a cultural institution seem to reflect increasing interest in notions of popular history and cultural heritage, and therefore a growing sense of value in cultural activity. The historiographical shift towards personal methods of historical engagement and the rise of popular forms of cultural experience have arguably contributed to this view. Kolding Nielsen's position might therefore be interpreted as a response to this growing trend: by harnessing a shift in social attitude, Kolding Nielsen (implicitly or otherwise) aligns the archive or library's mission with a contemporary pulse that instils the institution with greater meaning and relevance.

The development of the Black Diamond was therefore clearly shaped by Kolding Nielsen's ideas around cultural experience. A key goal of the extension was to give the cultural activities developed within the library a much higher priority; to recognise this work, already conducted 'embryonically' in many national libraries, as important; and to challenge its hitherto marginalisation.[19] He argued that the library should offer not just research facilities but also 'experiences'; 'the right to see (and hear) the cultural heritage and experience it in historical and cultural contexts'.[20]

Kolding Nielsen argued for the concept of national libraries as sites of 'national cultural importance',[21] as 'manifestations of culture' akin to national museums and art galleries.[22] Within this context,

> National libraries administer great cultural assets which are important to the history of the country, as well as being research sources. Both the information and the carrier are important, the information for its use and the artefact to be experienced.[23]

As Director General of the Royal Library, Kolding Nielsen's ideas can be understood to have shaped and developed the formation of the Black Diamond; such concepts can be perceived as a priority among the library's management, to develop the organisation as a 'venue for life, for cultural experiences'.[24]

Here I want briefly to focus on two key features emerging from this discussion. Firstly, Kolding Nielsen argues for an understanding of documentary sources as both informational and material. Here, then, is the archive as object-information, its informational and artefactual properties both activated in processes of engagement, although I would suggest that these characteristics and the bodily-intellectual affordances that they give are more entwined and enfolded than Kolding Nielsen allows. Significantly, Kolding Nielsen's argument gets to the heart of what experience with archives is about: sites of active engagement to be experienced as real material entities. They are performative categories within the world: not objects perceived as if from afar, but active agents to be taken up and lived.[25] In this sense, the potentiality of the archive as object-information, as informational *and* cultural construct, becomes privileged; it recognises the diversity of (potential) interest and use, and of audiences for archive and library institutions. This leads on to my second point: Kolding Nielsen's argument embodies a shift in the role of libraries (and archives) as sites of cultural expression and engagement. Although he writes about national libraries, his argument equally applies to all repositories of documentary material. He reframes the library as something other than (just) a research environment: he writes that 'we are both information centres *and* cultural museums'.[26] This dynamic refocusing articulates a multifarious role for the library and archive as a place of cultural encounter.

The Royal Library has seen this cultural agenda become increasingly embedded within its work practice. Steen Bille Larsen, Deputy Director of the Royal Library at the time of the Black Diamond's opening, writes that the two aims in the new building project were understood in quite distinct terms, separately identified through their functions ('the library part' and 'the cultural part').[27] At the time he was writing in 2000, a priority for the library was the merging of these different activities so that 'they support and develop each other'.[28] Indeed, in the Annual Report of 1999, the Black Diamond is understood not just as an extension or a renewal of the existing library, but rather as a completely new institution, in which its cultural activities play a vital role.[29] This concept helped shape the design of the new building and the programme of activities created for it.[30] Karl Krarup, writing about the library in 2004, describes how the project aimed to 'combine the general public-oriented activities with the specialized areas for research in a new way', to enable visitors not only to study and research but also to 'experience' the library's holdings, through exhibitions, for example.[31]

In practice, the library's audiences have remained distinct: those who research the collections or borrow books are generally not the same people

who visit the concert hall or the exhibitions.[32] As I discussed in Chapter 3, a distinction between audiences seems to be common across organisations. As the library's Communication Coordinator Uffe Paulsen commented, people generally have a 'specific target in mind' when they visit, 'they need something' (such as a piece of information) and once they have achieved that objective or acquired that knowledge, the purpose of their visit is accomplished and therefore complete.[33] Yet the validity of these different types of engagement is recognised: as Paulsen commented, one person's 'use of the space is just as valid' as another's.[34] What is important, perhaps, is not a shift in how an established audience experiences the library, but rather a diversification in its users in terms of what they want to do in the library, suggesting an increased agency in their role. Of significance here is how the work of the library itself has changed to incorporate cultural activity as fundamental within the institution.[35] According to Paulsen, during the two decades since the opening of the Black Diamond, the library has experienced a shift from an environment where librarians would 'shush' people who visited the reading rooms during a guided tour, to a space where 'everybody wants to communicate with the wider public as much as they can'.[36] He attributed much of this not only to a new generation of staff but also to the 'sense of purpose' that the new building and the new cultural offer have generated.[37]

Despite the drive to embed cultural practice within the organisation, the perception of the library by wider audiences seems less clear. The building itself has achieved noteworthy status,[38] but its role as a library has not always been obvious to visitors. Observers have noted that, on entering the building, they are 'not 100 percent clear what kind of building one is in – museum, concert hall or library'.[39] Steen Bille Larsen has acknowledged that 'the Black Diamond is iconic, the library perhaps less so',[40] whilst Paulsen commented that the library's 'nickname, the Black Diamond, doesn't reveal what it is, which can be a challenge'.[41] He referred to a survey in which 85 per cent of people knew the name but didn't know what goes on inside. The library is not known as an exhibition venue and for many people does not represent an obvious place to visit if they want to see an exhibition.[42] The galleries are not routinely obvious to the visitor and their location in the building does not make them evident or apparent to passing traffic.[43]

The design and the space of the building arguably play a role here. In this reading, the library tends towards the monumental, of highly designed statement architecture. Its lofty atrium, curved walkways and towering glass wall, offering striking views over the harbour, lean towards the dramatic and the spectacular, rather than opening the space to a 'lived' experience that foregrounds social encounter.[44] This tension between dramatic design on the one hand, and occupancy and use on the other, revealed itself when questions emerged between the building's users (here the library staff) and the designers during construction: on the matter of blacking out the windows in order to match the granite façade, for example, 'One of the chief advisers

asked us [the staff], if we would not suffer for the beauty of the building. The answer: Certainly not'.[45] Although the building is intended to provide cultural engagement, the dominant conception of space here is of something iconic and high-profile, designed to attract and draw visitors from across the country, producing a space that is perceived as a landmark, to see and photograph. The lived experience of cultural encounter, of intimate moments with archives, is seemingly flattened and lost by a dominant conception of space as monument.

But exhibition can play a part in reshaping spatial practice that challenges the iconic and the monumental by producing lived space that focuses on cultural encounter. One of the ways in which the exhibitions team seeks to engage the library's broader usership is to create exhibitions in unusual spaces throughout the building: 'we meet the public where they don't expect to meet exhibitions'.[46] The team has curated or staged exhibitions on the bridge which connects the two parts of the library, for example, as well as in other public areas.[47] As Christina Back, the library's Exhibition Architect and Coordinator commented, these interventions are designed to create encounters for audiences who would not usually visit the library to see an exhibition. They not only draw attention to the cultural activity of the Royal Danish Library but also open the potentiality of such experience to its distinct and diverse audiences. As such, they create for the library visitor an encounter with exhibitions in a space where they would not necessarily expect it.[48] Moreover, such activity can be understood as an appropriation of space, of responding to (or, perhaps, reacting against) the monumentality of the building by creating moments of intimate encounter. In this sense, the creativity of the staff enables them to remake and reshape space in new ways.[49] This work highlights the potential of exhibition as a creative intervention in the otherwise strict conformity of tightly designed space. Furthermore, the nature of the exhibition as a transitory medium introduces a dynamism into experience. Its capacity as something fleeting and momentary reacts against the static monumentality of the environment. It suggests an experimental performativity in overcoming or pushing against the restrictions of space, seeking to reach for the playful and the dynamic, rather than fixed conformity.[50]

To conclude this section, I want to draw across this discussion and make three brief remarks. Firstly, the library's evolution towards a site of cultural engagement (as well as a place of study and research) has clearly been shaped by the influence of Erland Kolding Nielsen, the library's Director General from 1986 until 2017. The role of a visionary individual in a managerial position appears to be a driving impetus for organisational change: similar developments were discussed elsewhere, for example at the British Library.[51] Secondly, a shift towards the archive as a cultural institution demands an evaluation of the organisation's role and purpose. As a site of cultural activity, there is a need to embed audience engagement as an integral and vital part of the archive's mission. Lastly, exhibition itself can be a mechanism for cultural

change. The library's spatial and organisational challenges have meant that audiences do not necessarily understand its role and purpose. As a spatial and transitory means of communication, the exhibition is well placed to attract audience attention to the library's diversity of holdings through unexpected staging and innovative forms of encounter.

Spatial and Bodily: An Experimental and Developmental Approach to Exhibition-Making

As part of its shift towards an institution with a greater focus on cultural experience, the Royal Library established its Culture Department in 1999 to provide its wider cultural offer, including its planning, implementation, development and marketing. The types of activity undertaken by the department include exhibitions; publications; group visits and tours; lectures of both a 'scientific and general' nature; conferences; public relations and media; marketing design and promotion, including the library's website; managing the Queen's Hall; and operating a membership-based club for the library's cultural activities.[52] The aim of the department is to make the collections and the library open and accessible to more people, not just to researchers.[53]

The library has shifted towards an understanding of exhibition as a spatial and embodied means of communication, and the work of the Culture Department has played a vital role in developing this approach. Key here was the appointment of Christina Back as the library's Exhibition Architect and Coordinator when the position was first created in 2006.[54] Back had trained as an architect and had also worked as an artist. Back commented that 'when they were hiring me, [there was] someone [within the library] who understood space as something that they should work with more. Because of my background I pushed to work more in this way with exhibitions'.[55]

Back's understanding of the exhibition medium is one that is spatial and bodily, and well-designed exhibitions accentuate this form of experience.

