2019

Not 'Just My Problem to Handle': Emerging Themes on Secondary Trauma and Archivists

Katie Sloan
Katie.sloan27@gmail.com

Jennifer Vanderfluit
jennifer.vanderfluit@gmail.com

Jennifer Douglas
University of British Columbia, jen.douglas@ubc.ca

Follow this and additional works at: https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas

Part of the Archival Science Commons

Not "Just My Problem to Handle": Emerging Themes on Secondary Trauma and Archivists

Introduction

Secondary trauma stress, also known as secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, or vicarious traumatization,[1] is beginning to be recognized in some disciplines and professions as a significant occupational hazard.[2] Secondary trauma can affect professionals who work directly with those who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event, including, for example, health care workers, psychiatrists, counsellors, and social workers.[3] Although the archival profession has not typically been listed with these affected professions, there is increasing awareness that archivists and other records professionals might be experiencing the effects of secondary trauma as they interact with donors and acquire records, arrange, process, and describe records, and work with researchers and communities who seek to access records.

Archivists are beginning to recognize that there is a need for resources and support to help them (1) manage the experience of working with records documenting trauma; (2) understand how to work with others affected by traumatic records (for example, donors, researchers, and subjects of records); and (3) protect their well-being. This is evidenced by the recent increase in conferences and conference sessions dedicated to secondary trauma in the archives and to self-care strategies for archivists who are experiencing or have experienced it.[4] However, little research exists examining the archival community's experiences of secondary trauma, nor is information readily available about the types of resources that are accessible or might be helpful to archivists experiencing secondary trauma.

This article reports on a research project that was undertaken as an attempt to fill this gap, at least in part. The article discusses the findings of a survey circulated in the fall of 2016 to Canadian archivists, records managers, and other records professionals; the survey

---

[1] For simplicity's sake, we will be using the most commonly used form of the term—secondary trauma—in the remainder of this article.

[2] Charles R. Figley, "Compassion Fatigue as Secondary Stress Disorder," in *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*, ed. Charles R. Figley (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995), 7; Brittni J. Glenwright, "The Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout on Mental Health Professionals' Intimate Relationships" (Master's thesis, University of Toronto, 2015), 1–3.

[3] "Fact Sheet #9: Vicarious Trauma," American Counseling Association, accessed November 30, 2015, https://www.counseling.org/docs/trauma-disaster/fact-sheet-9---vicarious-trauma.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

[4] These conference sessions and presentations include: Anna St. Onge, Melanie Delva, and Rebecca Sheffield, "Emotional Labour in the Archives," presentation at the Annual Conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Montréal, QC, June 4, 2016; Anna St. Onge, Julia Holland, and Danielle Robichaud, "It's nothing, I'm fine: Acknowledging Emotion and Affect in Archival Practice," presentation at the Annual Conference of the Archives Association of Ontario, Thunder Bay, ON, May 13, 2016; the "Unconference" held at Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference 2015 that focused on topics in Secondary Trauma and Self-Care for Archivists; and the Affect and the Archive Symposium held at the University of California Los Angeles, November 2014.

asked questions about respondents' familiarity with the concept of secondary trauma, their experiences of working with traumatic records, and their assessment of the secondary trauma–related resources available to them. This article summarizes the general findings of these questions, but focuses more closely on the qualitative data collected in open-ended sections of the survey. These data suggest a number of directions for future research and confirm the desire of the Canadian archival community for a more open and inclusive conversation about the emotional and psychological impacts of doing archival work.

What Is Secondary Trauma?

Secondary trauma is closely related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Whereas PTSD occurs in those who have directly witnessed or experienced a traumatic event, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* suggests that listening to or learning about another person's trauma can be a traumatizing experience for the listener who, in turn, can start to experience symptoms similar to those experiencing PTSD.[5]

Secondary trauma can occur in professionals working with trauma survivors, such as health care providers, social workers, and therapists. It can also occur in those professions advocating on behalf of traumatized people such as journalists or lawyers. As Charles Figley succinctly summarizes, secondary trauma is "the natural consequent behaviours and emotions from knowing about a traumatic event. . . . [It is] the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person."[6] Lisa McCann and Laurie Pearlman also describe this type of stress disorder as vicarious traumatization, in which "persons who work with victims may experience profound psychological effects, effects that can be disruptive and painful for the helper and can persist for months or years after work with traumatized persons."[7]

As it is with those who develop PTSD, it is unclear why some individuals experience secondary trauma and others do not.[8] Despite the lack of clarity concerning why and when it manifests, many professions are beginning to recognize secondary trauma as an occupational hazard and are calling for greater awareness of it as an illness and better recognition of its symptoms.[9]

---

[5] American Psychiatric Association, "Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders: Criteria," in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

[6] Figley, "Compassion Fatigue," 7.

[7] I. Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, "Vicarious Traumatization: A Framework for Understanding the Psychological Effects of Working with Victims," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990): 133.

[8] Brian E. Bride, Melissa Radey, and Charles R. Figley, "Measuring Compassion Fatigue," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 35, no. 3 (2007): 156; McCann and Pearlman, "Vicarious Traumatization," 133–34.

[9] Figley Institute, *Basics of Compassion Fatigue* (New Orleans, LA: Figley Institute, 2013), 12–25, accessed March 23, 2017, http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook_AMEDD_SanAntonio_2012July20_RevAugust2013.pdf; Patrice Keats and Marla Buchanan, "Addressing the Effects of Assignment Stress Injury," *Journalism Practice* 3, no. 2 (2009): 164.

Secondary Trauma and the Archival Profession

Within the archival literature, there is no agreed upon definition of "traumatic records," or of records that might induce secondary trauma in those who work with them. Archival scholars have, however, written about records documenting human rights abuse,[10] "archives of repression,"[11] and of "controversial material" that provokes discomfort and disgust.[12] Lisa Nathan, Elizabeth Shaffer, and Maggie Castor define "traumatic collections" as "purposeful gatherings of material that seek to include the records of disruptive, violent histories; efforts to document these events . . . and/or the subsequent activities that engage truth telling, justice, and/or reconciliation."[13] These types of records and collections tend to document large-scale events such as war or genocide. However, a traumatic record might also be one that documents experience on a smaller scale or that affects only one or a few people, such as records documenting the murder of a family member or a workplace safety report documenting a serious injury occurring at a worksite. Although the archival literature offers no specific definition of a traumatic record, we propose that for the purposes of this research study they be understood as records that document a profound incident, or series of events, and that cause psychological distress to the person working with or accessing these records.

While there is no clear definition of traumatic records in the archival literature, there is a growing acknowledgment of the need to acquire records documenting traumatic events and to provide access to them. The preservation and accessibility of such records can be particularly important for survivors of traumatic events, or those closely associated with them, such as their descendants or those working toward reconciliation. Tom Adami and Martha Hunt argue, for example, that records documenting armed conflict can "ensure historical accountability, retain memory of the victims and survivors, support prosecution, document the extremes of repression and chronicle the individual's power against the state."[14] In a similar vein, Michelle Caswell demonstrates that mug shots created by the Khmer Rouge later "enable[d] Cambodians and the international community to bear witness to the Khmer Rouge crimes."[15] As Adami and Hunt explain, it is harder for individuals or societies to deny or ignore the existence of a traumatic event when there is documentary evidence to attest to it.

