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No Manuals: Archives Administration 100 Years After Jenkinson's Manual

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No Manuals: Archives Administration 100 Years After Jenkinson's Manual

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NO MANUALS: ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER JENKINSON'S MANUAL

The year 2022 is the centenary of the publication of Sir Hilary Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration*, which became a foundation of archival practice in the English-speaking world.¹ Jenkinson was the Deputy Keeper of the Records (the head of the Public Record Office, now known as the UK National Archives), a founder of the British Records Association, president of the Jewish Historical Society of England and of the Society of Archivists, and a vice president of the International Council on Archives, which he had a hand in establishing as Britain's representative to the UNESCO committee that formed the council. Jenkinson taught paleography and archives administration at King's College London and University College London, where an annual lecture is named for him.² The centenary of his manual will be marked in Britain as a time for reflection on the history and future of archival thought and practice through activities such as a conference hosted by the Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research and the (UK) National Archives, and the publication of a special issue of *Archives and Records*, edited by Jenny Bunn.³

Outside the United Kingdom, Jenkinson's legacy may be less acutely present in archival thought today, but in English-speaking countries, his *Manual* is often still regarded as a historical milestone. Jenkinson's *Manual* has also come to represent orthodoxy. Although his admonitions against appraisal have been sidelined in the face of increasing records production, and his practical guidance superseded by changes in record-making and preservation technologies, his name and text remain signifiers for precepts of objective truth, work in the service of history, and dutiful custodianship on behalf of states presumed to be acting in good faith. Some practitioners proudly wear the badge of the "Jenkinsonian," while others see in Jenkinson's name an old order still to be toppled. The term "neo-Jenkinsonian" has been used to describe archival theorists, some whose views are markedly different from each other. Jenkinson's name and philosophy have been attributed meanings that are not always clearly delineated nor necessarily detectable in his own writing.

Undeniably, in the years since the *Manual* was published, archival theory and practice have changed radically, with the evolution of appraisal theory, post-custodialism, postmodern and critical turns in archival thought, and open questions about what and who records and archives are for. Leading up to 2022, Archival Discourses, the international research network concerned with critical intellectual histories of archival studies, has been crowdsourcing a new "manual" in a wiki format.⁴ Archival Discourses was established in 2018 to promote the critical examination of the history of ideas in the archival field, and to date it has convened panels at the International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (ICHORA) and produced a special issue of *Archival Science* on "Archival Thinking: Genealogies and Archaeologies."⁵ The wiki manual, intended as a diverting opportunity to suggest and contest the principles and practices that

¹ Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration* (1922).

² Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists*.

³ The creation of the wiki discussed in this article was prompted by an observation by Jenny Bunn, a member of the Archival Discourses network, that 2022 would be the anniversary of Jenkinson's manual. This article therefore owes its genesis to her.

⁴ A (New) Manual of Archive Administration, Wikidot, <http://archivesmanual.wikidot.com/>.

⁵ Archival Discourses: International Intellectual History of Archival Studies Research Network.

comprise the work of archivists today, illuminates, if incompletely, how radically the field has changed in a century.

So far, wiki entries cover topics such as data doubles, human memory, and redescription, with contributions received from across the globe. In this article, we present some of the content from the wiki that shows how thinking within archival science has changed in the last one hundred years. In presenting this selection of topics, however, we also want to think about the codification of ideas in the form of the manual, reflecting on what the concept of “authority” previously associated with a widely adopted manual looks like or means presently in the context of professional practice.

Navigating Archival Theory (Method)

Before beginning, it is important to clarify our positionality, because it concerns the framing of the history of ideas we are discussing. We live in a settler colonial state and have all been educated in Western education systems; as students and faculty at Queens College, City University of New York, we are enmeshed in these contexts, and for all our diversity, we are shaped by them. Like Jenkinson, and many of the writers who have followed him, our shared language of English is one of the major languages and legacies of the colonizer, both historically and in today’s increasingly digital world. Through this article, we are illustrating a professional trajectory that, albeit currently driving toward liberatory and restorative practices, still concerns the English-language archival discourse that belongs to a global order of knowledge and power shaped by colonialism and Whiteness. At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that archival ideas and practices within the English-speaking world are highly contingent on the historical and contemporary sociopolitical and juridical contexts of its different countries and regions, the nature of their own participation or subjugation in colonial projects, and the existence and scope of professional archival education, and thus themselves differ considerably from place to place and time to time. Moreover, few of the sources in the wiki entries to date, and few of our sources in this article, come from or reflect the many traditions and intellectual histories of archival thought that survive in the world despite the endeavors of some of our ancestors. There is an open question about how we acknowledge and respect these traditions without appropriating them, as James Lowry and Heather MacNeil observed when they wrote that questions “about orders of value, subjugated and resistant knowledges, the right to look outside our own contexts and how we do that, exoticization and othering, such questions trouble and propel critical intellectual history.”⁶ Such questions are not easily answered, but always reading and writing with a critical awareness of power/knowledge operations is key, and we seek to do that here.