> Exhibitions – when they are done properly – they talk to the body. I am really interested in this… Your senses are so activated in a way that is not obvious, so the back of your neck, sense behind you, sense in three dimensions, being there physically. It's possible to tell stories that are very touching or complex, but for me to use the exhibition language best, you have to try to communicate on the premises of space, and not just try to make it like TV or books.[56]

According to Back, the exhibition's unique facility is an experience that utilises spatial and bodily encounters with objects:

> You can move around, get curious about something, select something, deselect something: part of the experience is the mood I feel, not being

> told when X was built or written… [the spatial and bodily] is the strongest part of the exhibition language, rather than just talking about an item. So when you see something in real life rather than on a screen, the reason why it affects you is not just that you see the colour or depth much better for real than on a screen, but because you experience it with the whole body; even if you don't think you do, you do.[57]

In terms of providing information in captions and labels, Back commented:

> We are working very hard, even where there is a lot to be said, not to force words on people. We want people to be curious, present, to turn on their senses; to have curiosity to find information. It is not that the words are not present, they are just lower in the hierarchy… we take the bodily experience and the sensory meaning and put that in the foreground; when we have curiosity and want to know what something is, then we read the label in a passionate way, we are hungry for it.[58]

The exhibitions that have been staged at the Royal Library might be conceived as a developmental process of experimentation, testing what was acceptable to the library as well as exploring notions of embodied and spatial design. In 2008 Back collaborated with the artist and theatre designer Robert Wilson in an exhibition of artists' and writers' sketchbooks called *Everything You Can Think of Is True – The Dish Ran Away with The Spoon* (3 December 2008 – 4 April 2009) (Figure 7.2).

According to the library's exhibition report, Wilson's design was 'a very unconventional, dark exhibition space encouraging an imaginative and

Figure 7.2 Everything You Can Think of Is True – The Dish Ran Away with The Spoon by Robert Wilson. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Lesley Leslie-Spinks.

sensual engagement in the exhibits'.[59] The exhibition placed great attention on sensory experience; the inclusion of swings suspended from the ceiling and peep holes, where visitors had to adjust themselves physically in order to see the exhibits, speak to notions of embodiment and movement.[60] Very little textual information was present, with only formative captions; a catalogue was available, but since 'it was actually too dark to read anything… reading was really something to do after your stay'.[61]

This exhibition can be seen as one of a series of new initiatives developed by the Culture Department as part of their seven-year Action and Vision Plan, introduced in 2008.[62] The collaboration with Robert Wilson was an institutional learning process; because of its success, the exhibition 'pushed the boundaries of what the institution could imagine an exhibition to look like'.[63] According to Back, the collaboration aimed 'to expand the space that we can then play with afterwards';[64] its success crucially opened a door to new ways of thinking about exhibition within the library and allowed the department greater scope to experiment. Back sees this as a 'strategic' process, gradually encouraging the library to be brave in considering and exploring new ways of working.[65] The library's Annual Report for 2008 noted that Robert Wilson's artistic design represented the beginning of a new way to present the collections.[66] Further collaborations with artists and designers, intended to develop these experimental approaches to exhibition, have included projects with Hotel Pro Forma[67] and 'experimental and cross artistic' magazine Victor B. Andersen's Maskinfabrik.[68] The exhibition *Undercover* (24 April – 11 September 2010), for example, utilised sound rather than text labels and placed exhibits in the gallery so that they would only be visible from certain angles: they 'changed and unfolded [as you] mov[ed] through', suggesting a sense of revelation as well as motion.[69] Likewise, the design of the exhibition *Klaus Rifbjerg – A Poet on Time* (20 June 2015 – 5 March 2016) (Figure 7.3), which displayed the archive of the Danish writer, worked to give the impression of a 1960s apartment, with showcases built into the furniture and behind the walls; it reflected a growing sense of the installation as spatial and holistic, encompassing the whole exhibition.[70] And, as part of a research project called *The Prism of Sustainability*, funded by the Danish Agency for Culture, the library created an experiment around the display of a photograph, part of a wider exhibition called *Imprints of War – Photography from 1864* (4 June – 27 September 2014); working with architectural theorist Jonathan Hale, the library drew on the theories of Merleau-Ponty to accentuate embodied and sensory forms of engagement in the display, which also included visitor evaluation.[71]

Importantly, the design of each exhibition is considered and developed at the start of and throughout the curatorial process, rather than the designer being brought in to realise an existing concept.[72] In this way, the spatial capacity of the exhibition shapes the whole design process. As the designer, Back works in a process of 'democratic dialogue' with the curator, with each person bringing responsibility and expertise to the process.[73]

Figure 7.3 Klaus Rifbjerg – A Poet on Time. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Torben Eskerod.

These various stagings reveal an experimental approach to exhibition. They consider the spatial dimension of exhibition and how experience of the world happens through the body.[74] Moreover, focusing on movement, sound and the senses points to the transitory nature of exhibition, taking place in time as well as space. All of these experiments gradually help to unpack the experiential character of exhibition as a spatial and temporal medium.

How has the library harnessed this approach for the exhibition of books and archives? The library's work is clearly rooted in an understanding of exhibitions as spatial and embodied; yet Back noted the difficulty of exhibiting archives: they are 'not really friendly material to exhibit; the whole journey in working with this material is how we do it in the best way'.[75] What seems to emerge here is the relationship between the content of the books and the wider scenography of the exhibition space. Back commented:

> I started with focusing a lot on trying to expand the story – the content of the book – into space, which has some possibilities, but it was still books in cases, still yellow and unreadable. I would take the story, the actual content of the material, then take the different layers, the interpretation, the theme, this is what I try to expand into space, an intelligent container for the book. But no one goes in to see exhibition architecture, so the content still has to be very interesting.[76]

Later Back described how the fabric around the exhibits, the scenography or the installation 'is not the hook. [The exhibition] has to have a story around the content [rather than the installation]'.[77] The focus of the exhibition must

be rooted in its content – the archival material – and the installation must support rather than detract from it. Put another way, the scenography is used to draw the visitor into engagement with the exhibited archive. As Back commented, 'the archive has wider content but because it's often not very visual in its presentation, you can be more playful and use the language of exhibition in a way that you wouldn't be able to do in an art exhibition'.[78] The general lack of visual attraction in archival material allows creativity in the installation in order to help support the presentation of the content.

The library's exhibitions and collaborations with artists articulate a developmental sense of experimentation with the display of archives and books. The relationship between content and scenography is in evidence through many of these collaborations. The design of Robert Wilson's exhibition *Everything You Can Think of Is True* was inspired by the sketchbooks and their organic sense of creative potential. The exhibition was understood as 'representing a limitless space of art, reflecting a playful and puzzling state of process and becomings'.[79] In effect, the content of the sketchbooks expanded into the wider design of the space, informing the look and feel of the gallery, and thus rooting the spatial and embodied experience of the exhibition within the archival material. The wider scenography also acted to bring the visitor closer to the moment of artistic creation, as a 'witness to the act of writing',[80] something which also influenced the design of the exhibitions *The Original Kierkegaard* (23 April – 19 October 2013)[81] and, notably, *101 Danish Poets* (3 May – 26 July 2014) (Figure 7.4). This last example featured handwritten texts, inscribed

Figure 7.4 101 Danish Poets. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

by bodily movement on the gallery wall[82] and a selection of four-metre-high sculptures in the shape of giant letters (a 'scenographic alphabet forest'[83]), designed to suggest the notion of being inside the poet's head.[84] Again, this 'opening out' of the archival material – here, the notion of *how* that content was made – represents a spatial design motif rooted in the archive's content.

Perhaps the most extreme example of this design concept was realised in the Russian pop artist Andrey Bartenev's installation for the library's semi-permanent Treasures gallery, on display between 2012 and 2015 (Figure 7.5). This reimagined treasures exhibition showcased fifty archival manuscripts and books from the library's collections within a wildly hyper-real scenographic environment: the 'collections were "unleashed" in a colourful pop-cultural jungle'.[85] Bartenev's collage design drew inspiration from the various books and manuscripts on show and incorporated references to the busy and bustling information culture of the present day, drawing spatial links between the different items on display.[86] The books themselves were exhibited on pedestals that stood on white circles, thereby 'breaking with the image of the collage'.[87] The scenography of the display space in effect drew out the content of the books into the wider environment; 'the visitor would be magically transported into the virtual space of the texts on display'.[88] By presenting such a visual onslaught, the design almost counter-intuitively sought to reactivate attention on the books themselves: 'Visitors would simply seek to "escape" the intrusive space, and direct attention to the individual

Figure 7.5 Treasures in the Royal Library staged by Andrey Bartenev. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Christian Nygaard.

universes of the exhibits'.[89] The Bartenev exhibition proved polarising and challenging,[90] but it notably afforded the library the potential to produce more innovative exhibitions. Back commented: 'anything was [now] possible because it was so extreme… we could do much [more] because we wouldn't shock anyone [in the library] anymore'.[91]

In these examples, the scenography is designed to draw out the archives' contents and thus, in turn, reinforce notions of what the archives themselves are about. At the same time, the medium of the exhibition as spatial and embodied remains privileged. When considering the role of contextual captions and labels, Back commented:

> If the content cannot be understood without the text then the item is not interesting enough; the problem with archives is that some things can make you curious and are calling for a story, but it is all written material, and means you will have long pieces of text. It's very difficult; you then need to rethink and group things, find a logic to make people curious about these things. It's definitely a red light if you have to use a lot of text to explain; if there is no joy in what you are looking at.[92]

Here, then, Back is drawing on the role of design – on the spatiality of the exhibition – to instil a sense of curiosity and intrigue in the viewer. This may in turn stimulate increased enthusiasm to discover more about the items on display (through captions, for example). In other words, design is used to facilitate interest, rather than relying on written labels to do this. As part of this process, a sense of personal involvement and intimacy with the exhibited archive is encouraged. An example of this can be seen in the *Original Kierkegaard* exhibition, designed by Back to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. The exhibition displayed letters, diaries and manuscripts from the Kierkegaard archive held at the Royal Danish Library.[93] Designed as a series of themed rooms, the exhibition explored the idea of a personal encounter with written material through notions of immediacy, intimacy and personalisation. In part, the exhibition design sought to overcome the uniform appearance of archival material, but it also introduced a sense of individual encounter with Kierkegaard through his tangible written work. The design, which utilised small rooms entered through oversized doors and filled with large-scale furniture (Figures 7.6 and 7.7), accentuated the embodied and sensory experience of the visitor. It was designed to instil curiosity around the manuscripts and in turn bring the visitor, for a few moments, physically close to them.[94]

What emerges from this exhibition is the sense of encounter that is being developed between the viewer and the exhibit: an intimate experience within a specific moment in time. This idea also highlights the material form of the archive: the object-information.[95] This concept was explored in more detail in the exhibition *Opslag Nedslag – Danish Artists'*

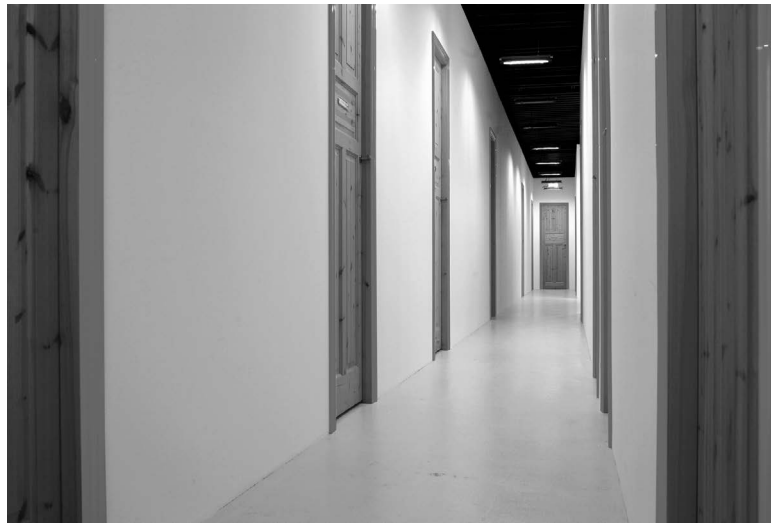

Figure 7.6 The Original Kierkegaard. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Sidsel Becker.

Figure 7.7 The Original Kierkegaard. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Sidsel Becker.

Books (30 September 2016 – 11 March 2017), in which the scenographic elements were removed so as to focus more on the encounter with the books themselves (Figure 7.8).[96]

This exhibition, curated by Back and Thomas Hvid Kromann, a researcher in the department of manuscripts and rare books and an expert on artists' books, sought not to present the books purely as artworks, but to maintain

Figure 7.8 Opslag Nedslag – Danish Artists' Books. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

an essence of their literary form.[97] Different techniques were used to present the books as both reading matter and artform: some were hung on walls in the manner of gallery pictures, whilst others were displayed on tables.[98] The exhibition included different media, such as scrolls, to consider the variety of book forms, but also questioned the limits of the book: Per Kirkeby's *Blå tid* (*Blue, time*), comprising only blue pages (and no text), is closer to sculpture than reading matter.[99] The exhibition sought to explore the dichotomy between 'content' and 'form',[100] exploring the intersection between object and information.

The curators recognised the frustration of exhibiting books in cases, thus preventing their being touched and handled.[101] To help overcome this, some of the books were displayed behind glass, whilst others were not. This was designed to allow the audience to transfer their experience of touch from one exhibit to another: 'the body was remembering, and felt like you had touched the other ones, and so the frustration of not being able to touch the others was not there, it has been satisfied'.[102] In this way, the exhibition was designed to stimulate an encounter that utilised different senses and which, in turn, accentuated the materiality of the book.

A similar example that harnessed the digital as a vicarious way of engaging with physical objects was used in the exhibition *Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony* (19 May 2017 – 3 February 2018) (also discussed in more detail below). Here, three photograph albums were exhibited

Figure 7.9 Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony, showing the photograph albums. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

in carefully constructed cases; below each was a screen which gave access to a digital version of the albums (Figure 7.9). The visitor, leafing through the digital images via the touch screen, to some extent bodily recreated the movement of turning the pages of the original albums, thereby transferring sensory engagement and tactility from the digital screens to the physical albums. The albums, each of which included family photographs from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, were presented on a small, domestic breakfast table. The scenographic display facilitated an intimate encounter with these personal images: the visitor, able to 'flick through a private person's album on a one-to-one', was encouraged to experience a more personal connection than might otherwise be accomplished with a vitrine full of photographs.[103]

What these ideas point to is a reframing of archival exhibition as an encounter between person and archive, an experience that takes place within a given moment in time and space. To recap, then: through its own exhibition-making and its collaborations with artists, the exhibition team at the Royal Danish Library has experimented with and developed a spatial and bodily understanding of the exhibition medium. Moreover, the team has sought to consider how it presents archives as both content and material object. Scenographic and design approaches have been used to draw out the content of archival material whilst, at the same time, exhibitions have examined the archives' materiality. This developmental approach is key to designing innovative forms of exhibition: as Back commented, 'we continue to develop how we show

books, how we create a physical meeting; this is very important to me and it's exciting to find various ways into it and learn from these processes'.[104] In the following sections, I explore ongoing innovation in exhibition design through two examples.

Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony

The exhibition *Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony* (19 May 2017 – 3 February 2018) was staged at the Royal Danish Library to mark the centennial of the sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States in 1917. The three main islands forming this colony, St Thomas, St John and St Croix, are now known as the US Virgin Islands. The exhibition was curated by three researchers within the library, Mette Kia Krabbe Meyer, Sarah Giersing and Mathias Danbolt, and designed and produced by Christina Back. The exhibition aimed to explore how these islands have been presented, depicted and interpreted over time, using historical and contemporary images from amongst the library's own collections, alongside new pieces by artists Jeanette Ehlers, Nanna Debois Buhl and La Vaughn Belle. In this way, the exhibition sought to explore Danish people's relationship to the islands both in the past and the present.[105]

I want to examine how the exhibition used spatiality and embodiment to explore these ideas and bring the visitor into a close encounter with the archival material on display. To do this, I will focus on one exhibit in the gallery. In an early part of the exhibition, *Taming the Landscape 1636–1799*, a series of charts from the library's collections was displayed, showing the early colonisation of the islands through surveying, mapping and settlement. These maps were presented flat on low pedestals around the room, and included Jens Michelsen Beck's 1754 map of St Croix, which is dominated by a uniform grid pattern dividing up the landscape. In the centre of the room was a large rug on which was depicted the first Danish map of St Croix, made by Johan Cronenberg and Johann von Jægersberg in 1750. This was part of an installation by artist Nanna Debois Buhl, which also featured a video projection. The map and projection were designed to focus the visitor's attention on how spaces are colonised through mapping and naming. Along one wall, a large, blown-up photograph showed a number of soldiers, clad in white, struggling to cross a river surrounded by dense jungle (Figure 7.10).[106]

There is a stark contrast here between the maps – as presented on the rug on the floor and the originals displayed on pedestals – and the photograph on the wall. As Back explained, the maps are idealised, bearing no resemblance to reality: the squares dividing up the land were simply imposed upon them, without reference to what was actually there: some of them might be halfway up a hillside. The maps, Back described, speak to a process of 'taking land and chopping it up into pieces': there is no reference to the Indigenous Peoples who were already living there.[107] In contrast, the photograph on the wall

Figure 7.10 Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony – Taming the Landscape 1636–1799. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

depicts a very different scene: of men struggling in the landscape. Here, then, the maps not only represent but also embody ideas of conquest and colonisation. Their simple design, of straight lines drawn across the surface, efface the reality of experience, as suggested in the photograph: lines of occupation cutting across the landscape, rather than lines of habitation running through the world.[108] Here are two very contrasting perceptions of conquest: one that is idealised and organised, harnessing maps as technologies of colonisation;[109] the other, a depiction of experience on the ground.

These ideas were conveyed in the exhibition design in a spatial and bodily way. The maps were all laid out horizontally in a manner that reflected consultation and surveillance. The visitor looked down upon the maps on their little pedestals and walked on the installation on the floor, in effect embodying processes of reading, surveying and mapping: as Back commented, the exhibit was designed to 'create a bodily relationship to the mapping'. This experience contrasted with the image of the men in the jungle, its size almost a form of confrontation: it was the only vertical image in the space.[110] The sense of embodiment and embeddedness that it conveyed was reflected back upon the visitor.