---

[10] See, for example, Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives," *Archival Science* 14, nos. 3–4 (October 2014): 308.

[11] Elena S. Danielson, "Privacy Rights and the Rights of Political Victims: Implications of the German Experience," *The American Archivist* 67 (Fall–Winter 2004): 176.

[12] Frank Boles, "'Just a Bunch of Bigots': A Case Study in the Acquisition of Controversial Material," *Archival Issues* 19, no. 1 (1994): 53–65.

[13] Lisa Nathan, Elizabeth Shaffer, and Maggie Castor, "Stewarding Collections of Trauma: Plurality, Responsibility, and Questions of Action," *Archivaria* 80 (Fall 2015): 94.

[14] Tom Adami and Martha Hunt, "Reconciliation in Regions Affected by Armed Conflict," in *Better off Forgetting? Essays on Archives, Public Policy, and Collective Memory*, ed. Cheryl Avery and Mona Holmlund (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 210.

[15] Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014)*,* 159.

Traumatic records are also meaningful for survivors and victims as they can validate their experiences and memories, sometimes in a more personal or immediate manner than other types of information about events. Albie Sachs describes the painful experience of reading records documenting his own arrest in apartheid-era South Africa and the brutal interrogation that followed it. The records, Sachs writes, convert "knowledge into acknowledgment. Knowledge is data, facts, information. The number of people who disappeared, who had been killed, that they had been tortured: this was all known. Acknowledgement meant acknowledging the pain, listening to the pain, responding to it."[16] Acknowledgment can be an important step for survivors and/or their descendants as they seek to understand and integrate past traumas.

Providing access to records documenting trauma can also be a means of giving voice to survivors and victims. A common theme in the literature related to records documenting trauma is that they tend to embody a one-sided perspective, generated by what Sachs calls "the ruling minority."[17] The voices of victims and survivors can be frustratingly absent from these records. Caswell argues that preserving the photographs taken by the Khmer Rouge, using them to identify victims, and "deploying them as legal evidence to hold the perpetrators accountable" are "the highest forms of respect."[18] Writing about archival medical records of nineteenth-century psychiatric hospitals, David Wright and Renee Saucer arrive at a similar conclusion about the importance of archives. After interviewing descendants of admitted patients, Wright and Saucer found that from the interviewees' perspectives, anonymization of medical records—done to protect patients' privacy rights—had the effect of perpetuating the stigma and fear of mental illness. By contrast, allowing access to patients' records "put a face on" the record, and allowed readers to see not only the fact of mental illness, but also a person with a story.[19]

As the importance of records documenting trauma to survivors and their families becomes increasingly evident, it likewise becomes increasingly clear that archivists will play an active role in making these records accessible and interacting with those who need them. As Caswell argues, the ethical response of archivists must be to "refram[e]" our understanding of the relationship between records and human rights "to best meet the needs of communities of survivors."[20] To further a "survivor-centered approach," Caswell suggests archivists enact concepts emerging out of the discourse on community archives, including sharing stewardship with communities; adopting participatory approaches to appraisal, arrangement, and description; engaging in archival activism; and promoting the agency of survivors. These concepts and approaches are also endorsed by archival scholars seeking a new positionality for the archivist—not as a passive

---

[16] Albie Sachs, "Archives, Truth, and Reconciliation," *Archivaria* 62 (Fall 2006): 9.

[17] Ibid., 2.

[18] Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable*, 164.

[19] David Wright and Renee Saucier, "Madness in the Archives: Anonymity, Ethics and Mental Health History Research," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 2 (2012): 80–81.

[20] Caswell, "Towards a Survivor-Centered Approach," 308.

gatekeeper, but as an active agent herself, with expanded responsibilities both to the communities she serves, and to the records in her care.[21]

Research Objectives

Our review of relevant literature demonstrates a developing acknowledgment of the importance of acquiring and preserving records documenting trauma as well as a growing recognition of the different ways that archivists engage emotionally with records, record makers, and record users.[22] However, there is little research that specifically addresses the experiences of practitioners working with traumatic records and/or with record creators and/or users who have experienced significant trauma.

Our research sought to address this gap—at least in part—by surveying Canadian archivists to ascertain their current understanding of and attitudes toward secondary trauma, to begin to gauge their experiences of working with traumatic records, and to determine what types of support services currently exist for those who have experienced secondary trauma as well as any perceived barriers to accessing those services.

Methodology

In September 2016, Katie Sloan and Jennifer Vanderfluit circulated a survey to Canadian archivists in order to gather information pertinent to these research objectives.[23] The online questionnaire included close-ended, semi-structured, and open-ended questions. Survey questions related to (1) participants' experiences working with traumatic records, (2) their familiarity with the concept of secondary trauma, (3) workplace awareness of and attitudes to secondary trauma, and (4) their personal experiences with secondary trauma and any types of supports they might have accessed or attempted to access.

The scope of the study was limited to the Canadian archival profession, in part due to differences between Canadian and American healthcare systems. As well, we understand

---

[21] Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 24; Marika Cifor, "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 27; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9, no. 1 (2009): 80–81; Anne J. Gilliland, "Studying Affect and Its Relationship to the Agency of Archivists since the Yugoslav Wars," in *Studies in Archival Education and Research: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference*, ed. Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead, and Eleanor Mattern (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2015): 50; Anne J. Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "Rights in Records as a Platform for Participative Archiving," ibid., 122.

[22] Although we do not refer to this literature in detail above, the emerging literature on archives and affect is also relevant, especially as it refers to the emotional impact of working with records, either as archivists or researchers. For an introduction to the application of affect theory to the archival field, see the special issue "Affect and the Archive, Archives and their Affects," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016).

[23] This survey was circulated as part of a directed research project course at the University of British Columbia supervised by Jennifer Douglas. Approval was sought and received from the UBC Research Ethics Board.

that professional culture varies across jurisdictions; for example, because Canadian archival institutions adhere to a tradition of total archives,[24] they might hold different types of materials than their American counterparts. Participation of Canadian archivists and record workers was recruited via email. An invitation to participate was sent to Arcan-L (the Canadian archival listserv) and emails were also sent to institutions listed in national and provincial archival directories, as well as to ARMA International chapters across the country. The survey recruitment email specifically asked individuals to share the survey, and it was also shared via Twitter and on the blog Librarianship.ca. The survey was open for three weeks, during which time 155 individuals completed and submitted the online questionnaire.

Data analysis was carried out by Sloan and Vanderfluit using statistical tools included with the survey software. All three authors also used iterative qualitative coding methods to analyze data collected through the open-ended questions. Initially, each author worked individually to identify emerging themes and concepts. Three team meetings were subsequently held to review, revise, and refine our understanding of emergent codes. In the remaining sections of this paper, we discuss both the findings from the statistical analysis of survey answers and the emerging themes we identified in respondents' answers to open-ended questions. We stress that this is exploratory research, intended to open discussion and suggest where future research efforts are required.