In Western traditions, the manual, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (which we invoke for its authority) as a “book giving instructions or information,” has been the genre of document most significant in the regularization of bureaucratic and industrial operations, seeking to bring consistency, efficiency, and quality control to messy and complicated networks of actors.⁷ Imperialism and capitalism both therefore owe a debt to the manual and its agency in the systematization of activities as diverse as manufacturing, construction, personnel management, accounting, auditing, scientific lab work, the administration of drugs, teaching, parenting, computing, and so on. The manual has figured significantly in the conduct of bureaucracy and the management of organizational information flows in governments, industry, and organizations of all types, and thus has played an important role in organizational records creation and management.

⁶ Lowry and MacNeil, “Archival Thinking,” 2.

⁷ *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), s.v., “manual.”

The first major modern publication on archival practice in Western Europe also took the form of a manual. Written by the Dutch archivists Samuel Muller, Johan Feith, and Robert Fruin, the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, commonly referred to as the “Dutch Manual,” codified one hundred rules for archival work that drew on the authors’ experiences with government records, as well as Dutch, Prussian, French, and other European ideas about how official records should be organized and preserved.⁸ Eric Ketelaar has explained some of the intellectual antecedents of that book.⁹ When Jenkinson’s manual was published in 1922, it enshrined practices at the United Kingdom’s Public Record Office, but again it was not created in a vacuum: Margaret Procter has described its milieu—the other archival thinkers and writers of the time—and in doing so has called into question the place that the *Manual* and its author holds in the genealogy and imagination of Western archival theory.¹⁰ Similarly, when T. R. Schellenberg’s *Modern Archives* was published in 1956, it codified ideas and practices developed by and specifically for the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration at the time. Anne Gilliland, in turn, traces how wider professional consensus nevertheless developed around Schellenberg’s work in relation to archival arrangement and description (rather than classification and cataloging approaches that were applied in librarianship), as an example of its regularizing effects.¹¹ Since then, record-keeping manuals and textbooks have proliferated in the English-speaking world, and while few of the more recent texts directly draw their authority from the institutional affiliations of their authors in the same way as the three manuals just discussed, these newer guides and textbooks typically draw from standards, policies, tools, and statements of best practices developed by state records authorities or state-funded international bodies such as the International Council on Archives or the International Standards Organisation. Behind each text is a body of thought realized in documents that gain their authority from the institutions mandated by law and funded by public funds to set norms of practice. In this way, most recordkeeping manuals bear the imprint of state authority.

However, many of the recent significant changes in archival theory and practice derive from the emergence of a “multiverse” following the growth in graduate education programs and research faculty since the 1990s, as well as the expansion of practice-based research, evidenced in another landmark text, *Research in the Archival Multiverse*.¹² The current theoretical archives literature often focuses on challenging or developing new archival concepts, while the more practically focused literature often seeks to share experiences, where any advice is framed in terms like “can” or “could” rather than “should” or “must”—what Rick Iedema called “shouldness.”¹³ Today, recordkeeping takes place in an archival multiverse in which the rule-based, sector-wide manual is epistemologically inappropriate and always already obsolete. In a sense, the (*New*) *Manual of Archive Administration* is an “anti-manual” because its format acknowledges flattened ontologies of authority in the always developing and multivalent space that is archival discourse.

It is not feasible to present a full analysis of a century of change in one article, particularly at a time when archival theory is developing month by month. Instead, we use chance to navigate

⁸ Muller, Feith, and Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*.

⁹ Ketelaar, “Archival Theory.”

¹⁰ Procter, “Life before Jenkinson.”

¹¹ Anne Gilliland, “Professional, Institutional, and National Identities in Dialog: The Development of Descriptive Practices in the First Decade of the US National Archives,” *Information and Culture* 49, no. 1 (2014): 54–73. Thanks to Erin O’Meara for this reference.

¹² See, in particular, Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew J. Lau, “Preface,” and Anne J. Gilliland, “Archival and Recordkeeping Traditions in the Multiverse and Their Importance for Researching Situations and Situating Research,” both in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew J. Lau (Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Monash University Publishing, 2016), 16-29, 31-73.