According to the interpretative notes, the art installation suggested that 'the routes once followed by colonists are to some extent the same roads taken by tourists today'.[111] As a whole, the exhibition was designed to encourage visitors to reflect upon their perceptions of the islands and the Danish

colonial legacy. Contemporary images have represented the islands as tourist paradises, largely effacing the experiences of colonised and enslaved peoples.[112] The images and text in the exhibition challenged visitors to reflect upon the past and the ongoing legacies of colonisation but, through its bodily affordances, I suggest, the exhibition implicated the visitor in these processes. In *Taming the Landscape*, the design and layout of the exhibits was designed to place the visitor in the role of coloniser, consulting the maps and walking *upon* the surface of the island – before the reality check that comes from walking *into* the image and the experience of *being* within the world. In this sense, I argue, the exhibition encouraged a personal reflection on our individual relationships to the past. This bodily engagement instilled its own layer of interpretation and activated the visitor in a performative encounter with the archives on display.

Abramović Method for Treasures

Abramović Method for Treasures (21 June 2017 – 21 March 2020) represents a recent version of the library's Treasures exhibition, one designed to heighten awareness of the physical and the bodily whilst simultaneously shaping an encounter with archival material. Christina Back described how she sought a new approach for this latest Treasures exhibition. Until now a key component of exhibiting books and archives was the use of a scenographic motif to bring out the contents of the material into the exhibition space: in effect, creating a 'wrapper' around the exhibits.[113] Back was interested in focusing more closely on the experience of encounter between the individual and the exhibited book or archive.[114] Back described two key elements to this approach.

Firstly, she was interested in the sense of expectation that can be created around a particular item, which in turn can shape the individual's encounter with it. She used the example of a handwritten draft of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Princess and the Pea* to illustrate this.

> If I gave you a first edition of Hans Christian Andersen and told you what it was, you would already have an emotional expectation about this; so your encounter would be coloured by those feelings that you had already had. But if you didn't know, it would just be an old bit of paper with handwriting on it which you couldn't read, and then you would want to know what it was. When I told you what it was, it would be very interesting, but [you wouldn't have the same experience as the first encounter]. So, it is this 'wow' factor that we need to create, projecting the narrative of the book onto itself, empowering it to become more than its physical shape.[115]

Secondly, Back was again concerned with rooting the exhibition in the book's content. She commented: 'when we exhibit books… we tend to focus

on the outside of the book, its age, importance, who owned it, what it means in history; very rarely do we focus on the actual content and what is written inside'.[116] Later she commented,

> We have a challenge: books are not very good exhibition objects. They are meant to be handled and read; or flipped through to tell a story. As an object, they are just a book. They can be a symbol of what's in it, but this is weak: you can't read its story by its physical presence (unlike a painting), so you have to do something to unfold it, to tell their stories, which are now behind glass for security and preservation reasons.[117]

These comments reflect an intention to focus the audience's attention not (just) on the materiality of the document and its wider significance, but directly on its content. According to Back, it is here, in its content, where the book's significance lies; this distinguishes one book (or, indeed, archival document), from another. Here, then, is the archive as object-information but, reversing the need to recognise the materiality of the archive-as-source (for study and research),[118] this position seeks to recognise the informational content of the archive-as-exhibit (or the archive-as-object). Importantly, the exhibition sought to do this without recourse to written texts such as labels. It is from this perspective that Back's interest in stimulating curiosity is especially interesting: by creating a sense of discovery around the content of the book before it was experienced, the resulting encounter with the book was designed to activate sensory, emotional and affectual responses, rather than (just) cognitive ones.

The new exhibition was curated by the Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović, noted for her art installations in which the artist and, later, the audience take on active and participatory roles. In her various *Abramović Methods*, various tasks or experiences are designed to heighten the presence of the individual and to increase their mental and physical awareness within a given situation. The specific design of the *Abramović Method for Treasures* sought to draw visitors' attention to their own presence within the gallery space and, in keeping with Back's intentions for the exhibition, to prepare the visitor for their encounter with the books and archives on display.[119] Through various activities and actions, a sense of expectation was built which heightened the eventual encounter with the exhibits, and the distance created by the glass of the showcase was diminished.[120]

On arrival, the visitor was directed to leave their coats and bags in a locker. They were also asked to leave their mobile telephones and watches at the reception desk, thus removing outside distractions and, in effect, redirecting the visitor's attention to their presence within the world: as Abramović described, the experience was designed 'to give the public the opportunity to be free from these distractions and to be connected with themselves, with each other, and with the present moment'.[121] The visitor collected an audio

device and headphones and was directed to the gallery, where they placed their shoes in a locker. Here they would wait with other visitors until their time slot began. As Back described, these simple actions were designed to create a certain state of mind for what the visitor will experience when entering the gallery.[122] Once the time slot commenced, the visitors entered the space, where they could choose to sit on one of the specially designed chairs or lie on a bench located around the edge of the gallery. These pieces of 'meditative furniture'[123] were specially designed for the exhibition and encouraged the visitor to become increasingly aware of the presence of their body, the feel and sense of it within the gallery space. The visitor put on the 'huge' headphones that 'block out the sound' in the rest of the exhibition space.[124] Following a short introduction by Abramović herself, the visitor could select different treasures which were read out or performed by actors in English or Danish. The visitor was invited to close their eyes and listen to these performances; they could also move around the exhibition space to locate and look at the treasures on display. The experience lasted up to an hour and twenty minutes; a bell sounded to indicate when it was over (Figure 7.11).[125]

Among the documents and books on display were a series of letters written by Mahatma Gandhi to Esther Menon, dating between 1917 and 1920; Saxo Grammaticus' History of the Danes, c.1200; letters written by Karen Blixen to her brother and mother between 1918 and 1930; Guaman Poma's account of post-Conquest Peru, 1612–15; the last words written by the Arctic

Figure 7.11 Abramović Method for Treasures. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

Figure 7.12 Abramović Method for Treasures. Photo: Royal Danish Library/Laura Stamer.

explorer Jørgen Brønlund in his account of the fatal Danish expedition to Greenland in 1906–8; Tycho Brahe's sixteenth-century observations of the stars; and works of Hans Christian Andersen including letters of the 1830s and *The Ugly Duckling* of 1844. These items were selected by Abramović from a wider group identified by members of staff in the library (Figure 7.12).[126]

According to Back, Abramović's approach focused on the 'feeling of presence, the felt relationship [you have] with the book'.[127] By inviting Abramović to curate this display, Back explained, 'we are working with presence, relating to material things, really hoping to bring something to the table which we hadn't thought of before'.[128] The exhibition catalogue notes that 'By redirecting our focus inwards and unfolding the many narratives found within these books, the method highlights the sense of presence in the room for visitors and treasures alike'.[129] The design of the exhibition heightened the individual's sense of their own presence within the gallery: it stressed embodiment and sensory engagement through visual, aural and tactile experience. As Back commented, being asked to place yourself somewhere within the space was a 'physically new way of being there', which drew the visitor's attention to their own spatial presence in the gallery.[130] It also articulated a sense of performativity: following the exhibition instructions, and through bodily emplacement on the furniture, each visitor in effect enacted a performance within the gallery.[131] Because the exhibition operated on prebooked time slots, each visitor was accompanied by a group of other people

(often strangers); in this sense, each person was involved in a collective act of performance.[132]

This sense of performativity can also be applied to the exhibits themselves. This was not originally part of the design concept. Back initially argued,

> The aim of everything is to create a new relationship between the audience and the treasures; but they [the treasures] are just standing there, the shift is happening in the visitor, in their mind, and being in the space in a different way, with the actual contexts, words, material.[133]

In our discussion of this idea, however, I suggested that perhaps the treasures do perform. As we talked, Back began to re-evaluate her position, commenting that the exhibition is

> bringing the book alive, because it is read, not as a container, but as content, giving them a voice directly into your head. We are making or creating a condition in an exhibition situation to make you really listen to what they have to say, rather than just going on to the next one.[134]

In the encounters that take place between individuals and objects, both become enmeshed with one another.[135] The archive is thus not passive and objective; rather, its textuality and materiality shape understanding and knowledge, emotion and feeling, influencing our awareness and behaviour. The design of the exhibition, focusing on and animating the content of the documents, amplified their performativity. Their agency as both text and object was heightened through the mediating role of the exhibition design.

The exhibition also emphasised the idea of an encounter between visitor and archive. In stressing this moment of encounter, the exhibition catalogue describes 'a work that employs a unique, engaging exhibition concept to create an entirely new, highly poignant interface between individual human beings and cultural history'.[136] As Back commented, the notion of encounter was heightened through the sense of expectation which the exhibition design stimulated: the various preparatory rituals; the wait before entering; the sound installation.[137] Again, Back noted how the exhibition was designed to instil a sense of curiosity in the visitor: having listened to and therefore become familiar with the archival texts, the visitor brought their sense of interest to the moment of encounter with the original archive, present in this moment.[138] It was a highly personal experience: the visitor selected and chose which exhibits they wished to focus on; their responses were unique and individual to them.

Furthermore, the exhibition amplified the medium's temporality: it was an encounter that took place in this moment, *now*, thus giving presence to the visitor and archive as material entities within time. The *Abramović Method for Treasures* played on the notion of time by isolating the visitor from outside

distraction. Devoid of technology, time remained unrecorded and so the present moment was stretched; for the visitor, focusing on a sense of self within the present, the horizons of the past and the future became diminished.[139] In the seemingly endless *now*, the presence of the exhibits was accentuated and the encounter with them was amplified. It was only when the bell sounded that the elasticity of time collapsed and a sense of change awakened temporal awareness.