Answering the Research Questions: Survey Responses

Demographic information and respondents' backgrounds
Responses were received from individuals across Canada, though a majority were from British Columbia (37 or 24%) and Ontario (40 or 26%). Nearly three-quarters (118) of the respondents to the survey identified or presented as female; one-fifth (32) identified or presented as male; and the remainder identified as non-binary or non-conforming (3) or opted not to disclose gender (2). As figure 1 shows, respondents' from all age categories were fairly evenly represented, though just over half of the respondents were between twenty-five and forty-four years of age. Only one-fifth of respondents (33) indicated that they belonged to "an ethnic community, cultural group, or any sort of underrepresented group in Canada."

---

[24] In the Canadian archival context, the term *total archives* refers to the tendency of archival institutions in Canada to acquire both public and private records; in federal, provincial, and municipal archives, as a result of the total archives tradition, archivists will regularly work with both government records and the records of individuals, families, and communities. For an introduction to total archives, see Laura Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998): 103–46.
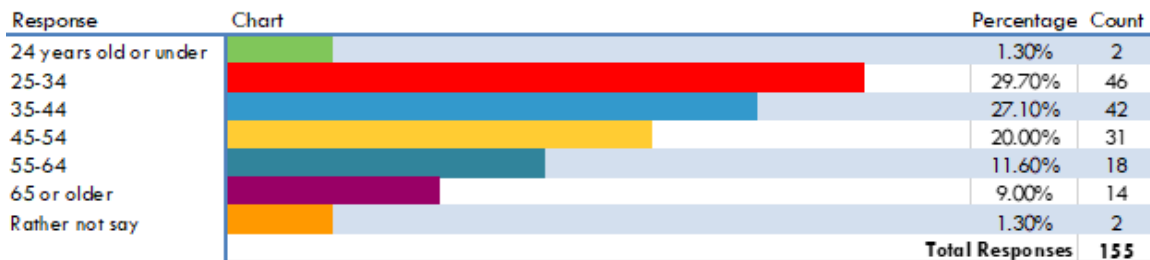
Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
24 years old or under		1.30%	2
25-34		29.70%	46
35-44		27.10%	42
45-54		20.00%	31
55-64		11.60%	18
65 or older		9.00%	14
Rather not say		1.30%	2
		Total Responses	155

Figure 1. What is your age?

The majority of respondents (101 or 65%) possess a master's degree,[25] but responses to a question about education levels indicate a range of educational pathways leading to work in archives. Respondents reported a variety of job titles, including: archivist, archives analyst, assistant archivist, archivist-librarian, collections manager, conservator, contract or project archivist, curator, records manager, government records archivist, director of archives, director of collections, executive director, heritage and archives clerk, information access and privacy administrator, library assistant, manager, records analyst, reference services manager, resource center and archives manager, student archivist, student library assistant, and volunteer archivist.

Nearly half of respondents (78) have been working in archives for ten or fewer years; about one-fifth (29 or 18%) have worked in archives for twenty or more years (figure 2). Respondents had work experience in a variety of types of institutions, including: community archives, government archives (municipal, provincial, and national), corporate archives, university archives, school archives, public libraries, academic libraries, museums, religious archives, Indigenous archives, and law enforcement archives. Ten respondents (7%) reported that they worked on or for a First Nation government, council, or similar body.

Questions about working with traumatic records

Participants were asked if they had ever worked with traumatic records, which in this section of the survey were defined as records containing upsetting or disturbing information, a purposefully open definition that, in the absence of an agreed upon definition of the term, allowed respondents to determine for themselves what constituted a traumatic record in their own experience. One hundred and twelve respondents (72%) said they had worked with traumatic records, while twenty-nine respondents (19%) indicated that they had not and fourteen (9%) were unsure. Those who had worked with traumatic records were asked to indicate which types of archival work brought them into contact with the records. Respondents could select more than one of the provided options and/or add other types of archival work (figure 2). Specifications of "other" types of activities included: work related to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), access review of records under freedom of information legislation, outreach in particular communities and to the public, donor relations, and research using records.

---

[25] Participants indicated earning master's degrees across a range of fields including archival studies, library and information studies, museum studies, and history.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Appraisal		49.20%	60
Arrangement		53.30%	65
Description		63.10%	77
Processing		59.80%	73
Reference		60.70%	74
Digitization		28.70%	35
Preservation		40.20%	49
Access to information & privacy*		4.90%	6
Cataloguing*		0.80%	1
Disposition*		0.80%	1
Donor relations & acquisition*		0.80%	1
Education*		0.80%	1
Exhibition*		0.80%	1
Filing*		0.80%	1
Legal work*		1.60%	2
Promotion & Outreach		1.60%	2
Research*		6.50%	8
Residential Schools / TRC		2.50%	3
		Total Responses	**122**

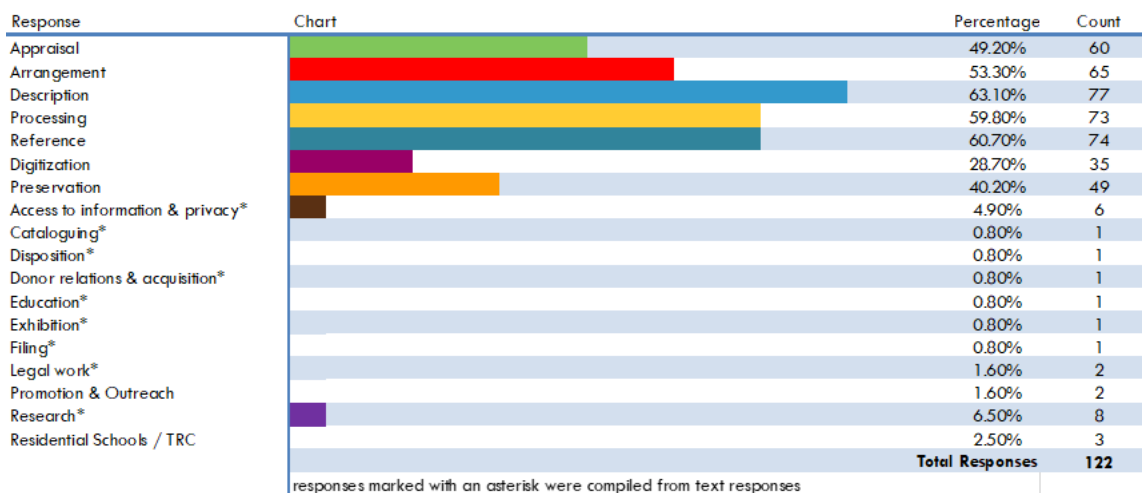responses marked with an asterisk were compiled from text responses

Figure 2. How have you worked with traumatic records?

