

Permeable Binaries, Societal Grand Challenges, and the Roles of the Twenty-first Century Archival and Recordkeeping Profession¹

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Abstract: Building upon recent work, this paper demonstrates how 21st century recordkeeping concerns are integral to societal grand challenges that have been identified by governments, think tanks, scholarly organisations and affected communities around the globe. Using the example of forced displacement and migration, the paper focuses on ways in which recordkeeping is inextricably linked to both the causes and possible digital, policy and educational mechanisms for addressing certain aspects of societal grand challenges. These linkages are significantly under-explored and under-addressed in our field. The paper's principal arguments are that archives and recordkeepers have social and ethical responsibilities toward those individuals who are least empowered to engage with official records and recordkeeping practices or to maintain their own records; and that responding will require implementing archival and recordkeeping practices and policy at *supra*-national and *meta*-archival levels. The paper suggests some actions and reconceptualisations therefore, that might move us in that direction.

Keywords: Archives; Forced migration; Grand Societal Challenges; Records Access; Records Protection; Refugees

Preamble

As we ponder the effects and potentials of pervasive networking and digital production on the 21st century record, on institutions, communities and individuals, and on the archival and recordkeeping field² and its ideas and activities, it is both professionally and ethically insufficient to do so only from within our own institutional settings and national contexts. While I was preparing this paper for the ARANZ 2015 Conference I was also reflecting on the ways in which the field should

be engaging with the compelling and very intractable issues of massive and growing forced displacement and transnational migration resulting from regional conflicts of unprecedented scale, ecological disruption and environmental disaster, and increasing global economic inequities. Such human crises can evoke emotions and provoke highly charged debates that can make some in our field, with its historically dispassionate and distanced approach based on reasoning about the need for professional neutrality, uncomfortable when called upon to engage. However I have previously argued that such “neutrality” is not only impossible, but is also based on misplaced ethical considerations,³ and there is a growing movement within the field demanding explicit attention to the presence of affect and its effects on archival and recordkeeping professionals, on those who create or use records, and on those who imagine or long for absent records.⁴ Passion is essential, and affect is inevitable when we respond to frontline aspects of our work.⁵ In this spirit, therefore, I also acknowledge that affect is an integral aspect of the subject matter of this paper and how I have chosen to approach it.

Building upon recent work, this paper demonstrates how 21st century recordkeeping concerns and technologies are integral to societal grand challenges that have been identified by governments, think tanks, scholarly organisations and affected communities around the globe. Using the example of forced displacement and migration the paper focuses on ways in which recordkeeping is inextricably linked to both the causes and also possible digital, policy and educational mechanisms for addressing certain aspects of societal grand challenges. These linkages are significantly under-explored and under-addressed in our field. The paper’s principal arguments are that archives and recordkeepers have social and ethical responsibilities toward those individuals who are least empowered to engage with official records and recordkeeping practices or to maintain their own records; that responding requires the implementation of archival and recordkeeping practices and policy at *supra*-national and *meta*-archival levels (i.e., that operate above and across individual nations, archival institutions and diverse archival traditions); and that trusted archival spaces and advocates not aligned with official bodies are also essential (both those that already exist such as certain community-based archives, and those that need to be established). The paper suggests some actions and reconceptualisations therefore, that might move us in these directions.

Footprints in Space and Time

The call for this conference, *Footprints in Space and Time*, began with a quotation from David Bearman from the 1990s: “Documentary evidence is the source of social and legal identity and significance.” When he made this statement, Bearman was working as a self-styled archival informatics consultant, focusing especially on how the archival field needed to reorient itself and reconceptualise key tenets in order to address, most prominently and pressingly, the challenges presented by electronic records. His thinking frequently proved to be a decade ahead of when the field finally arrived at similar conclusions. It was particularly influential in Australia in the 1990s, where together with the work of Terry Cook, it provided some of the catalyst for the development of the records continuum and continuum-based thinking and practices – probably the most important conceptual reorientation of the field in its professional history. The 1990s and approaches to electronic records management were characterised by their emphasis on evidence-based approaches – most prominently with regard to the records of government and international agencies such as the United Nations, and strongly invoking legal conceptions of records. This was not just because of the relevance of these conceptions, but also, frankly, because of their teeth.⁶ Bearman’s reminder to us that documentation is also the source of social identity and significance – in fact, he places these before “legal” in his assertion – did not, unfortunately achieve the same priority at the time from the field in this particular evidence-based movement.