¹³ Iedema, “The Language of Administration,” 73.

through the content of the unstable and always-emergent wiki. To look at the contents of the (*New*) *Manual of Archive Administration* we have approached the text through a wiki game, a hypertextual game for one or more players. The Wikipedia page for WikiGame explains the objective and rules of the game: “Players (one or more) start on the same randomly selected article, and must navigate to another pre-selected target article, solely by clicking links within each article. The goal is to arrive at the target article in the fewest clicks (articles), or the least time. The single-player Wiki Game, known as Wikirace, Wikispeedia, WikiLadders, WikiClick, or WikiWhack, involves reducing one’s previous time or number of clicks.”¹⁴

We chose this format because, apart from allowing us to sample the wiki entries, it surfaces the ontological fluidity of the wiki format. The topics presented in this article were encountered by clicking from “LGBTQ+ Archives” through to the designated end point, the entry for “Digital Repatriation,” both of which we selected arbitrarily. Each section below describes the contents of a wiki entry at the time of writing this article and offers a reflection on how the notions in the entry diverge from or sustain the principles contained in Jenkinson’s manual. The article concludes with a consideration of the form of the manual, authority in archival discourse, and the implications for our field’s intellectual histories and futures.

Entries from the (*New*) *Manual of Archive Administration*

LGBTQ+ archives.

A (*New*) *Manual of Archive Administration*’s entry on LGBTQ+ archives is about archivists navigating marginalization and identity within institutional frameworks.¹⁵ LGBTQ+ archives work to collect, preserve, and make accessible the documentary heritage of queer people and their communities. The wiki article charts the development of this mission in order to introduce readers to the ideological and practical challenges that shape the role of LGBTQ+ archives within the larger archives landscape. From the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919–33) to contemporary institutions and projects such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives (1974–) and the Digital Transgender Archive at Northeastern University (2008–), LGBTQ+ archives have always existed across a broad spectrum of institutionality.¹⁸ Facing violent erasure or censorship in daily life, queer people have memorialized their lives and deaths in counter-archives, but as LGBTQ+ identity has become more widely accepted in some places, and identity/difference more widely embraced as important to archival collections, “outsider” archives or archival collections have sometimes been incorporated into large, institutional archives, such as state-operated archives or university special collections. This has presented queer communities and their archivists with the problematic idea that legibility is validity is (political) power.

Adoption within such institutional archives (or the ability to mirror the standards of such archives) can mean access to valuable resources and is key to many archives’ survival. For others, it can also represent the culmination of decades of struggle regarding visibility and inclusion. At the same time, many LGBTQ+ archives are indifferent to or reject institutional affiliation in order to maintain the freedom to create, discard, and alter standards to reflect the dynamism and diversity of queer culture. It is true that standard archival policies and practices can be exclusionary to queer

¹⁴ Wikipedia, “Wiki Game,” project page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wiki_Game.

¹⁵ A (*New*) *Manual of Archive Administration*, s.v., “LGBTQ+ Archives.”

¹⁸ Wikipedia, s.v., “Institut für Sexualwissenschaft,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut_fur_Sexualwissenschaft; Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, N.Y., <https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>; Digital Transgender Archive, Northeastern University, Boston, <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>.

people, but it is also true that without resources, smaller counter-archives can struggle with preservation and outreach.

Do the policies and practices that have shaped archival practice for the past one hundred years “work” for queer materials? Expanding standards to be more inclusive does not always address very real reasons for communities’ distrust of institutional structures. Codification requires the endorsement of those in power; those in power are usually not the ones with real stakes in queer archives. Codification often benefits those in closest proximity to power, who are most easily cast as “representative” of the community at large.

But communities and identities are inherently messy. Queer identity in particular is fluid and dynamic. Since the modern period, messiness has been thought of as antithetical to knowledge production, and manuals like Jenkinson’s are designed to curb messiness. Ideas have changed and resulted in more equitable polices, but too often this is reduced to “inclusion = progress.” We cannot simply expand on Jenkinson and expect broadly workable results, just like we cannot merely expand the archive and expect satisfactory representation and full archival sovereignty. These tensions characterize the position of queer archives a century after Jenkinson.

Archival activism.

The wiki entry on archival activism defines it as action-oriented archival activities informed by an activist mentality and practices to provoke political or social change.¹⁹ Archival activism encompasses activist work carried out by professional archivists, as well as archival work performed by activist archives and community archives to document underrepresented voices and support political and social justice work.²⁰ The entry credits Howard Zinn as having introduced the term “archival activism” in a 1970 speech at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). His address urged archivists to challenge the notions of archival neutrality that prevailed in the profession and instead work to promote human values of peace, equality, and justice.²¹

The entry includes a literature review chronicling an insurgence of scholarship on archival activism since 2010, suggesting that archival impartiality is continually being challenged and dismantled as archivists engage in activist acts in the creation, destruction, and access of records. Literature cited in the entry documents an awareness and shift toward practicing archival activism as a social responsibility and humanitarian obligation. Andrew Flinn explores archival activism through radical history-making activities that challenge hegemonic heritage collecting.²² His research documents collecting community histories within independent and community-led archives, proposes strategic partnerships between formal and informal archives, and promotes participatory archiving. Jennifer King encourages archivists to assess and address imbalances in institutional collections and to adopt inclusive collection development policies that engage diverse and marginalized groups within their communities.²³ Vladan Vukliš and Anne J. Gilliland identify four forms of archival activism including community archives, work within government and institutional archives promoting transparency and accountability, research-based activism documenting radical and marginalized histories, and action-oriented activities of independent

¹⁹ A (New) Manual of Archive Administration, s.v., “Archival Activism.”