Participants were asked whether or not they had been alerted (for example, by a supervisor or coworker) to expect traumatic records before encountering them. The majority indicated that they had not received any warning. Some explained that a warning was not necessary as the provenance of the records (for example, records of Holocaust survivors) suggested that the presence of traumatic records was a possibility. Others explained that as the first people to review records, there was no one who could provide a warning. The difficulties of providing adequate alerts were also explained. For example, one respondent said, "In one case my employer had looked at the records but didn't have enough context to realize that the implications of the material were potentially disturbing."[26] Several respondents suggested that it was difficult to know beforehand what kind of warning might be needed; as one respondent explained,

> I knew the materials would be difficult to work with but both I and my
> organization vastly underestimated how difficult it would be to work with
> the records, affected communities, individual survivors and other
> organizations. There is so much more than the trauma of what is contained
> in the records: there are the politics around providing access to the records
> that continues to cause trauma for those of us involved in this kind of work.

Survey questions also inquired about symptoms experienced by respondents who had worked with traumatic records (figure 3). The symptoms listed in the survey corresponded to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder as listed in the DSM-5. Symptoms noted by respondents included sleeplessness, helplessness, excessive sleeping, irritability, shock, anxiety, loneliness, sadness, headaches, guilt, shame, burnout, empathy, curiosity, and hopelessness.

---

[26] All respondent quotations appearing from this point on in the article are quoted directly from the optional, open-text response fields of the survey.
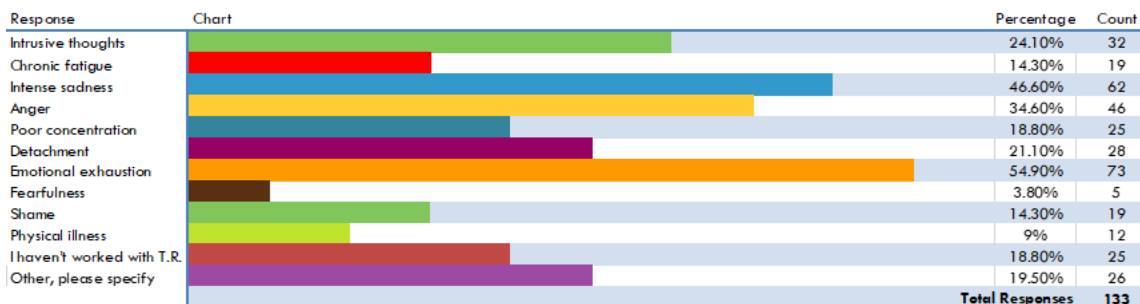
Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Intrusive thoughts		24.10%	32
Chronic fatigue		14.30%	19
Intense sadness		46.60%	62
Anger		34.60%	46
Poor concentration		18.80%	25
Detachment		21.10%	28
Emotional exhaustion		54.90%	73
Fearfulness		3.80%	5
Shame		14.30%	19
Physical illness		9%	12
I haven't worked with T.R.		18.80%	25
Other, please specify		19.50%	26
		Total Responses	**133**

Figure 3. Have you experienced any of the following symptoms during or after working with records of a traumatic nature?[27]

Some respondents indicated that though they had worked with traumatic records they had not experienced any of the listed symptoms. One respondent who experienced symptoms indicated uncertainty about whether "they stemmed primarily from the experience of working with traumatic records, the many stresses associated with that particular workplace, the uncertainties of precarious employment . . . or other underlying mental health issues." This person recognized that it can be difficult to make direct causal links between physical and emotional reactions and different aspects of an archivist's day-to-day work.

Several respondents indicated that though they experienced one or more of the listed symptoms, the symptoms did not impact their day-to-day life. However, two respondents explained that they chose to find a new job because of the stresses they experienced working with traumatic records.

Questions about employer or workplace handling of secondary trauma?

Only seventeen respondents (11%) indicated that their employer or workplace had addressed secondary trauma. Several of these respondents worked in positions where exposure to traumatic records might be predicted to be more likely (for example, records of residential schools or Holocaust survivors). Ninety-five respondents (61%) were employed at workplaces that offer benefits that can be used toward support services such as counseling; however, several respondents indicated that benefits were minimal, partial, and/or difficult to access. A significant number of respondents reported relying on support systems outside their workplace, including friends, family, colleagues in the profession, and mental-health providers not associated with employee benefit programs.

The survey also asked about perceived barriers to accessing existing workplace support. Written responses to this question listed the following types of barriers: mistrust of the

---

[27] This question was optional and presumed that respondents would only mark responses that applied to them. However, in the "other" category, two respondents indicated "no" or "none," which highlighted a problem with the survey design as it failed to adequately capture those who had worked with traumatic records but experienced no symptoms. A follow-up question, which all participants completed, included the option "I have not had these symptoms," and 34/21.9% of respondents chose this.

employee benefit provider's ability to protect respondents' privacy and confidentiality, lack of benefits for contract or part-time employees, limitations on employee assistance program counseling services, concerns about missing work to attend appointments, and fear of exposure (that is, a fear that others in the workplace would find out). Several respondents indicated that there was phone support available to them but because they worked in an open office they did not feel comfortable using the services.

The number of responses by those who identified barriers and those who did not were about equal. Sixty-five participants responded to an optional question about whether they thought they would access workplace services if they needed them. A variety of responses were provided, with many respondents indicating that they would, some claiming they already had sufficient support systems in place outside the workplace, others suggesting they had little faith in the ability of their workplace to offer helpful services, and some suggesting that their workplace culture would discourage them from accessing available services.

In a separate question about reasons respondents might not access services that are currently available, the following reasons were given: time, cost, stigma, privacy, concerns about the quality of workplace-provided services, and lack of access to available services because of a contract position. Organizational culture was discussed by several respondents in the optional additional comments section. These respondents felt their workplace required a "stiff upper lip" approach to archival work; some respondents suggested that in order for a workplace to truly support employee well-being there needed to be change within the workplace culture, rather than relying on referral through benefits packages to "large healthcare providers."

Emergent Themes

In this section, we discuss several themes that emerged during our iterative coding of responses to open-ended survey questions. The open-ended questions, which encouraged participants to describe in their own words their understanding and experiences of working with traumatic records, provided some of the richest data accumulated during this research. We have preferred to use long quotations from survey responses throughout this section to best reflect respondents' thoughtful, sensitive, often passionate, and sometimes provocative perspectives on this exploratory research.

The difficulty of defining what constitutes a traumatic record

The survey results demonstrate that working with traumatic records, or records documenting trauma, is not an uncommon experience. While the majority of respondents indicated that they understood the concept of secondary trauma and were aware of the emotional toll traumatic records can potentially have on records professionals, survey answers demonstrated uncertainty regarding how to define what constitutes *trauma* and/or *traumatic records* in archival settings. Respondents generally accepted that the term "traumatic records" could be applied to records that document events resulting in death, serious injury, or sexual violence, as well as events recognized in mainstream society as being traumatic or resulting in long-term traumatization such as records

generated by Canada's residential schools system or records documenting war and genocide.

However, some respondents noted the subjectivity involved in defining traumatic records, and questions arose around records that have the potential to affect the archivist working with them, but that fall outside the generally accepted definition of "traumatic." For example, one respondent suggested that "the types of records I have mentioned in this survey might not really be 'traumatic.' Everyone is different and I have read documents and watched videos before that seemed more traumatic [than the records I worked with]." Another respondent suggested it is "hard to classify records as 'traumatic'—I have seen records that contain unsettling or very sad/tragic stories but I do not think I was traumatized, as far as I can tell." One respondent explained that records documenting trauma could be more or less upsetting for different employees: "the content was more difficult to process for me as a young person than the previous archivist (an older priest) expected." Respondents also noted that what is considered traumatic can change over time and in different contexts.