In drawing this section to a close, I want to step back and briefly consider the *Abramović Method for Treasures* within the wider landscape of the library. Again, on the one hand, the exhibition created a sense of timelessness: the visitor enclosed within the isolation of the gallery.[140] Yet, on the other hand, the experience was rooted directly in the wider institution of the library. Not only did the visitor's experience begin and end outside the gallery space, the exhibition itself affected many different parts of the library, from the reception staff introducing the concept to visitors, to personnel who could only access or transit the gallery space between time-slots.[141] As Back said, 'it is only possible to make an exhibition like this when there is a group effort, which includes people who don't have things to do with exhibitions… everyone needs to be willing'.[142] In this specific example, the library's cultural agenda becomes embedded within and part of the wider workings of the institution.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been twofold. Firstly, it has examined how the library has understood and developed its role and practice in order to become a site of innovation and creativity. In discussing the context and development of the library, several key points emerge. The library has 're-oriented' its role within society. Whilst recognising its value as a place of research, it has simultaneously developed a cultural agenda, driven by a need to amplify alternative ways of engaging with library and archive material, rooted in experiential forms of engagement, and reflecting diverse interests and use. To recognise the importance of this agenda, the library's cultural activities have become embedded within the wider working of the organisation. By providing space and flexibility to develop its activities, the library has allowed a culture of experimentation to evolve, which has helped push the boundaries in terms of how it engages audiences. As a consequence, it has reframed and refined the nature of exhibition and what it means to encounter archival material in this way.

The second aim of this chapter has been to consider not only exhibition as a medium for cultural engagement, but also the role played by archives in that process. As embodied beings, individuals are able to 'take-up' that which is in the world, to 'live it': thus, both humans and objects are active in a cyclical process of being and becoming.[143] The conceptual understanding of exhibition that has formed at the Royal Danish Library and its developmental

approach to practice gets to the essence of what exhibition *is*: a spatial, bodily and temporal medium. Notions of curiosity, intimacy and performativity speak to the experiential potential of the exhibited archive. Here, then, exhibition is an encounter that generates understanding, meaning and experience around the archive, rooted in a sense of embodiment and embeddedness within the world.

Notes

1. Krarup 2004, para.1. The Royal Library merged with the State and University Library in Aarhus on 1 January 2017, along with the Danish National Art Library and the Administrative Library. The combined organisation is designated the Royal Danish Library. I use the term 'Royal Library' when referring to the organisation before its merger.
2. The Royal Library 1999, 179; Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen n.d. [c.1999], 3, 6; Christina Back, interview with author, 3 April 2017.
3. Krarup 2004, para.3. Erland Kolding Nielsen was director for 31 years, until 2017.
4. Krarup 2004, para.3; 7–8; Latimer and Cranfield 2008, 359; Kolding Nielsen 1997, 19–20. The Black Diamond was one of several building projects developed by the Royal Library at this time, the others being significant redevelopments of two faculty libraries at Copenhagen University.
5. Larsen 2000, 99.
6. The Royal Library 1999, 180.
7. Larsen 2000, 99.
8. The Royal Library 1999, 180, 184.
9. Larsen 2000, 99.
10. Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen n.d. [c.1999], 1.
11. The Royal Library 1999, 6.
12. Larsen 2000, 99.
13. Thomas Hvid Kromann, interview with author, 4 April 2017; The Royal Library 1999, 9.
14. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 18.
15. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 18.
16. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 18, original emphasis.
17. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 19.
18. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 19, original emphasis.
19. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 20–1.
20. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 21.
21. Line 1998, 90.
22. Line 2001, 46. Line is more cautious than Kolding Nielsen, accepting 'the validity of the cultural case', but questioning their role as 'national symbols'; see also Line 1998.
23. de Beer 1998, 3.
24. Uffe Paulsen, interview with author, 4 April 2017.
25. Merleau-Ponty 2012.
26. Kolding Nielsen 1997, 21, emphasis added.
27. Larsen 2000, 99. See also Kolding Nielsen 1997, 20, who writes of 'separated considerations of *use* and *experiencing*', original emphasis.
28. Larsen 2000, 106.
29. The Royal Library 1999, 6.

30. The Royal Library 1999, 182.
31. Krarup 2004, para.14.
32. Paulsen, interview; Back, interview, April 3.
33. Paulsen, interview.
34. Paulsen, interview.
35. See Lynch n.d. [c.2014], 6; Simon 2010, i–ii.
36. Paulsen, interview.
37. Paulsen, interview.
38. Larsen 2000, 102, 104, 106.
39. Latimer and Cranfield 2008, 360.
40. Latimer and Cranfield 2008, 360.
41. Paulsen, interview.
42. Paulsen, interview.
43. Hvid Kromann, interview.
44. See Till 2009, 134; MacLeod 2013, 184.
45. Krarup 2004, para.46.
46. Back, interview, 3 April.
47. Back, interview, 3 April.
48. Back, interview, 3 April.
49. See Hill 2003, 28.
50. See also Greenberg 2005, 226.
51. Alexandra Whitfield, interview by author, 12 January 2017.
52. The Royal Library 1999, 182.
53. Paulsen, interview.
54. Back, interview, 3 April; The Royal Library 2006, 172.
55. Back, interview, 3 April.
56. Christina Back, interview with author, 6 April 2017.
57. Back, interview, 6 April.
58. Back, interview, 6 April.
59. The Royal Library 2014b, 1.
60. The Royal Library 2014b, 2–3.
61. The Royal Library 2014b, 2.
62. The Royal Library 2008, 205–6.
63. Back, interview, 3 April.
64. Back, interview, 3 April.
65. Back, interview, 3 April.
66. The Royal Library 2008, 79.
67. The Royal Library 2010, 231; Hotel Pro Forma 2010; Royal Library 2014c, 1.
68. The Royal Library n.d. [c.2014].
69. The Royal Library 2014c, 3; Christina Back, interview with author, 4 April 2017.
70. Christina Back and Mette Ørnstrup, interview with author, 4 April 2017.
71. Christina Back, interview with author, 5 April 2017; Hale and Back 2018, 340. For a detailed discussion, see Gro Gundersen and Back 2018.
72. Back, interview, 3 April.
73. Hvid Kromann, interview; Back, interview, 3 April. For in-house exhibitions, the curator is usually a researcher or librarian within the library.
74. Merleau-Ponty 2012.
75. Back, interview, 5 April.
76. Back, interview, 5 April.
77. Back, interview, 6 April.
78. Back, interview, 6 April.
79. The Royal Library 2014b, 1.

80. Hale and Back 2018.
81. The Royal Library 2014e, 1; see also The Royal Library 2013, 45.
82. See also Hale and Back 2018, 349.
83. The Royal Library 2014a, 69.
84. Back, interview, 4 April.
85. The Royal Library 2012, 242.
86. The Royal Library 2012, 19, 101.
87. The Royal Library 2014d, 2.
88. Hale and Back 2018, 341.
89. The Royal Library 2014d, 4.
90. The Royal Library 2012, 11.
91. Christina Back, interview with author, 11 September 2017.
92. Back, interview, 6 April.
93. The Royal Library 2012, 45, 211.
94. Hale and Back 2018, 342; Back, interview, 4 April; The Royal Library 2014e, 1–3.
95. See also Lester 2018.
96. Back, interview, 3 April.
97. Hvid Kromann, interview.
98. Back, interview, 4 April.
99. Back, interview, 4 April.
100. Hvid Kromann, interview.
101. Back, interview, 3 April; Hvid Kromann, interview. This issue was discussed elsewhere, for example at Tate Britain (Jane Bramwell, interview with author, 18 May 2017), Waddesdon Manor (Catherine Taylor, interview with author, 19 May 2017) and the KB (National Library of the Netherlands) (Erik Geleijns, interview with author, 25 October 2017).
102. Back, interview, 3 April; The Royal Library n.d. [c.2016].
103. Back, interview, 11 September.
104. Back, interview, 3 April.
105. Back, interviews, 5 April; 11 September; see also The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017a], 1.
106. See The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017a], 8, 12–3, 16.
107. Back, interviews, 5 April; 11 September.
108. Ingold 2007, 81, 85.
109. Stoler 2009, 20.
110. Back, interview, 5 April.
111. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017a], 16.
112. Back, interview, 5 April.
113. Back, interview, 5 April.
114. Back, interview, 5 April.
115. Back, interviews, 3 April; 11 September.
116. Back, interview, 3 April.
117. Back, interview, 11 September.
118. The term 'archive-as-source' is borrowed from Stoler 2009, 44.
119. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 4.
120. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 4.
121. Marina Abramović, quoted in The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 8.
122. Back, interview, 11 September.
123. Back, interview, 5 April.
124. Back, interview, 5 April.
125. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 20.
126. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 24, 28–9.

127. Back, interview, 3 April.
128. Back, interview, 5 April.
129. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 4.
130. Back, interview, 11 September.
131. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], 4.
132. Back, interview, 11 September.
133. Back, interview, 5 April.
134. Back, interview, 5 April.
135. Merleau-Ponty 1968; Merleau-Ponty 2012.
136. The Royal Danish Library n.d. [c.2017b], p.4.
137. Back, interview, 5 April.
138. Back, interview, 11 September.
139. See Merleau-Ponty 2012, 438.
140. Back, interview, 11 September.
141. Back, interview, 11 September.
142. Back, interview, 11 September.
143. Merleau-Ponty 2012.