²⁰ Dictionary of Archives Terminology, s.v., “Activist Archivist,” Society of American Archivists, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/activist-archivist.html>.

²¹ Vukliš and Gilliland, “Archival Activism,” 15.

²² Flinn, “Archival Activism,” 4.

²³ King, “Trust and the Activist Archivist,” 190.

archivists.²⁴ Additional research explores the role of archival activism in supporting human rights and social justice movements; activist archives and the practice of archiving activist movements; archival activism and symbolic annihilation within LGBTQ+ community archives; incorporating social justice advocacy, awareness, and activism in archival education; and disrupting homogenous histories in academic archives.²⁹

Archivists' work is inherently political in its engagement with recordkeeping system design, ideas about provenance and ownership, retention and disposition of records, collection development, and accessibility of records and outreach to targeted user groups. As illustrated in the wiki entry summary, archivists, activists, scholars, and community members have different definitions for archival activism, what it may entail, and the expected outcomes. The wiki entry cites a breadth of voices and perspectives, providing a foundation for contributors to add to, enhance, and challenge the origin story of archival activism, and to elevate the many contributions made by underrepresented communities, community-based archives, and unpublished practitioners. The crowdsourced nature of the new manual encourages a flexible, adaptable, interdisciplinary, and collaborative definition.

The presence of archival activism in *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration* gestures to the acceptance of activist mentalities within the archival profession and archival education. As Jenkinson acknowledged in the preface to the second edition of the *Manual*, issued in 1937, "Progress on an important scale is continuous everywhere and in relation to every department of archive work."³⁰ Although he may not have imagined archival activism as part of that progress, he recognized that change and advancement were inevitable and part of the development of the profession.

Public outreach.

The wiki article on public outreach starts with Catherine Nicholls's definition for public outreach in archives as "any activity that promotes the use and/or mission of the archive program to its wider community."³¹ It then offers some reasons public outreach in archives has received attention in recent scholarly literature.³² Its first section ends by explaining that public outreach has spread from community archives to university, state, and national archives to accomplish their missions and ensure their survival, and is especially prevalent in "institutions that . . . want the consent of the community they are archiving."³³

The second section focuses on other arguments in favor of public outreach. It cites part of the SAA's 2020 Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics: "Archivists should strive to: Expand access and usage opportunities for users, and potential users, of archival records, cultivate collaborative opportunities not only with creators, users, and colleagues, but with any interested parties who wish to engage with archival records, and actively share their knowledge and expertise with creators, users, and colleagues." The section ends by trying to justify public outreach from

²⁴ Vukliš and Gilliland, "Archival Activism," 14.

²⁹ Evans et al., "Self-Determination and Archival Autonomy," 340; Sellie et al., "Interference Archive," 453; Brown, "Archival Activism, Symbolic Annihilation," 6; Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice," 202; Hughes-Watkins, "Moving toward a Reparative Archive," 14.

³⁰ Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration* (1937), vi.

³¹ Nicholls, "The Role of Outreach," 63.

³² Barrett, Cannon, and O'Hare, "Application of Library Outreach Strategies," 5; "Act Now to Save NHPRC, NARA Funding!" Society of American Archivists, <https://www2.archivists.org/news/2019/act-now-to-save-nhprc-nara-funding>.

³³ *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration*, s.v., "Public Outreach."

Jenkinsonian tenets about authenticity and chain of custody. Jenkinson held that presumptions of archival authenticity depended on storage in reputable archives and an unbroken chain of custody.³⁴ Public outreach is arguably one method of promoting the reputation of the archive in support of trustworthiness.

The third section of the entry states some arguments against the prioritization of outreach over other activities such as preservation and access, citing tighter budgets and growing backlogs. These arguments “put the onus on patrons to seek out the archive, its records, and its services. . . . They treat outreach as an ‘added responsibility’ not part of ‘our normal work.’”³⁵ The entry ends with a practical problem for public outreach in archives—the fact that archivists tend to lack formal training in public outreach, which makes it difficult to start and maintain as a long-term project. The wiki page includes a short list of public outreach methods for archives.³⁶ It notes recent changes in preferred forms of public outreach, popular social media sites, and blogs that archives can use for public outreach, as well as less common public outreach ideas like participation in local fairs or festivals.³⁸

Jenkinson’s archivist was largely in service to the state and to scholars, but many of today’s archivists recognize the importance records have to communities, individuals, and societies as a whole. Archival thought has, in fact, gone beyond public outreach, through participatory archival models and questions about refusal, consent, sovereignty, and autonomy. While Jenkinson might have seen the value in archival institutions reaching out to prospective publics, today many archives and archivists emerge from and work for the communities they are archiving. In his 1953 presidential address to the Jewish Historical Society of England, Jenkinson described the archivists’ business as “merely to preserve [documents] in their integrity and make them accessible. . . . The good archivist is almost as selfless a devotee of Truth as it is possible to imagine.”³⁹ His passive recipient and guardian of records for others stands in contrast to many modern community archivists who do not need to “outreach” from anywhere.