Some respondents wondered whether or not records documenting personal tragedy or systemic inequality or injustice could be considered traumatic. One respondent explained, "I worked with archival records that are not necessarily traumatic. However, I remember feeling very sorry for one individual knowing his death was a tragedy." Another wrote: "I think it's worth noting that [what's] upsetting to me includes things that are especially heartbreaking and sad, not just graphic/disturbing." Another respondent echoed these ideas, stating,

> Traumatic might be an overstatement, but I have certainly worked with records that documents [*sic*] that document conditions of extreme poverty and racism. They would be the kind of thing that most people understand in the abstract, but reading the details for people's lives becomes more concrete and upsetting.

Respondents also noted, as one put it, "that not all records that document trauma will themselves be 'traumatic records.'" This respondent went on to explain that "a collection of [World War I] era letters home from nurses definitely document trauma but is it reasonable to assume that an archivist processing these letters will subsequently be traumatised by their contents?" Also stressing the impact of perspective, another respondent suggested that "records of seemingly benign natures can become traumatic when context is added to them by researchers, social attitudes change towards issues contained in them, etc."

Several respondents discussed occasions when records were either more or less traumatic than expected, often referring to times when they were working with administrative records whose contents surprised them. For example, one shared this experience:

> I was processing records from municipal cemeteries. Some of the correspondence included in the files was very difficult, particularly those

which related to the deaths of children. I assumed I was looking at administrative material and did not realize that I would have an emotional reaction to the contents.

Another commented: "I knew that the collection contained records of a sensitive and potentially upsetting nature by virtue of where I worked but I never really knew when I would come upon them in my work."

Participants also clearly indicated that some records that are not necessarily traumatic by definition nevertheless evoke an emotional reaction. While some of the respondents quoted in the section above were hesitant to label what they experienced as secondary trauma, they clearly had an emotional response to working with some kinds of records. Respondents indicated that after working with records of a traumatic nature, they experienced a variety of feelings and symptoms—psychological, physiological, and a combination of both—that echo those associated with the symptoms of secondary trauma. The most commonly experienced symptom among respondents was emotional exhaustion.

Many respondents expanded upon their symptoms and on the emotional experience of working with records of trauma; they wrote of the negative emotions, including guilt, loneliness, and helplessness, that they felt as a result of working either with records documenting trauma or with individuals closely associated with those records. A small number of respondents indicated that working with emotionally exhausting records was a factor in their decision to leave a specific job or to leave the archival profession altogether. As one respondent wrote, "I chose to find a new job because of the secondary trauma associated with the records I managed in my previous position."

The different responses discussed in this section reveal some of the difficulties in defining what constitutes a traumatic record as perceptions of trauma are subjective, affect each person differently, and change over time and in different social and cultural contexts. It also appears that there is uncertainty in applying the term "traumatic" to records documenting situations that fall outside the purview of the traditional definition of trauma, but that nevertheless *emotionally* affect the archivist working with them. These responses demonstrate that not all records that affected respondents emotionally were traumatic in nature, and also that being emotionally affected by the contents of records is not the same as being traumatized; however, it was also clear from the responses to the survey that many respondents experienced some kind of emotional response while working with records that affected them profoundly enough to refer to it in response to questions about secondary trauma.

Working with donors and researchers

While the survey discussed here focused on traumatic records, unsurprisingly respondents identified other aspects of archival work that must be acknowledged in discussions of secondary trauma and archives. Feelings of secondary trauma or emotional distress were not only elicited through contact with records documenting traumatic

events, but also through contact with record creators, donors, and those accessing and using records. One respondent shared that in their experience, "it is much more difficult to deal with the community of people with traumatic experience than working with their written or told stories." Respondents suggested that more attention needs to be paid to the "effects of meeting with individuals" as the "in-person encounter with survivors of trauma can affect an archivist very deeply."

A small number of respondents recounted having attended Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) national events and/or working with survivors of the residential schools in other contexts; as one recounted, their "most intense experiences with archival records and trauma were focused more on dealing with survivors who had been triggered by the records from our collection." Responses also demonstrated that donor relations and "archival acquisitions work" can be emotionally difficult: "Many of my most emotional experiences have been while visiting personal residences of donors."

Who is entitled to experience secondary trauma?

Alongside the discussion in the responses about the emotional response to records documenting trauma and to working with individuals and communities affected by trauma, another theme emerged: a tendency to downplay, minimize, and/or wish to deny emotional responses. Several respondents wrote about experiencing feelings of shame, embarrassment, and/or guilt caused by a sense that as witnesses to trauma experienced firsthand by others, they were not entitled to experience trauma themselves. This type of reaction is clearly demonstrated in the following responses:

> *Respondent:* "[compared] to what others have faced, I feel like I should be able to 'tough it out' because my experience is so little."

> *Respondent*: "While I have experienced anger, sadness and detachment (numbness) I don't think I would characterize it as 'secondary trauma.' I don't particularly enjoy working with records of trauma but it did not have a huge impact on my life. I also find it difficult not to find my emotions in these instances somewhat self-indulgent. After all, I am a CIS white male with a good job and very few problems, this shouldn't be about me."

> *Respondent*: "It's enough to deal with kids who are experiencing a current or ongoing trauma. My discomfort passes but theirs will stick."

Respondents who were uncertain about whether the materials that had upset them qualified as traumatic also expressed discomfort regarding their emotional reactions. For example, one admitted, "When I felt like I had secondary trauma if [*sic*] felt almost silly to be worked up by the materials I was working with." This respondent explained that the biggest barrier to seeking help was "feeling like [their experience] is enough of an issue to address it."

Two respondents were concerned that a focus on the concept of secondary trauma in archives was inherently disrespectful to the experiences of survivors, and suggested that for that reason, archivists should be wary of claiming they have symptoms of secondary trauma. One argued that "there is a danger that the development of this questionable concept belittles the experience of those who have actually faced traumatic events first-hand," while another suggested that "the idea that secondary trauma applies to archivists diminishes the extensive issues that survivors of primary and secondary trauma face." This respondent added: "While I acknowledge that some archivists work with records of trauma and some these [*sic*] archivists find this difficult and want to address this issue, I believe that framing it as secondary trauma is problematic and less than helpful."