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Conclusion

The history of archive exhibitions is one that has largely been framed and articulated through a narrow lens. Although exhibitions have been a regular feature of institutional archive practice since the nineteenth century, scholarship has generally focused on their value and worth, continuously questioning their place within practice and the merits that they are understood to have. Such conversation is clearly the result of dominant archival thinking that defines the archive as neutral and the archivist as passive and impartial. Moreover, exhibition has almost always been discussed within the context of outreach, itself likewise persistently subject to questions of merit. The coupling of exhibition with outreach, I argue, has largely arisen through the need to justify such activity within a framework of duties and responsibilities that finds little room for such work. As important as outreach is – and it is important to note and recognise that exhibition today is typically understood through notions of promotion, visibility and profile – such a position gestures towards a static reading of the archive and of shaping use into established patterns and modes of behaviour. In other words, the transformative potential of exhibition – of thinking through what it means to exhibit the archive, and the implications of such work on the space of the archive, its habitation and use – remains largely occluded when considered only through the context of outreach. What is called for, then, and what I have argued for here, is a reformulation of our understanding of exhibition practice, situated within a reading of the archive that is neither passive nor neutral, but saturated with subjectivities, biases and challenges. Nor is it exclusively defined through its informational capacity, as research and as evidence, but is simultaneously experiential, the archive as object-information, framed through notions of personal value and identity. Here, I have tried to position exhibition within the context of critical archival thinking, acknowledging the institutional drivers that shape exhibition practice but foregrounding the conceptual and theoretical influences and implications of such work and what this means for our understanding of the archive. Moreover, influenced by the scholarly directions of new museology, I have sought to reorientate attention away from a focus on technique *per se* to consider instead the theoretical

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underpinnings of exhibition practice, and thus what certain techniques do to our understanding of exhibition and its wider implications for the archive.

By focusing on the experiential capacity of the archive, redolent and heavy with possibilities that incorporate but extend beyond notions of visibility, promotion and learning, we can begin to see a purpose and role to exhibition that offers different and new possibilities for what it means to visit an archive and engage with archival material. Throughout, I have used the notion of encounter as a way of exploring exhibition in a different way. Such a reading is underpinned by the phenomenological theories of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, of the bodily engagement of people with things, fundamentally embedded within the world both spatially and temporally; and the spatial ontology of Henri Lefebvre, which articulates the socio-political production of space that defines and shapes experience and our behaviours within it. Such perspectives generate alternative ways of looking at the archive and open up new possibilities for thinking through the productive potential of exhibitions.

How is the practice of exhibition-making itself conceived by those working in archives? From conversations with archivists, designers and curators, it is possible to discern a complex understanding around exhibition-making and its relationship to audiences. Many conversations conceived exhibitions through a lens of visibility, of showcasing collections, framed through a broad range of agendas that typically reflect notions of outreach and promotion: political and economic strategies around safeguarding and highlighting services; and broadening and diversifying audiences. Yet, I want to suggest that conceptualisations of exhibitions within archives go further than a straightforward reading of advocacy. Whilst several conversations revealed the tensions that surface around innovative exhibition practice, suggesting the ongoing influence of established readings of an archivist's duties and responsibilities, exhibitions are also understood as a valuable experience in their own right. Part of this reasoning lies in the way in which many archives, including Archives+, the Royal Danish Library, the National Archives of the Netherlands and London Metropolitan Archives, identified specific audiences with an interest in engaging with archives in this way. The National Archives of the Netherlands described distinct audiences with different and diverse interests and needs. The researcher audience seeks information for specific purposes, perhaps in ways that the archivist may never know about, and whose engagement in the archive might be conceived in a transactional way (whilst recognising the artefactual affordances that research with archives can entail). The 'browser', on the other hand, engages with archives in a way that can be defined as more experiential, shaped and developed by the archive through such media as exhibition. Influenced by historiographical turns towards personal and communal histories and the increasing importance of heritage, this experiential approach to archives suggests different types of use and calls for a pluralising of activity within the archive. It gestures towards understandings of

exhibition that extend beyond the promotional and which foreground these types of activity as vital and valid.

Interestingly, what emerges through many of these conversations is that the different ways in which exhibitions are understood are bound up together and, arguably, influence one another. At the National Archives of Luxembourg, for example, the *Blackouts* exhibition was partly about bringing the audience into a dialogue around remembering and the past; the role that archives play in this; and (not necessarily intentionally) a reflexive commentary on the nature of recordkeeping. But it is also a way of interesting new audiences and promoting the archive. What emerges here, then, is a reading of exhibition that is understood in several complex ways and which are tightly bound with an understanding of audiences.[1] Likewise, exhibition practice itself, through interpretation and design, points towards its epistemic capacity, its ability to fragment, recontextualise, challenge and disrupt the archive. This is important since this is not how exhibitions have typically been understood within archival scholarship which, again, often collapses exhibition-making into standard arguments around outreach. Exhibition practice within the archive, I suggest, is more complex than this: it works in ways that point to different and diverse forms of engagement with archives. What I have tried to do here, then, is draw across the sector to open up and point to new possibilities for how exhibition works in archives, what it means to exhibit archival material, and how such work, through intention and design, gestures towards alternative readings of what the archive is and what it means to experience it.

Encountering Archives

What is the nature of exhibition within the context of archival spaces? Here, I use the notion of 'encounter' to begin to develop understanding of exhibition that encompasses but also moves beyond concepts of outreach and promotion. As mentioned earlier, the idea of exhibition as encounter within museology is not new, but it does help to broaden understanding of what exhibitions are and thus how they generate experience within the context of archives. A sense of encounter emerges from many of the exhibitions discussed here, being most clearly articulated by Christina Back at the Royal Danish Library. Unpacking this notion of encounter helps develop understanding around the nature and experience of exhibitions.

Encounter works on several scales. At its smallest, it is a meeting between an individual and an archival object. Such an encounter works in a material way: the entwining of bodies with things, the individual integrated into the world and thus into an active and dynamic field of engagement.[2] This sense of encounter between embodied individual and material archive – the object-information – is programmed into exhibition design in different ways, each intended to produce certain responses in the visitor. Certain display strategies build on a sense of performativity through interpretation or design,

sometimes harnessing aspects of the theatrical to amplify these experiences: the enclosed, architectural spaces of *Dead Central* at the State Library of New South Wales, for example, or the design of *I Am Archive* at Croome, reminiscent of an archival strongroom. At the Royal Danish Library, the idea of the archive as object-information shapes a significant part of the exhibition design process. Here, archives (alongside rare books) are understood as content enfolded within a material object. It is the informational content which provides a specific book or archive with its haecceity, as opposed to the quiddity of archives and books in general. Exhibition-making at the Royal Danish Library is designed to unlock the rich content of documentary material through an activation of the body and senses and, in turn, shape a connectivity between material object, content and person.

As an encounter between person and object, exhibition happens in the 'here and now': a point in time and space in which the visitor and the archival 'object-information' come together. As discussed in relation to the British Library's *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* exhibition, this sense of spatial and temporal encounter is often embedded into exhibition interpretation and design. In this reading, the idea of the 'presence' of an archive plays an essential role. Exhibitions that stress the originality and authenticity of the exhibited artefactual archive – the more 'treasures' type display – harness this concept in the most visible way, for example in the display of the foundational charters in the Rotunda of the US National Archives. The presence of the archive is likewise a facet of digital exhibitions, although in these cases it is the affordances of the digital environment that shape experience; even though the materiality of the digital is different to that of physical objects, there is still an encounter here, a moment in space and time between individual and (digital) artefact.

Here also are the encounters that visitors have with the voices within the archives themselves, perhaps suggested most prominently in the Royal Danish Library's *Abramović Method for Treasures* exhibition. The 'presence' of the archive is not just the presence of the object, but also the voices that speak within it. Such an idea suggests an intimate encounter with the people around whom the record is made. The encounters with Mabel Phythian, George Brown and Guaman Poma are not just experiences shaped through archival material, but encounters with real people: here, exhibition accentuates individual experience against the backdrop of wider socio-political contexts and histories. Moreover, exhibition gives presence not only to those who have the ability to speak but also to those about whom the archive is written. The Homeless Library exhibition at Archives+ foregrounded the experiences of people such as Martha Gresty, recounted in the archive but who do not express their own voice: they are written *of*, not written *by*. Yet by giving people presence in the exhibition through processes of interpretation and design that speak to notions of empathy and care,[3] such individuals' stories can be told with dignity, asserting their identity as 'co-creators' rather than as subjects of the archive.[4]

At this scale too, is the encounter between archive and archive, and thus the potential for diverse readings that such placements are designed to afford. In one sense, exhibition brings together disparate collections, suggesting new interpretations and readings, including lesser-known and hidden histories. This was a design feature of *Velvet Iron Ashes* at the State Library Victoria, for example, whilst at the Library of Congress the interconnections between exhibited archives were designed to produce affectual responses. The use of digital media works to extend the reach between archives, both as part of onsite galleries, such as that at the National Archives of Australia, and online, where disparate collections from different repositories can be brought together in new arrangements. In another sense, encounters between archives often work to trouble and unsettle established narratives and histories (for example, at the US National Archives) by offering alternative interpretations that question the discourses that have grown up around specific themes and issues.

This, then, brings us to a larger scale, the encounter between different worldviews that happens within the space of the exhibition. At this scale, exhibition brings together the perspectives and viewpoints of different communities and individuals through the voices that speak in personal and community archives, oral histories, gestural records such as dance, and cultural traditions and memories. As a space that gathers diverse knowledge systems, exhibition gestures towards the subjective and contingent nature of the institutional archive. Such exhibitions work not only to diversify the archive but also to challenge and question it. Exhibitions situated within the histories and legacies of colonialism, such as the planned display *[Under]Exposed* at the KB, for example, produce encounters between different ways of knowing that work to trouble and disrupt the archive, and to push at its margins and limits.