Consent in archival practice.

Consent as an ethical standard is not new in archives, and certainly not in archival research, but Julie Botnick’s 2018 article “Archival Consent” examines its limitations in current theory and practice and calls for expansion. Botnick discusses not only the underpinnings of Western archival practice and its professional and procedural norms but also its deep relationship with Western jurisprudence, which treats information as one of many kinds of property. The article lays the groundwork for “a mosaic of consent models” within any and every kind of archive by examining three extra-legal examples from overlapping and adjacent fields, namely Indigenous protocols, feminist affirmative consent, and institutional review boards.⁴⁰ The corresponding wiki entry in *A (New) Manual* briefly summarizes each of the three designated pieces of Botnick’s “mosaic” and their application to archival practice, concluding with a discussion of the framework’s implications, especially regarding the evolving role of the archivist.⁴¹

³⁴ Eastwood, “Jenkinson’s Writings,” 43.

³⁵ Ericson, “‘Preoccupied with Our Own Gardens,’” 114.

³⁶ Barrett, Cannon, and O’Hare, “Application of Library Outreach Strategies,” 3.

³⁸ Garoufallou et al., “Use of Marketing,” 326; Buchanan and Bastian, “Activating the Archive,” 432–33.

³⁹ Jenkinson, “Jewish History and Archives,” 62.

⁴⁰ Botnick, “Archival Consent.”

⁴¹ *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration*, s.v., “Archival Consent.”

In brief, Indigenous protocols can differ substantially from Western archival norms, inviting archivists to respect and support diverse, even conflicting, paradigms of knowledge transfer. Feminist affirmative consent uses sexual consent as an analogy for inclusion in archives, observing that the absence of explicit refusal is not the same as explicit, affirmative consent. Institutional review boards, which assess the ethics of research design and methodology regarding human subjects, provide a model for potential analogous bodies within archives. Botnick proposes that archives create institutional safeguards to treat collections, descriptions, and access procedures with the same urgency and care as with living human subjects.⁴²

After exploring these examples, Botnick discusses the opportunities available to practitioners interested in applying models of consent, using the University of California at Los Angeles as a case study. She highlights areas where standard archival practice and professional norms conflict with consent-based methods, and makes recommendations for how consent and diverse paradigms of legacy might be better honored at these points of conflict.⁴³

All of Botnick's three examples implicitly recommend a rigorous, intentionally collaborative relationship among record creators, subjects, and archivists, and the wiki begins a discussion of how such models affect archivists' practices.⁴⁴ A more forward prioritization of consent could directly address broad inequities in archives and preservation, as historically and currently many are left to decide how to document and archive themselves, and many groups more prefer to do so. A consent lens reveals how ethical and practical concerns intertwine. In recognizing that the scope of work of Jenkinson's formal archivist is and should be limited, the necessity of empowering communities comes into greater focus, and creative paths forward emerge.

Finally, the mosaic of consent models Botnick proposes is not unlike a wiki in form, and theoretically makes space for unlimited models to interconnect and mutually inform one another over time. Indeed, consent and community participation in archival practice imply the presence of many fluid, participatory, and adaptable "manuals," and it follows that communities would have the agency and impetus to interrogate and affect these. Thus, Botnick gestures at a kind of index for a wiki of consensual archival activity of infinite potential.

Post-custodialism.

Continuous custody has historically been important to the practice of archiving, but it was central to Jenkinson's conception of archival quality. Bernadette G. Callery describes his position: that archivists are neutral stewards and solely responsible for the legitimation of archival records.⁴⁵ This custody model remains popular, despite its complicity in extractive and controlling state practices. T-Kay Sangwand links the control mechanisms that constitute archival enclosure as inextricable from imperialism and colonialism.⁴⁶

Post-custodialism is a broad position with various manifestations. Its advocates generally believe archivists should relinquish their custody of records, in full or in part, to the creating entities.⁴⁷ Jeannette A. Bastian explains the term's development. In 1981, F. Gerald Ham argued that playing the role of custodian distracted archivists from actually managing their appraisal and access duties,

⁴² Botnick, "Archival Consent."

⁴³ Botnick, "Archival Consent."

⁴⁴ A (New) Manual of Archive Administration, s.v., "Archival Consent."

⁴⁵ Callery, "Custody and Chain of Custody," 1391.

⁴⁶ Sangwand, "Preservation Is Political," 3.