But today in dealing with the digital, we have moved beyond this uni-faceted construction of evidence and what now seem to be the impossibly simplistic questions raised by the bureaucratic electronic recordkeeping of the 1980s and pre-web 1990s. That is not to denigrate the importance of these questions or even to say that we have solved them, but that they have become just so much more complicated. Digital affordances have also multiplied evidential possibilities. We can support multiple notions of evidence and multiple narratives in, through and about our records and the lives to which they pertain because of the possibilities of multiple orderings, juxtapositions and compilations afforded by the digital world. We can also think and behave differently when it comes to the presentation, representation, dissemination and accessibility of those records. The networked society in some ways is already doing archives’ and archivists’ jobs for them – capturing and linking up all sorts of traces of human social activity, framing far more complete representations of identity by capturing more facets of our

lives and how we represent ourselves than official records ever will or can. However the spectre of creating “the total registry”⁷ looms large. Questions about openness and privacy have already been debated at length, and decisions about opening or closing certain records may not be able to be settled definitively. Such decisions might need to change at different moments as related materials are linked, materials presumed lost resurface, old knowledge is recovered or reconstructed, new technological considerations are taken into account, or new generations voice new concerns. Other critical questions relate to equity and ethics of accessibility; to the rights of those who participated in the creation of the records but whose role or presence still goes unacknowledged in recordkeeping and archival practices; and to the rights of those whose lives are deliberately, accidentally or incidentally captured or revealed in these traces or in the compilations or analyses of these traces that the digital networked world now makes possible, but may do so without their ability to dissent or to control. As the field that is uniquely qualified in matters of records, these are all questions with which we *must* grapple. We *must not* leave this kind of recordkeeping and archival work purely to the serendipities, idiosyncrasies and profit-making, intelligence-gathering and other self-interested strategies of those who develop, control or exploit networked technologies and social media. The world’s citizenry, and especially people who we have traditionally underserved and mis-served not only deserve, but also need more deliberate and proactive action than that.

The metaphor of footprints begs many questions about what archival and recordkeeping practices are currently able to tell us or to support, and what not. To extend the metaphor, if records are indeed the footprints made by and through human activities, then do we take into account whether they were made by walkers or marchers or fleers and adjust our practices accordingly? Do the makers of the footprints want us to be able to trace their steps? Do they want us in fact to walk in their footsteps? Might they instead want no one ever, or ever to have to walk the same route again? If too many people attempt to walk that route, does it become damaged, for example, does it lose its special valence to those who created it? And of course, whose footprints do we still not see, and why not?

The call also included a quote from the Universal Declaration on Archives, developed by a special working group of the International Council on Archives and endorsed by the ICA as a key pillar of its outreach and advocacy strategy, culminating in its adoption by UNESCO in 2011.

Significantly, the first clause in this quote addresses the evidential concerns and interests of governments and institutions that traditional notions of evidence and accountability privilege (“the vital necessity of archives for supporting business efficiency, accountability and transparency”), but I would like to highlight the rest of the statement: “for protecting citizens’ rights, for establishing individual and collective memory, for understanding the past, and for documenting the present to guide future actions” and to augment it with the wording included in the next section in the Declaration, which recognises: “the diversity of archives in recording every area of human activity.”⁸ I would suggest that we, the archival and recordkeeping community collectively, have actually failed miserably in these latter respects. We do not record every area of human activity, at least not deliberately, and we do not protect all citizens’ rights, at least certainly not to an equal or even equitable extent. Settled within our institutional and national scopes, we have not been able to rise to the supra-institutional and supra-national archival imperatives and the meta-archival objectives implied in this declaration. We are stuck in singular rather than plural conceptions of archives that prevent us from prioritising linkages across institutions, across content, across digital and non-digital in ways that might enable archives and records agencies to become forces for collective action. We have interpreted the term “citizen” too literally and too exclusively within our nation-state and institutional framings. Within our archival fiefdoms and silos, our appraisal policies are designed to support only the records and collective memory needs of a deliberately selective and institutionally resourced “sliver” (to invoke Verne Harris’s metaphor) of human activities and lives within our local and global societies. Even while we grapple with the management and security of records created and stored using networks and the Cloud, we fail in the documentation of “global citizens” who physically move for all sorts of reasons by choice, out of desperation, and most fundamentally to survive, as well as those who virtually collaborate and socially communicate and re-unite across different national spaces and jurisdictions. And we fail so-called “non-citizens” who are officially and popularly categorised in all sorts of exclusionary euphemistic and legalistic ways that each serves to make them “irregular”⁹ and push them off the archival radar: migrants, refugees, the displaced, the undocumented. Among these, we further fail child citizens – who may be separated from families or others who took care of them in their flight from another country; who may have been sent away to another country during wartime and were fostered then

adopted locally when their parents, due to all sorts of exigencies, did not make contact to claim them;¹⁰ who were born along the migration route and whose births might never have been registered or whose parents were prevented from registering their birth in the country of settlement because of lack of legal acceptance of their own identity documentation or status;¹¹ who, arriving with their parents as babies, may not even be aware of their legal documentary status until they reach the age of majority in a country where they have grown up and then find they have none of the rights of their fellow teens; or who have no documentation of their parentage or who are not permitted to access it.