At the largest scale, the exhibition is an encounter between individuals and the institutional archive: here, participatory forms of exhibition which invite the visitor to contribute their memories, views and perspectives, as at Archives+, for example, or even to curate entire exhibitions, such as *Blackouts* at the National Archives of Luxembourg, point to a dialogical encounter between visitor and archive (or, in the case of *Blackouts*, simply between people). It suggests how exhibition, as an encounter, offers a space of reflection, critique and dialogue that generates meaning around the archive, the ways in which it articulates the past, and the implications of this in the present. Here, then, exhibition shifts away from a pure representation of knowledge to a space that stimulates and produces new ways of thinking through the exchange of ideas.[5] Encounters that bring diverse voices into dialogue with the archive likewise speak to the ways in which personal and communal identity and a sense of place are formed around the archive and how value is generated from it.

At this scale, too, is the exhibition as an encounter between individuals themselves: between archivists, visitors, researchers; in short, a meeting space

Figure 8.1 Interactive touch table at the US National Archives. Photo: Brogan Jackson/ National Archives and Records Administration.

between people. The generative act of encountering others through exhibition is indicated in the design strategies of Archives+. During my many visits here, I witnessed the murmur and sound of conversation; used the space to talk with staff and partners (some of which happened by chance); and arranged to meet friends and family. At the Brotherton Library in Leeds, visitors have come into the gallery and chatted together about the exhibits.[6] And whilst visiting *Velvet Iron Ashes* in Melbourne I became (by accident) part of a touring party and took part in conversations with staff and other visitors. In certain instances, this sense of sociality is designed into exhibition, and digital technology can play a part here. This emerged, for example, at the US National Archives, where the large, interactive touch table in the *Records of Rights* exhibition allows visitors to select and read documents, record their (emotional) responses by highlighting tags and sharing them with other people.[7] These tags also appear on the display screens around the gallery, transforming an individual encounter with documents into a shared experience (Figure 8.1). Likewise, at Archives+, visitors can explore the history of different parts of Manchester on one of three touchscreens; the raised circular unit between them reveals the subjects chosen by each visitor, thus bringing individual explorations into a shared space (Figure 8.2). In these examples, then, the exhibition works as a site of encounter between different people. Such a reading has implications for how the space of the archive itself is conceived and understood.

Figure 8.2 Shared display space, Archives+. Photo: Mather & Co.

What is significant about these discussions is that encounter not only involves the archive in different scales and articulations but that, crucially, it involves people too: visitors bring themselves, their values, perspectives and understandings into exhibition space and into the moment of encounter. This may seem obvious, but it helps to recognise that exhibitions are as much about people as they are about objects and, as such, helps frame archives in terms of what they are *for* and how people engage with them. Reflecting the shift in understanding archives as sites of personal and communal value,[8] exhibition here is a dialogical experience, with visitors active in shaping their own understanding and engagement.

Shaping Experience of the Archive

How does exhibition shape our understanding of the archive? Rather than reproducing an established concept of the archive and the narratives within it – and which thus suggests a fixed reading of what the archive is – exhibition instead (has the potential to) act upon and transform thinking around the archive and how it is experienced. Throughout the discussion, I have suggested a number of different ways in which exhibition articulates certain conceptions of the archive. The archive as fragment is closely tied to a sense of the personal and the intimate, expressing individual voices that both speak for and are set within the wider narratives of history, such as in the *Family Ties* exhibition at the Archives of Ontario. Similarly, exhibition suggests dynamic

reworkings of archival context, as at the National Archives of Australia, for instance, reformulating and reshaping the relationships, interpretations and meanings about archival collections. Exhibitions designed to amplify the archive as a performative entity, such as *Designing English* at the Bodleian in Oxford, draw on its informational content and materiality – the archive as object-information – to generate diverse affectual responses. And exhibitions that reflect upon or challenge the archive, such as *[Under]Exposed* at the KB, for example, work to offer new articulations around how archives act upon society and shape its memory.

What these different readings indicate is a fluidity in terms of how the archive is understood and designed to be engaged with. Exhibitions harness, interpret and use archives in diverse and complex ways: recontextualising, reinterpreting, re-presenting. They reflect the broad range of ways in which people relate to and use archives, and from which personal and communal meaning can be shaped and generated. This suggests a plurality of understanding about the archive, an elasticity that is more diverse than a single definition or form of use.[9]

As a space of dialogue and exchange, exhibition works to generate new interpretations and meanings around the archive, actively bringing individuals into new encounters and reframing the archive through lenses of personal meaning-making, identity, belonging and value. Individuals thus reshape the archive itself by bringing their own personal memories and identities into dialogue with it. The potential of participatory forms of exhibition, including collaborative and co-curated projects, broadens and extends the meanings and uses of archives, introducing new interpretations and readings shaped by individuals themselves. In this sense, the archive evolves from established and seemingly static definitions of its purpose and meaning to become something defined by individuals in varied and different ways. Moreover, by bringing different and diverse voices into the space of the archive, participatory forms of exhibition draw attention to its limits, giving presence to those whom the archive omits and silences.

The archive, then, is not static but open to multiple interpretations and meanings. Nor is the archive neutral. The political nature of exhibition-making as a site of interpretation accentuates and amplifies the archive as something subjective and contingent, rather than destabilising and questioning its supposed objectivity. In practice, this remains a complex issue: during several conversations, individuals described a 'neutral' approach to exhibition-making, to let the documents 'speak for themselves'; this position shaped in many cases by the pragmatic realities of being institutional repositories: agencies of political and public organisations with their own positions and agendas. In such contexts, individual agency to express certain viewpoints is not so easily realised. Yet even in these accounts, there was recognition that selections and juxtapositions reflect curatorial decisions and nuanced understandings of how arguments might be presented or interpreted.

Through its dialogical possibilities, exhibition embodies the potential to (re)shape archival understanding and reframe perceptions of both past and present. Furthermore, it gestures towards the potential to reorder understanding of the archive. It suggests a reorienting or blurring of practice: in one sense, it is understood to showcase collections and, in another, to disrupt and challenge them. It blurs the boundaries between what is typically considered public and what isn't, often drawing on motifs of vaults and storage; it harnesses research to craft experiential encounters; and brings audiences and communities into processes of recordkeeping and meaning making. Exhibition, then, goes beyond a representation of the archive. It is more than just a way of promoting the archive; it is a space that pluralises experience of it, that gestures towards different reformulations and conceptualisations, and which asks questions about the nature of the archive itself. What is of significance here is how users themselves define what is valuable to them, and how those definitions shape the design of archival practice. Exhibition, then, gestures towards an opening out of what the archive is for, and how it can be understood as vital and relevant to people's everyday lives.

Archival Spaces

As an encounter between archives and people, exhibition, I argue, has a role to play in wider transformations of the archive. The pluralising of experience opens up the archive beyond (just) a space for research and study. This in turn has implications for what the space of the archive is understood to be.

In several conversations, the archive was conceived in this new reading as a cultural venue, a destination space, perhaps most clearly articulated at the Royal Danish Library. The premise for the Black Diamond was based around the question of what a national library (and, by extension, an archive) is for. Engagement with a 'browser' audience suggests a shift in terms of what the archive offers and provides. This concept emerged elsewhere too, notably at the National Archives of the Netherlands and Archives+.

The archive as cultural venue is closely tied to audiences. It indicates an increasing recognition of a diverse usership interested in engaging with archives in different ways, and of creating spaces that speak to a more pluralised audience. Archives+ is especially interesting here, since these potential audiences were, to a degree, involved in the processes that resulted in new spaces. The cultural venue, then, is indicative of a reshaping of the archive which reflects (broader) audience interest and use.

It is helpful here to return again to the work of Henri Lefebvre and, in particular, his concept of 'differential space', that is, spaces that articulate and animate difference and give presence to the social. In contrast to ideas of 'abstract space', in which the user conforms to pre-determined modes of experience, differential space enables the user to determine their own forms of occupancy and habitation, in ways that reflect and are shaped by their own everyday lived experiences.[10]

The concept of the archive as a 'differential space', then, suggests somewhere in which experience is shaped by the user themselves. This is an important concept since the space of the institutional archive is often defined by regulations and controls constructed out of a professional ideology and which, in turn, generate the power relationships that shape how experiences happen within it.[11] The 'differential' archive, by contrast, opens up the archive to new readings that are not, or are less defined by, institutional and professional control. An increasing awareness of user need and, to an extent, of user participation, in turn, indicate potential for new readings of archival space.

The creation of space cannot be seen as separate to the wider social relationships that happen within institutions, including archives.[12] The making of new or reformulated spaces is emblematic of (a drive towards) attitudinal change in terms of how the archive relates to its users and, for spaces to embody a user-driven perspective, such processes must be embedded through the whole organisation. Put another way, exhibitions (and other activities) within the cultural venue are not separate from what else happens in the archive, but integral to it. At the Royal Danish Library, for example, the Black Diamond was not conceived as a separate function of the library, but rather as an integral feature of it, resulting in a new organisation instead of just an addition to the existing one. Such a shift embodies a process of organisational change, a rethinking of what the archive itself is for, and a reimagining of the social processes that take place within it.