⁴⁷ A (New) Manual of Archive Administration, s.v., "Post-Custodialism."

but that archivists should still share custody of sensitive materials with their creators. Conflicting definitions formed soon after, when David Bearman used “post-custodial” to describe a “non-custodial” model. Bearman’s synthesis was known as “distributed custody” and pivoted archivists from the role of record-keeper completely to that of auditors and appraisers.⁴⁹ More recent conceptualizations of post-custodialism use digital surrogates of materials for archival purposes and return originals to their communities of origin. Staunch opponents of post-custodialism, like Luciana Duranti, raise the issue of trustworthiness, maintaining the primacy of the archival threshold, which marks records’ acceptance as evidence at the point the records are accessioned in the archive.⁵⁰

The entry on post-custodialism in *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration* reflects the shift away from, but not the total extinguishment of, the Jenkinsonian view of custody. Individual community and autonomous archives have undertaken efforts to design their own independent repositories, for fear of losing access to their cultural records. Andrew Flinn echoes the mistrust cited by Sangwand as the cause for marginalized groups to spurn institutional archives. Flinn also finds that groups taking on archival responsibilities—such as appraisal, description, and arrangement—achieve better representation of cultural records.⁵² In this way, post-custody is liberatory, both for communities and for archivists’ duty to wrangle order from an ever more complex world of records, while the ongoing need for documentation of continuous custody for evidential purposes plays out across systems and actors, including individuals and communities outside “the archive.”

Digital repatriation.

Digital repatriation is the process by which digitized versions of analog cultural heritage materials are made available to the communities from which the artifacts originated.⁵³ The wiki entry for digital repatriation examines the benefits and problems of the digital repatriation process, articulating the ethical concerns that arise when digital surrogates have been assumed to be a replacement for the return of original artifacts and/or when public access to artifacts has been granted without consultation or consideration of the desires of originating communities. As Bell, Christen and Turin observe “While digital technologies allow for materials to be repatriated quickly, circulated widely, and annotated endlessly, these same technologies pose challenges to Indigenous communities who wish to maintain traditional cultural protocols for the viewing, circulation, and reproduction of these new cultural heritage materials.”⁵⁴

In a section delineating the differences among “digital surrogates,” “knowledge repatriation,” and “physical repatriation,” the wiki describes and compares these terms. Punzalan and Butler point out that while “digitized collections can offer the unique affordance to return complex and fragile objects more easily through digital surrogates than does physical repatriation,” digital surrogates must be viewed as alternative and unique representations of cultural heritage objects, not as replacements for original artifacts.⁵⁵ This idea is explored in supporting statements from Kimberly Christen’s seminal 2011 article on repatriation, “Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation,”

⁴⁹ Bastian, “Taking Custody, Giving Access,” 88–89.

⁵⁰ Duranti, “Archival Science in the Cloud,” 5.

⁵² Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives,” 163, 167.

⁵³ *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration*, s.v., “Digital Repatriation.”

⁵⁴ Bell, Christen, and Turin, “After the Return,” 196.

⁵⁵ Punzalan and Butler, “Valuing Our Scans,” 5.

which describes digital surrogates as “unique objects” with their own issues of access and digital preservation.⁵⁶

The wiki entry includes what its author considers best practices, noting that while digital repatriation may, in some cases, be a satisfactory solution for conservation and preservation issues for fragile, tangible original artifacts, collecting institutions should offer preservation assistance but defer to a community’s determinations. Even when source communities grant stewardship of items to archives or museums, issues may occur surrounding archival authority if, in an effort to maintain traditional provenance, collection catalogs are centered around the anthropologist or ethnographer who collected or maintained the materials and, by so doing, relegate the members of the community from which the material was created into the background.

The use of digital surrogates also does not resolve issues of access. Traditional archives have a bias toward public access for what the holding institution has designated as declassified or open, but the ability of source communities to limit and define access to cultural heritage materials is implicit in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The growth of Indigenous digital archives and emerging technologies that allow source communities greater control over access to digitized cultural heritage items are promising developments.

The entry concludes by noting that this process is not a panacea. If digital surrogates are used as a replacement for actual repatriation, when source communities are not allowed to retain, regain, or claim curatorial control of both the digital and physical artifacts, this process can be a half-measure that ends up supporting state authoritarianism, colonialism, and inequity.

The wiki on digital repatriation in *A (New) Manual* reflects the trend away from Jenkinson’s view of custody and control and toward embracing an ethos in which the archivist must serve the communities of the records. It recognizes that the archivist is not an impartial observer but an active participant in the shaping and management of collections, and consequently has a duty to approach them with a view to equity and justice.