And so, as I contemplate where we stand today in the second decade of the twenty-first century when our field has finally begun to reckon substantively with human rights exigencies and the myriad ways in which these interact with and challenge its bureaucratic imperatives, it seems to me that we must confront our own complicity in these events and effects, and fundamentally re-examine, re-think, and both speak and step up if we are going to live up to what the Universal Declaration so stalwartly declares.

Rights in and to Records: Refugees, Migrants and Forced Diaspora

My work in recent years has been based in Croatia and Bosnia and is concerned with how individuals survive and recover from conflicts that have resulted in massive trauma and displacement; with how to support the most immediate and daily records and recordkeeping needs, rights and affect of those in forced diaspora, those who are internally displaced, those who wish to return, and those who remain at the sites of the conflicts. It also contemplates the needs, rights and affect of the generations who come after those who were caught up in these conflicts (on all sides) with regard to records by and about their predecessors and their own coming to terms with those pasts. This work has also engaged post-graduate education. In 2014 Hariz Halilovich from Monash University and I co-taught a new multi-disciplinary course for Masters and doctoral students at UCLA titled *Migrating Memories: Diaspora, Archives and Human Rights*. This course, maybe the first of its kind to be offered within an archival studies program, examined the (re)construction of migrants' memories and identities as distinct transnational and translocal practices taking place in both private and public domains, in reality and imagination, and in the realms of real and cyberspace. Students were introduced to the significance of memory in establishing diasporas and explored various forms and practices, both tangible and intangible, of

memory and memory work in migrant and refugee communities: from oral histories and testimonials to performative enactments of memories (e.g., commemorations, exhibitions, art, literature, film) to the establishment of more formal memory and recordkeeping structures such as archives, libraries, museums, monuments, and documentary and print production.¹² My reflections today emanate in part out of this work, but the urgency of addressing such concerns globally is underscored by the terrible human plight involved in the forced displacement and migrations that seem to be a global constant but that have been particularly in our minds in recent times. It is a systemic societal grand challenge that has very specific recordkeeping dimensions that should call to action those who are closest to records creation, capture, organisation and policy formation and who understand the complex recordkeeping dimensions possibly better than any other party.

"Rights in" and "rights to" records issues in such situations have been surfaced repeatedly by recent and ongoing research as well as in inquiry and commission reports and community and personal testimonies.¹³ In responding to these issues, we are immediately confronted with the need to address the power exercised by dominant, gendered and age-bound notions of single provenance, agency and authority that govern so much of records creation and also archival practice. What would broadened notions of inclusive and participatory citizenship actually mean for rights in records with regard to their creation,¹⁴ management, description, dissemination and accessibility? What would they mean for how we allocate our scarce resources and prioritise our activities, for how we articulate and live our ethical codes, for how we balance competing institutional expectations and wider professional concerns, and for how we prepare future professionals? We should not just be contemplating the general liberation of the archives through digital affordances, but we should be doing so also with a specific aim to enfranchise and recognise the rights and needs of those whom archives and their principles have systematically failed or disempowered – such as those millions of individuals and families fleeing countries in so many different parts of the world whose desperate faces we are seeing daily in the media. And we should be doing so not only through traditional archival institutions but also by creating trusted new, and recognising the contributions of existing, non-institutionally aligned archival and recordkeeping roles and spaces in both local (e.g., community archives) and transnational contexts.

A couple of weeks ago, Croatian media carried an interview with a

Syrian journalist who concluded that the most important things for those fleeing Syria and pouring through the Balkan states are money, mobile phones, and documents. Charged mobile phones are important not simply because of their communication and geopositioning capabilities, but also because of the photographs they contain of home – often the last and only remaining images of their loved ones and their homeland as they once were. Documents include the records they need to establish their identity, to obtain status as refugees, to settle and interface with the bureaucracies of life elsewhere or to return to their homeland, and to reconstruct or otherwise move on with their lives¹⁵ – documents that may also jeopardise their safety if they are found on their persons by those from whom they are fleeing.¹⁶ Both of these needs that he identified – the materials of personal memory and official documents – are echoed by so many others when they tell their stories and are, without doubt, our business.¹⁷