Effects of organizational culture

Another theme emerged from the open-ended responses related to the relationship between organizational or workplace culture and respondents' experiences of working with traumatic records or feeling emotionally affected by working with records. One respondent wondered whether "work culture and support for archives/institutions whose holdings are related to traumatic events (ex: TRC Research Centre and Residential Schools) are different from those institutions where, for example, archivists stumble upon records with difficult subject matter by chance." Responses to questions about workplace attitudes to secondary trauma seem to suggest that this could be the case. Respondents who indicated that they worked with records related to the TRC or to the Holocaust also tended to describe more supportive work environments, more readily available support services, and more explicit recognition of the potential for secondary trauma or emotional responses to records. One respondent who worked with records documenting the Holocaust explained that their workplace "actively encourages using [support] services as a part of our health plan and/or talking to people experienced with trauma who might be available in our community or networks." Further, this respondent explained that in their capacity as supervisor, they were careful about who they assigned particular tasks to and that explicit warnings about potentially upsetting materials were always provided. While dealing with trauma was not "an explicit part of training for the most part," "all members of this workplace are aware of the circumstances surrounding any survivor interviews, and all staff are willing to talk about it if necessary."

In contrast, several respondents reported an organizational culture that, as one respondent put it, "discouraged talking about emotional matters on work hours." Another respondent explained that at their workplace, the connection between emotional or mental well-being and the nature of the work was not acknowledged. Several respondents suggested that while there were resources available for employees, employers did little to explain how these could be accessed or to discuss with employees when they might need such services; as a result of the lack of information about services and attention to emotional and mental well-being, respondents reported feeling uncomfortable seeking help. As one respondent reported:

> At my past workplace where I worked with traumatic records, I was told that we had a counselor on staff and that there was a phone health support line available as well, but I didn't really feel comfortable using these (although I knew others who did). I found the thought of turning to the counselor in our office embarrassing as I worked with her regularly on other projects, and I never really knew what sort of services the phone line offered as I wasn't told and never tried calling it. It seems like more could have been done to explain its services and make employees feel comfortable with using it.

Even the physical configuration of a workspace might affect how respondents experienced the availability of support; several respondents referenced open workspaces as a barrier to accessing employer-offered counseling services. As one explained, "We work in an open environment and I honestly don't want to talk about it at work because I will cry and I don't want to be seen like that at work in front of everyone."

One respondent described some of their own efforts to change organizational culture by trying to "put more warning on some of our difficult materials," but then explained that these warnings were removed by other employees. Another respondent, who worked with traumatic records but did not experience secondary trauma, emphasized that "there are potentially proactive practices and tools available in work places and via work practices that seek to mitigate and/or address the potential of secondary trauma." This respondent added that "those who work in environments where there is potential for secondary trauma due the nature of the materials with which they work may have access to a variety of ways to recognize, address and mitigate this trauma prior to it occurring." This might be the case in repositories where the presence of traumatic materials is expected, but the responses to this survey also indicate that traumatic or emotionally upsetting materials can appear in unexpected places; survey responses indicate that experiences vary widely across types of workplaces and suggest that there is a need to further consider the relationship between workplaces, traumatic records, and individual experiences.

Professional culture: The continuing influence of the neutral archivist

Responses to open-ended questions reflected long-standing debates in the archival profession concerning the extent to which archivists are expected to remain neutral and objective, and to maintain a certain distance between themselves and the records with which they work. Although we have looked at several responses in which participants describe emotional responses to working with records (and/or with donors and/or researchers), there were also answers demonstrating disapproval or anxiety about emotional responses, which were seen as counter to the norms of the archival profession that emphasize the impartiality and neutrality of the archivist. As one participant, who recognized the potential emotional impact of archival work, noted:

> It's important to remember that our job is to preserve the material, not to interpret it. My background and experience with and within several marginalized communities allow me to maintain a certain level of

objectivity with regard to distressing material, but I don't think the issue is generally addressed in most archival training. This leaves practitioners (especially those who are younger and/or new to the profession) at a definite disadvantage, lacking the tools to maintain objectivity.

Terry Cook identifies four paradigms for archival theory, and along with them, four roles for the archivist: the guarding custodian-archivist, the selecting historian-archivist, the shaping mediator-archivist, and the mentoring activist-archivist.[28] In the first paradigm especially, archivists are concerned with the "guardianship" of records as evidence and are themselves characterized as "impartial custodians"[29] of records. "Custodian-archivists"[30] focus not on the content of records or on their interpretation, but rather on their "moral and physical defense."[31] The notion that indifference to the content of records remains a valued trait can be seen in responses to the survey. Detachment, which is among the symptoms associated with secondary trauma, and was reported by 21% of participants, was cited by some as a virtue of the profession. One participant credited it with enabling them to do their work: "I view detachment as a coping tool that allows me to meet researcher needs—researchers who were likely to have directly experienced trauma (though that being said, empathy is also necessary working with researchers)."

Another respondent viewed detachment as central to the archival endeavor and suggested that an archivist who is unable to remain detached from the records they care for might need to consider another type of profession: "No one is forced to work in an archives. If someone finds the records they are dealing with upsetting, they should go get another job—[. . .] find something a little lighter. In my opinion, archivist, as proferssionals [*sic*], should be able to maintain a level of detachment that would prevent any secondary trauma."

A third point of view connects to our earlier discussion of the subjective nature of the experience of secondary trauma:

> Unvarnished history needs context and perception. One person's "upsetting" is often another person's statement of fact, and it's very easy to assume that someone else's take will be the same as ours. Too much caution plants seeds of suspicion, which can get in the way of an objective approach to the material.

Here, the respondent seems to suggest that a focus on secondary trauma and/or the emotional aspects of records work might jeopardize the ability of archivists and records professionals to appropriately manage the records in their care.

---

[28] Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science* 13, nos. 2–3 (2013): 95–120.

[29] Ibid., 107.

[30] Ibid., 106.

[31] Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual for Archival Administration* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1922), 44.

Role of archival education

Although the survey did not ask about the kinds of education and training Canadian archivists receive that would prepare them for working with traumatic records and/or responding to secondary trauma, this was a topic raised in the open-ended responses. One respondent discussed working with records over the course of their career that were anti-Semitic, racist, and homophobic, that depicted violence, fatal accidents, and the experiences of children in residential schools. They added:

> But the saddest ones I've dealt with have been about adoption and the 60's scoop.[32] I always feel terrible that I can't provide more assistance to researchers, but the records are gone. What I hear is survivors' stories, and sometimes that's all they want to do is share their stories, but there's no training offered in how to assist with that.

This concern about a lack of training was echoed by several other respondents, alongside the suggestion that "those working with [traumatic] records should be trained to handle the emotional aspects, the same way care providers are trained. This would go a very long way to minimizing secondary trauma, and formal support would be required less often."

Respondents who wished for more extensive training noted the roles of both archival education programs and professional development programs in providing it, but there were also some reservations expressed about the capability of existing education programs to provide adequate training; these reservations, as the respondent below explains at length, relate to the perception of the archival profession as neutral and detached:

> Having a supervisor with experience in archives (and no experience in any other field) may well be more of a detriment to staff mental health than a positive. Archival education and professional development has rewarded a cold logic approach that we laud as objectivity, but it has not rewarded empathy, considering multiple perspectives, or seeing records creators or records workers as whole people. As a consequence, those who are supervisors with experience in archival practice are likely to have been promoted precisely because they were being rewarded for their lack of empathy. I would encourage the community to look deeply at how we can

---

[32] The Sixties Scoop refers to a practice in Canada that saw the removal, or "scooping," of Indigenous children from their families and communities, often without the consent of the children's parents and/or band. The children were then placed into foster homes, and/or were adopted by predominately non-Indigenous families across Canada, the United States, and Western Europe. The program ran from the late 1950s and ended in the 1980s, with the program at its height in the 1960s. The removal had long-lasting effects on both the children removed from their families, communities, and cultural identities, as well as the families and communities who lost their children. For more information, see Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Sharon Dainard's "Sixties Scoop," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, June 22, 2016, last modified March 21, 2018, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sixties-scoop.

build an archival system that rewards empathy, promotes those who demonstrate it, or at least retains those who show emotional responses to the records (and doesn't fire them for this).