No Archons: Discussion and Conclusion

These few examples of entries from *A (New) Manual of Archive Administration* give a sense of how radically Western archival thought has changed in the last one hundred years. LGBTQ+ archives subvert Jenkinsonian notions of archival neutrality while upholding his view that records creators would determine what is archival. Archival impartiality and neutrality continue to be challenged as archival activism becomes embedded into archival studies, practices, and education. The growing acceptance of archival activism has helped to transform archives into liberatory, participatory, and socially responsible repositories of history and memory. The article on public outreach demonstrates that there is a move away from the passive archivist through public outreach toward participation, refusal, and community sovereignty. Applying expanded conceptualizations of consent subverts the traditional archival manual by placing it among simultaneous, individuated theoretical and practical models that explicitly and intentionally serve records’ communities of origin. Post-custodialism seeks to redress past harms by critically engaging with stakeholders, creating entities and cultural archives on their own terms. Digital repatriation brings to the fore updated concepts of users’ rights of access but also allows for continuity in the value Jenkinson placed on custody of original documents. By emphasizing the importance of original artifacts as unique and separate from digital surrogates and the importance of maintaining the provenance of

⁵⁶ Christen, “Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation.”

each, though allowing for the repositioning of curatorial control, the wiki article demonstrates both adherence to and deviation from Jenkinsonian ideas of custody and control.

In some instances, the entries in the wiki may be factually incorrect, grossly simplified, make dubious claims, or offer problematic ideological assertions, but these negative possibilities stem from the affordances of the format: fluidity, accessibility, contestability, changeability. Arguably, the wiki may become more accurate if it is used more, but in any case it makes possible both consensus and dissent, having none of the reconciliatory mechanisms of review and moderation that the Wikipedia community has developed. Importantly, some level of accountability is offered in the edit histories for each entry, and contributions can be understood as the situated perspectives of individual writers more readily than in manuals that have passed through the gatekeeping of the publishing industry and peer review's claims to represent best practices. These affordances work against the canonization of tenets and claims to authorial authority implicit in the traditional manual.

The historical uses of the manual format have aided the organization and standardization of diverse activities, particularly as mechanization began to contribute to capitalistic and colonialist expansion: Matthew S. Hull has observed that “normative procedures were laid down in hundreds of manuals produced for every sphere of administration in the late nineteenth century,” and their connection with power and control was noted in Marc Trabsky's study of nineteenth-century British and colonial manuals for coroners, which saw a “rhetoric of technocracy” replace the language of prudence in earlier manuals. “This history,” he writes, “correlates with a story of empire-building, the bureaucratic expansion of colonial institutions, and the intensification of centralised governance.”⁵⁸ Manuals are a form of institutional or professional discourse that are tied to power—who has it and how it is exercised. Rick Iedema, studying the language of administration, wrote that “institutional discourses can be typified as concerned with the realization of constraint, or ‘shouldness’, on the one hand, and with the construal of levels of institutional enablement and power on the other. Realizing ‘shouldness’ according to prevailing institutional conventions makes possible hierarchical structures of power and authority.”⁵⁹

Jenkinson was not writing only for Public Record Office archivists, aware that he was contributing to an international professional literature. The pronouncements of his manual bore “shouldness” into multiple professional spaces. In seeking to regulate practice, the format of the manual inevitably excludes or forecloses different practices and possibilities. Eric Ketelaar observed this of the “Dutch Manual,” that its codification of “archival methodology . . . kept Dutch archival theory petrified for a very long time. The standardization, part of the process of professionalization of Dutch archivists, blocked the development of archival theory.”⁶⁰ Reflecting on his observation, Margaret Procter notes that in “the British case, the appearance of the second edition of Jenkinson's Manual coinciding with (perhaps even required by) an increasing number of archivists—with a sense of their discrete professional identity—had a similar effect.”⁶¹ And Cheryl Beredo sees the same foreclosing of conversation or contestation in T. R. Schellenberg's *Modern Archives*:

Schellenberg's analysis does not invite a definition of another form of archive. A modern archive is constituted by culling non-current records and is inherently borne of government bureaucracy. In the interest of streamlining archival practice, and in the expediency of understanding the French and English origins of modern

⁵⁸ Hull, *Government of Paper*, 10; Trabsky, “The Coronial Manual,” 195.

⁵⁹ Iedema, “The Language of Administration,” 73.

⁶⁰ Ketelaar, “Archival Theory,” 35.

⁶¹ Procter, “Life before Jenkinson,” 155.

archives, acceptance of Schellenberg's articulation of archival principles limits the vocabulary for understanding how archives are constituted, and how they function and to what effect. As Schellenberg both describes and prescribes the "essential nature," the varied functions, etc., of archives, he is also stating what an archive is not and cannot be; evident in these tacit omissions is the ideology of American exceptionalism and the allegory of the archive.⁶²

Reading this criticism of Schellenberg's text with his remark on Jenkinson in mind—"I'm tired of having an old fossil cited to me as an authority in archival matters"—we are mindful that the codification of professional knowledge carries within itself the promise of obsolescence, and that authority invites defiance.⁶³