As a cultural venue, then, the archive embodies a different *kind* of activity for its users: less transactional and more experiential, thus requiring change in how the organisation operates and interacts with its visitors. At the British Library and Archives+, the space of the archive was conceived in other ways, too: as a meeting place, a third place. The archive as differential space emphasises the importance of sociality. Here, I will theorise how spatial reformulations understood in this light suggest new approaches to the archive as a social space of encounter. A useful way to think about this is through the concept of high-intensive and low-intensive meeting places. A high-intensive meeting place is one in which a specific activity is undertaken: it is something of direct relevance and importance to someone's life and may not necessarily require a high degree of intensive input. Conversely, a low-intensive meeting place is one where activity of a more incidental nature is experienced. Svanhild Aabø and Ragnar Audunson write of how the public library can be seen to act as a place that enables visitors to transcend between high- and low-intensive activity. A person may visit in order to undertake a high-intensive activity (to find a book on a given topic, for example) but, during the course of their visit, may change focus and engage in some peripheral activity which is conducted in a more casual manner (browsing through newspapers, for instance). In this way, their activity has moved from a high-intensive pursuit to a low-intensive one. The library has facilitated this transition and thus exposed the visitor to other interests and pursuits which they may not have originally sought out.[13] A key characteristic

of the library is the 'diversity and variation' of use and the fluidity with which users move between activities and roles (student, friend, citizen and so on).[14]

Ragnar Audunson writes about how the role of the library can be seen as a low-intensive meeting place, a place in which people are exposed to difference. Democracy and tolerance both flourish through discussion, debate and informed decision-making and these concepts require the need for public spaces and arenas in which such activity can take place. Audunson points to the public library not just as a space where new communities and excluded groups can experience a 'gradual introduction to the local community that the strategy of legitimate peripheral participation recommends',[15] but also as an arena in which public discourse can be facilitated.[16] What is important here is not just an exposure to 'otherness',[17] but a recognition that the ideas and values of different communities must be understood and recognised.

Throughout, I have discussed how exhibition can play a role in reflecting on the nature of archives and recordkeeping and activating different voices in creating meaning around archives and the past. Key to these approaches are participatory forms of exhibition that generate new meanings shaped around the perspectives and viewpoints of different individuals and communities, for example at Oslo City Archive, the National Archives of Luxembourg and Archives+. Such participatory exhibitions activate voices within the archive and both utilise and reflect upon it in wider constructions of history and contemporary society. What these different types of activity suggest is the potential for exhibition to act as a space for individuals and communities to express their own memories, thoughts and identities: a space that articulates different ways of thinking and being. At Archives+, for example, the range of collections from across the partnership already opens the space of the archive to potentially diverse audiences. The contributions of people from different communities and the inclusion of temporary displays from other archives and community groups help poly-vocalise understanding of the past and present.

As a research space or a cultural venue, the archive might typically be understood as high-intensive: the user has a specific purpose in visiting. But an exhibition space that opens up conversations about the nature of history, of how the past and present are understood, and which invites many and different voices into that conversation, suggests a dynamic space open to new perspectives and more diverse understandings. In this sense, the archive becomes low-intensive, enabling diverse encounters and a plurality of perspectives and meanings.

In this reading, the exhibition recasts the archive as a site of debate, a space open to new, dynamic and diverse understandings of archives, of history and of contemporary society. To this can be added events and activities, which many archives deemed to be of similar importance. In this sense, the archive becomes more than (just) a research space; it is (also) a space of collaboration, 'studios [for] collecting, describing, enriching cultural memories'.[18] The archive becomes a public sphere as theorised by Jürgen Habermas, a space of

exchange, to articulate, define and contest the discourses of the archive and, as citizens, the wider political and cultural dimensions of society.[19] Exhibition thus enables archives to emerge as 'forums for confrontation, experimentation and debate',[20] sites not just for meeting and socialising, but also spaces to challenge, question and proffer new interpretations, meanings and perspectives. Such a reading gives a deeply political character to the archive, yet all spaces are expressions of socio-political relationships.[21] To harness these possibilities is to open up the archive as a site of liberatory potential.

Towards the User

What emerges from all of these discussions, I suggest, is the importance of people within our reading of archives: the voices within the records and the many people who encounter them, as well as each other. These moments of encounter are defined through dialogue and conversation, engagement and experience, and together reframe archives as differential spaces.

Politics often surface within the making of exhibitions, but this is because exhibition itself is a political act:[22] it is a form of activism, harnessing the archive with the intention to encourage and enable certain responses and actions.[23] What I argue for here is a theory of exhibition that can open out our understanding of archives and what happens within them; of how they can enable and support a dynamic wealth of experiences designed to produce new meanings and understandings of the archive and its role in contemporary society.

What matters here is recognising what visitors – individuals, communities, participants – want to do in and with the archive; of acknowledging different and diverse audiences with their own interests, expectations and needs; and enabling these types of experience through archival spaces. Exhibition, I argue, can play a key role in flattening the power hierarchies that develop within the archive and support and enable individuals and communities to experience diverse and different ways of engaging with archives.

The space of the archive has the potential to work as a differential space, one that accentuates and celebrates difference. As a social space, a meeting space, it offers potential to bring people together in conversation, reflection and dialogue. In this sense, the archive can offer a vitality within the broader social, political and cultural landscape in which it sits. This was most clearly suggested at Archives+, where the archival collections, notably through their display, were felt to provide a focal point within the city. Whilst Archives+ is located in a grand, high-profile building, what is important here is not a 'powerful' or 'imposing' statement of archival integrity that focuses on the archival record,[24] but rather the sense of civic and community identity and belonging that the collections afford through their personal and social histories.

Throughout many of my conversations, civil and human rights emerged as an important aspect of exhibition-design and of archive work more generally. In some instances, the concept of civil rights was used as a way to articulate the

need to exhibit, to promote collections to which people had a right of access. At one level, this concept is a simple relationship between taxpayers and access to services. At another, there is an understanding here of the role that archives play in processes of decision-making and citizenship, a feature that emerged especially at Oslo City Archive. This brings me to the importance of *process*, especially as part of participatory and co-productive forms of exhibition-making, and how such participation engenders personal meaning and value. At Oslo City Archive, the process of exhibition-making opened up conversations about the evidentiary capacity of archives for citizens of the state, identifying archives as a vital resource for personal rights and individual freedoms. Elsewhere, for example at the KB, the participatory nature of the exhibition process suggests an articulation of contemporary human experience and a way of giving presence and meaning to personal histories that have been marginalised, including by the archive itself. Participatory forms of exhibition enable individuals and communities to express their own histories and to give presence to their own memories.

The potential here is of exhibitions as active in shaping meaning in people's everyday lives and experiences. The experience of dialogue and exchange that happens through the process of participatory exhibition-making gives expression to different perspectives and viewpoints and brings these into conversation with others through the space of exhibition. Here is the liberatory potential of exhibition-making: harnessed to effect real change in the lives of individuals within contemporary society. Such concepts emerged, for example, in the community displays (as well as volunteering projects) at Archives+ and as part of broader programmes of engagement and wellbeing, for example at Oslo City Archive and Norfolk Record Office: projects shaped by the benefits afforded to the user, rather than the archive. Likewise, exhibition offers the potential to act as sites of healing and reconciliation, and to empower alternative forms and ways of knowing, as in the case of the State Library of New South Wales. In all of these readings, exhibition provides a forum of encounter in which the potentiality of the archive can be experienced to the full.

Across the many examples of exhibition-making taking place in archives is a passion and a drive to make archives accessible, meaningful and relevant to people's everyday lives. Reframing exhibition as an experience, an encounter with archives, opens new possibilities for thinking through what can happen within the archive. As an encounter between people, exhibition becomes a space of sharing and celebrating difference. Exhibition situates the archive as a space of and for people; a space to enrich individual experience and make real change in people's lives.

Notes

1. These views were expressed by archivists, designers and curators and, interestingly, were not defined by discipline, although the most innovative forms of practice seem to happen in collaborative settings between professions.

2. Merleau-Ponty 2012.
3. Caswell and Cifor 2016.
4. Gilliland 2012, 340–1.
5. Basu and Macdonald 2007, 2, 16. See also Baxandall 1991, 36; Barry 1996; Rugoff 2006, 46–7; Trofanenko 2010, 271–2, 282–4.
6. Rhiannon Lawrence-Francis, interview with author, 8 May 2017.
7. Corinne Porter, interview with author, 17 July 2017.
8. Cook 2013.
9. Geoffrey Yeo (2007, 343) argues for a multiplicity of perspectives, noting that 'none is comprehensive'. Likewise, Sue McKemmish (2005, 9, 14) writes of the 'multiple and dynamic' relationships that exist among records, which are 'both fixed and mutable'; see also Upward and McKemmish 2001, 32; Ketelaar 2008, 12; Cook 2013; Johnson 2017, 113.
10. Lefebvre 1991, 49–52; see also MacLeod 2013, 183–4.
11. See Ketelaar 2002, 236–7.
12. MacLeod 2013, 182.
13. Aabø and Audunson 2012, 140.
14. Aabø and Audunson 2012, 148.
15. Audunson 2005, 432.
16. Audunson 2005, 433.
17. Aabø, Audunson and Vårheim 2010, 17.
18. Ketelaar 2003, 17.
19. See Ketelaar 2003, 17–8. Elsewhere, Ketelaar writes of shaping archives as places 'of understanding, of forgiving, of reconciliation' (Ketelaar 2008, 17, 21).
20. Cameron 2004, 70.
21. Lefebvre 1991.
22. See Macdonald, 1998.
23. See also Evans et al. 2015, 339.
24. Duranti 2007.

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