Role of professional associations

In addition to continuing professional education, a few respondents pointed to the role that professional associations might play in providing a supportive venue for discussion and capacity building. One respondent shared that the "most powerful moment" they had experienced as an archivist "was a sense of community at the ACA 2016 conference that came out of discussing experience with traumatic records from a related panel." This panel, mentioned in the literature review, was noted by a few other respondents as one of the ways they learned about secondary trauma in archives and/or as a place where they felt recognition and support. Some respondents who appeared not to have attended the panel also called for these types of discussions to occur within the structure of archival professional associations. One explained that they had "never heard actual Archivists specifically talk about this at conferences," adding that "we need to create more awareness and include it in our agendae." Another recounted their own "success sharing experiences with archivists, as more of us are engaged in this kind of work" and suggested that "we could provide more support to one another in our professional circles to talk about some of these experiences."

Effects of precarity

Another common theme found throughout the survey related to precarity. Some respondents noted that precariously employed archivists might not have access to the same resources as permanent employees. For example, contract employees are often ineligible for benefits that would help them to access or pay for support services.

The lack of benefits was not the only factor affecting precarious workers' experience of working with traumatic or emotionally challenging records. Fear of stigmatization was cited by a significant number of respondents as a deterrent to accessing support, but it seemed to have particular significance for those working contract or other short-term positions. Precariously employed archivists cited concern about their professional reputation as a deterrent to accessing support. While several respondents mentioned this concern, one put it quite bluntly: "The records don't hurt me. What hurts me is being told to suck it up, feeling threatened I might lose my precarious, contingent labour which I am forced to do to pay my dues to the archival community." This same respondent urged us to "look closely" at the relationships between precarious labor and the level of support around secondary trauma: "People can't speak up to get support if they feel like anything they may ask for that is 'extra' may lead them to lose a contract renewal." This problem is exacerbated, as the respondent noted, when an organization can simply hire another short-term employee.

Empathic effects of working with traumatic records

While there was clear indication that working with records documenting large- and small-scale trauma may result in emotional and physical stress, respondents also reported experiencing other types of reactions. This includes the development of empathy—or empathic responses—and a rise in curiosity regarding records and their subjects that could have a positive impact on their work. For example, one respondent wrote: "My experience has been that experiencing secondary trauma has actually been a good thing for my professional life as an archivist. While not fun at the time, I was fortunate to be in a supportive environment, and it has lead [*sic*]me to be more empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others."

Some respondents discussed the desire to honor and respect the subjects of the records (that is, those who experienced trauma firsthand), the communities to whom they belonged, and the traumatic experiences they endured. The respondent quoted above, who reported having "had a lot of experience processing these feelings" due to having worked in a particular community for a long period of time, explained that "at this point, I feel the best way for me to respond is to do my best work in processing and describing these records, in order to honour their creators and their traumatic experiences." Another respondent, in the open-ended space provided for the question about symptoms experienced by participants who had worked with traumatic records, listed as a symptom the desire to "honour [the records'] creators and their traumatic experiences" as well as anxiety "related to handling the records in such a way that is respectful to the situation and the individuals involved."

Some respondents who discussed the ways that working with records documenting trauma helped them to develop empathic responses, called on the archival community to more fully embrace empathy as a professional value, particularly when working with records documenting trauma or otherwise upsetting content.

Future Work

As exploratory research, this study was undertaken in order to open up space for a wider discussion of archivists' experiences working with traumatic records. The themes discussed above suggest a variety of ways in which discussions can be taken up by the archival community. Topics and questions for further research could include (but not be limited to) the following:

The types of records that might be considered traumatic: Responses to the study indicated that a variety of records have the potential to cause emotional distress; archivists might expect records documenting experiences of the Holocaust or of residential schools to contain difficult subject matter, but such subject matter can also be present in more "routine" records. There were also questions raised in the responses to the survey about whether certain types of records were inherently more capable of causing trauma or distress (for example, are audiovisual records more "triggering" than textual records?). Our research suggests that more work is needed to determine what

constitutes a traumatic or distressing record, and more broadly, a traumatic or distressing experience working in and with archives. This work might recognize, as discussed above, that experience is subjective and that a scale might be drawn to acknowledge a range of reactions from distress to secondary trauma.

The emotional dimensions of archival work: The study calls attention to the ways that archivists experience their work and interactions with records and researchers emotionally. It also raises questions both about the legitimacy of emotions in archival work and about the necessity for acknowledging the emotional aspects of archival work in training and education programs. More research should be undertaken to characterize the role(s) of emotion(s) in archival work and to determine the most effective ways of preparing archivists for emotional work.

Working with people and traumatic records: This study focused on working with traumatic records, but a significant number of respondents suggested that the emotional effects of working with *people*—creators, subjects, and users of records—require a good deal more attention, and that archivists need training and education around how to work sensitively and respectfully with people and records in difficult situations. Working with people as they process their feelings and experiences of trauma might constitute a more personal and emotionally exhausting experience than working with a set of records that can, for example, be put down and returned to at a later date. Working with researchers or donors directly may also require the archivist to engage more deeply with the contents of a set of records. Patrons may need more from the archivist than just those records; they may also require emotional support from the archivist, and the archivist may need to develop skills in providing such support. More research is needed to study the interactions between archivists and the people who create, are subjects of, and use records, and to determine how best to prepare archivists for working with donors and researchers of all types.

The role of education programs in preparing archivists to work in traumatic or emotional scenarios (with records and/or people): A majority of respondents indicated having worked with traumatic records at some point during their career, and not always in collections or repositories where they would have expected to come across such records. This suggests that it is not unlikely that a working archivist will encounter traumatic records at some point in their career. However, respondents also described a lack of education about and preparation for working with difficult records. This research suggests, therefore, that archival educators need to consider how students in archival education programs can best be prepared for the possibility of working with difficult materials as well as with donors, researchers, and records subjects. Here, archival educators might consider what can be learned from how other professional education programs, such as social work and journalism, prepare their students to work with difficult materials and to recognize and manage experiences of vicarious traumatization.

Role of professional associations in preparing archivists to work in traumatic or emotional scenarios (with records and/or people): Alongside archival education programs, professional associations could also play a stronger role in providing education

and training for archivists, through the provisions of workshops at conferences, online webinars, and so on. Professional associations could also play a role in making space for sharing and discussing difficult or traumatizing work experiences; this was a need mentioned by several respondents. Research in this area could consider the kinds of spaces, opportunities, and learning resources that would best serve the various needs of professional archivists.