Not only can a manual, once widely adopted, foreclose varied practices, but any subsequent canonization of a manual or its statements can obscure contemporaneous and previous contributions to a discourse, forming reductive genealogies where our intellectual history becomes singular and successive instead of richly complicated. As Procter noted of Jenkinson's manual: "That the publication of the second edition of the Manual coincided with the beginnings of the UK archival profession and a lack of other contemporary archival writing created the situation in which Jenkinson emerged as the father of British archival theory. But at the same time it erased from history the equal contribution of a group of writers and practitioners who deserve to be reinstated into the archival canon."⁶⁴

This erasure extends beyond the sphere of the emerging British archival profession that Procter is contemplating. Hannah J. M. Ishmael has made a major contribution to our intellectual history by arguing that Arthur Schomburg and his *The Negro Digs Up His Past* belong to the same ranks as Jenkinson and his *Manual*, reasoning that while "their contexts are different, they are engaged in a single discourse on the nature and value of archives and both used publications and institutions as a way of codifying their practice and thought."⁶⁵ On a similar note, James Lowry and Heather MacNeil discuss Toyin Falola's "Ritual Archives":

Falola's text depicts archival thinking with a history that stands apart from the well-rehearsed narrative of tabularia, chanceries and manuals, while also being ancient and global, through the Yoruba diaspora and its cultural heirs. It is possible to see in its glimpses of concepts such as the archival bond (extended far beyond material records), but what it offers is not a chance for comparison or reconciliation into a universal metanarrative, but a disruption of historiographical hegemonies.⁶⁶

Other histories may be waiting for us too. Why should we confront the canon in this way? Master narratives suggest a direct line from the past into the future, anticipating and prefiguring unidirectional progress. In his landmark essay on one of the intellectual histories of the archival profession, published the year before the centenary of the "Dutch Manual," Terry Cook wrote, "After surveying the archival ideas of the century, I believe that we are gradually developing a new conceptual or theoretical framework for our profession."⁶⁷ That gradual development would accelerate rapidly, but not toward a conceptual or theoretical framework and instead away from

⁶² Beredo, "Archival Allegory?" 31.

⁶³ Cook, "What Is Past," 28.

⁶⁴ Procter, "Life before Jenkinson," 155.

⁶⁵ Ishmael, "Reclaiming History: Arthur Schomburg," 282.

⁶⁶ Lowry and MacNeil, "Archival Thinking," 2.

⁶⁷ Cook, "What Is Past," 47.

frameworks or any other singular articulations of theory or practice. Critical theoretical and applied work has gathered pace and shows no sign of slowing, producing multiple ways of thinking and doing archives. Projects that seek to envelope diverse and independent work and thought, to build universal models—such totalizing endeavors are antithetical to the current moment. Evading unification or assimilation, today’s archival theory is unruly and insubordinate.

While Jenkinson sought to and did offer help in the care of archives, his manual also became, perhaps inevitably, a symbol and a scapegoat for positivistic European archival science. Jenkinson’s *Manual* comes from and reflects an instinct to normalize and control; while many technical aspects of archival work require such normalization and control, more broadly our social and paradigmatic positionalities make the notion of unchangeable, universalized principles unsuitable for the breadth of social, technical, and affective phenomena that archivists will encounter. Today, archivists are working with different materials and technologies, so unsurprisingly the more applied aspects of the *Manual* are less relevant to archival practice. Jenkinson recognized this would be the case when he wrote in the preface to the second edition, “The changes which I have found it necessary to make should prevent any suspicion that I think I, or anyone else, can say the last word (save in the matter of principle) about what I know to be a developing science.”⁶⁸ While Jenkinson realized that practice would change, he saw the principles he espoused as universal and enduring. But archivists are working in different societies, with different ethics, preoccupations, and positionalities. Arguably, sole-authored manuals pronouncing norms for all archives are no longer appropriate expressions of professional practice, and there is no “last word” on principle. Instead, multiple discursive spaces open and close all around us. The crowdsourced text in the wiki troubles the nomological authority of the manual genre, and what can appear fragmented about a wiki format next to the considered synthesis of any integral manual gestures at archival futures that are conversational and interdependent.

The current multiplicity of archival ideas, seen in the pages of recent issues of established journals and the arrival of new journals such as the *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* and the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, as well as in other spaces, comes from a multiplicity of people and places: the figure of the archon fades into the crowd. But while we critically sift through the past for what is good to keep and what should be discarded, we must recognize that the “archontic” is still very much present in archival theory (our article is steeped in it) and guard against new orthodoxies. We suggest that the project of the next thirty years, leading to the centenary of Schellenberg’s manual, will not be the erection of the new framework for archival thought that Cook envisaged but the continued demolition of archival hegemonies, to the enrichment of praxis. Yet in looking forward to 2056, we perpetuate the already-archontic. This is in the absence of some other framing, which suggests that an important part of the work to be done lies in revisiting the past.

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⁶⁸ Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration* (1937), 11.

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