Barriers to accessing services for those experiencing secondary trauma or emotional distress: Further research is also needed to better understand the types of barriers that prohibit or discourage individuals from seeking help when they need it. Respondents to the survey identified several reasons why they might not access available support services; these reasons related to organizational culture, to workplace precarity, and to the stigma associated with admitting to being emotionally affected at work, which may be compounded by the continuing influence of the model of the impartial and objective archivist.

Archives as a caring profession: Many of the suggestions outlined above require a fundamental reorientation in understanding the archival profession as a *caring* profession.[33] This is not an insignificant shift in perspective and it precipitates serious questions concerning what caring means in the context of archives and archival institutions, and what impact understanding archival work as care work will have on archival theory, methods, and practice. If we are to begin to think of archival work as care work, we must attend seriously to the types of support that will be required for archivists, for educators, for managers, for professional associations, and even for users of archives. Significant further research is required to outline the dimensions of archival care work and to understand and implement the necessary systems of support for such work.

Conclusion

This study collected data on Canadian archivists' understanding of the concept of secondary trauma and on their professional experiences of working with records that could be considered traumatic. The survey also gathered data concerning the types of support services available to Canadian archivists, and participants' use of these services. As exploratory research, the study raises more questions than it answers, but the questions it raises are important ones. Based on participants' answers to open-ended questions, this article has focused on identifying emerging themes and areas where further research is required and has demonstrated that the topic of secondary trauma and archivists' experiences of it are of significant interest and importance to the archival community. The study confirms the desire of the Canadian archival community for a

---

[33] The need for this type of reorientation is beginning to be expressed in the profession and in archival literature. For example, in the conference sessions noted in note 4, attention to a focus on care was called for. Care—or more specifically a feminist ethics of care—and the need for radical empathy on the part of archivists and of the archival profession are skillfully introduced and passionately advocated for in Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 23–44.

more open and inclusive dialogue on the emotional and potentially traumatizing aspects of archival work. The research tasks laid out in the previous section should be considered as a call to action, and it is our hope that this early work will contribute to the development of a robust research agenda and to positive change in the ways that archivists are educated and trained and in how—as a profession and discipline—we talk about trauma and the emotional impact of the different aspects of our work.

We wish to thank the participants in this study, many of whom shared difficult stories, and many of whom also expressed thanks for the survey and for its potential role in breaking the silence around the topic of secondary trauma. As one respondent who shared this sense of gratitude explained, the survey put a name and shared experience to what they had previously experienced alone: "I haven't ever considered that other archivists and researchers might feel the way I do; I felt it was just my problem to handle." The answers to this survey demonstrate that secondary trauma and/or emotional reactions to working with difficult materials are not isolated experiences and that this is not only one person's problem to handle: it is a problem with which the profession, archival education programs, and workplaces must begin to grapple.

One of the aims of this article was to highlight the experiences and words of our respondents. With that aim in mind, we close with the words of one respondent, whose hopes for the future we share:

> I hope that out of this research we as a community can open up a discussion that results in more support resources for archivists dealing with secondary trauma, specifically guidelines and information about how to recognize secondary trauma, support our colleagues who are dealing with it, where to turn for help, and how to protect the mental well-being of our support staff and users who may work with it.

References

Adami, Tom, and Martha Hunt. "Reconciliation in Regions Affected by Armed Conflict." In *Better off Forgetting? Essays on Archives, Public Policy, and Collective Memory*, edited by Cheryl Avery and Mona Holmlund, 195–214. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

American Psychiatric Association. "Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders." In *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Boles, Frank. "'Just a Bunch of Bigots': A Case Study in the Acquisition of Controversial Material." *Archival Issues* 19, no. 1 (1994): 53–65.

Bride, Brian E., Melissa Radey, Charles R. Figley. "Measuring Compassion Fatigue." *Clinical Social Work Journal* 35, no. 3 (2007): 155–63.

Caswell, Michelle. *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory and the Photographic Record in Cambodia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014.

———. "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives." *Archival Science* 14, nos. 3–4 (2014): 307–22.

Caswell, Michelle, and Marika Cifor. "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives." *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 23–43.

Cifor, Marika. "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse." *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 7–31.

Cook, Terry. "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms." *Archival Science* 13, nos. 2–3 (2013): 95–120.

Danielson, Elena S. "Privacy Rights and the Rights of Political Victims: Implications of the German Experience." *The American Archivist* 67 (Fall–Winter 2004): 176–93.

Figley, Charles R. "Compassion Fatigue as Secondary Stress Disorder." In *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder*, edited by Charles R. Figley, 1–18. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995.

Figley Institute. *Basics of Compassion Fatigue*. New Orleans: Figley Institute, 2013.

Flinn, Andrew, Mary Stevens, Elizabeth Shepherd. "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream." *Archival Science* 9, no. 1 (2009): 71–86.

Gilliland, Anne J. "Studying Affect and Its Relationship to the Agency of Archivists since the Yugoslav Wars." In *Studies in Archival Education and Research: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference*, edited by Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead, and Eleanor Mattern, 29–58. Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2015.

Gilliland, Anne J., and Sue McKemmish. "Rights in Records as a Platform for Participative Archiving." In *Studies in Archival Education and Research: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI* Conference, edited by Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead, and Eleanor Mattern,101–31. Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2015.

Glenwright, Brittni J. "The Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout on Mental Health Professionals' Intimate Relationships." Master's thesis. University of Toronto, 2015.

Jenkinson, Hilary. *A Manual for Archival Administration*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1922.

Keats, Patrice, and Marla Buchanan. "Addressing the Effects of Assignment Stress Injury." *Journalism Practice* 3, no. 2 (2009): 162–77.

McCann, I. Lisa, and Laurie Anne Pearlman. "Vicarious Traumatization: A Framework for Understanding the Psychological Effects of Working with Victims." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990): 131–49.

Millar, Laura. "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada." *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998): 103–46.

Nathan, Lisa, Elizabeth Shaffer, and Maggie Castor. "Stewarding Collections of Trauma: Plurality, Responsibility, and Questions of Action." *Archivaria* 80 (Fall 2015): 89–118.

Niigaanwewidam, James Sinclair, and Sharon Dainard. "Sixties Scoop." *Canadian Encyclopedia*. June 22, 2016. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sixties-scoop.

Sachs, Albie. "Archives, Truth, and Reconciliation." *Archivaria* 62 (Fall 2006): 1–14.

St. Onge, Anna, Julia Holland, and Danielle Robichaud. "It's nothing, I'm fine: Acknowledging Emotion and Affect in Archival Practice." Presentation at the Archives Association of Ontario Annual Conference, Thunder Bay, ON, May 13, 2016.

St. Onge, Anna, Melanie Delva, and Rebecka Sheffield. "Emotional Labour in the Archives." Presentation at the Association of Canadian Archivists Annual Conference, Montreal, QC, June 1–4, 2016.

Wright, David, and Renee Saucier. "Madness in the Archives: Anonymity, Ethics and Mental Health History." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 2 (2012): 65–90.