But we too have figuratively erected fences and walls around our archives and records programmes and their jurisdictions and priorities just as much as some countries have attempted to do so literally around their borders, perhaps with less deliberateness and less consciousness of who we are keeping out, but we make the same kinds of arguments about limited resources, about being overwhelmed already, about being bound by legalities and regulations and definitional precision, about needing to take care of our own first. For these displaced and desperate people, our appraisal decisions fail – if we consider the records they carry with them, on their cell phones or in their pockets, we raise questions about their reliability and authenticity, about their item-level association with individual stories, and about their value and authority as seen by others today and in the future; in other words, we impose value structures and other criteria at the archival threshold that say that these precious items, even if they were to be offered to us for safekeeping, as evidence, and as memory texts, are not worth the investment of our precious resources (and this is why many of these materials find their way to community archives and memory projects). Our newly found emphasis on access has rightly challenged our previously held custodial mindsets but has ignored the societal stewardship role involved in securing and protecting those evidence-bearing items in which most emotion has been invested, which, often as the only surviving traces, are most valued by those who possess them, and which are constantly at risk of loss in lives that do not permit of permanence of place or sometimes even of the continued ability to carry them – in other words, we have lost sight of the fact that what is

most needed by some of the most vulnerable communities is a trusted keeping place for their records both official and personal in the here and now, not a place to open those materials up for scrutiny as to their more general validity, or for future use by all.¹⁸ Another dilemma in terms of records creation that we have not addressed is the extent to which we should be documenting these crises events as they are occurring – through interviews, photography and other means. Can we undertake these activities, and do so without any element of spectatorship, as acts of advocacy, for example, documenting current conditions in ways that they can be used to locate and reunite family members and other loved ones or recording personal statements in support of proving citizenship after wrongful deportation? Or to help those affected to achieve asylum, residency, healthcare and other recognition and assistance in the short term or to obtain compensation, rights or return as desired in the longer term? What might we bring to such documentary actions as a result of our particular skills and perspectives that might be different from documentation created by journalists, anthropologists, humanitarian agencies, community groups or government or legal investigators?

Even more fundamentally at the level of how records are created and used, the recordkeeping community has failed in its advocacy role. It has failed to raise concerns when governments imposed new authentication controls such as digital and biometric validation mechanisms on identity documents needed to travel across national borders after September 11th, 2001.¹⁹ Measures put in place to prevent the movement of terrorists have contributed to the trapping of hundreds of thousands of fleeing individuals who in similar situations in only the previous decade, escaped wars and genocide such as those in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s using altered documents or the documents of someone else – legally a crime, but humanly an act of survival.²⁰ Peace processes in several conflicts have included requirements to secure and/or reconstruct and publicly display cadastral maps, land surveys and other land records, sometimes with active citizen participation. Disputes over land have been seen to be a key issue in both the outbreak and continuation of conflicts as well as in peace- or state-building.²¹ However, we have insufficiently injected ourselves into such processes, to train those who will be creating such records or to replace cadres of recordkeepers who may have fled or been killed, and to prevent local destruction of records that are vital to ensuring the identity, rights and ability to return of forcibly displaced or persecuted people. We have not insisted, as part of peacekeeping or peacemaking activities, on audits or monitoring of

recordkeeping systems and offices in countries or regimes that have been responsible to ensure that they are not engaging in selective targeted destruction of relevant records; we have not ensured that hostile military forces do not remove documents carried by fleeing refugees; and we have not worked on behalf of refugees who are now being DNA profiled in refugee camps to ensure that voluntary consent forms fully inform refugees about how this DNA-based digital identity record might be used – for example, to impose genetic notions of families upon social constructions of families and thus separate individuals with non-related DNA from the only family they have known or from those who have cared for them through their travails, or for inappropriate and possibly international tracking purposes in the future.²²

We have failed to realise that the kinds of official records that might be most essential for people trying to prove their rights, reconstruct their lives and reunite their families are those that are often still maintained in non-digital and frequently haphazard or idiosyncratic ways by a range of different government records offices and regimes, or, if they are held by archives, are often deemed to be too routine to invest many archival resources in acquiring or indexing or digitising them. Prioritising records that relate to identity, property, rights, credentials and qualifications, even military service for mass digitisation, indexing and linking, and then making certified copies of these globally available from a single, secure and non-aligned digital location would help immediately with the immediate exigencies faced by millions of people forcibly dispersed around the globe. This doesn't just pertain to government records, however. Related records and traces that can provide further evidence or fill in vital details can be found in international and NGO aid agencies, in bank and insurance records, in school and college records, in religious records, as well as in the testimonies collected by tribunals and documentation projects. It is also our responsibility to lobby for national and international funding to digitise, store and link these records, and to research how to do so in robust and secure ways and in non-aligned spaces that prevent diminished privacy, surveillance, identity theft and other risks that such linkages and "total registry" compilations can also support as part of efforts to address humanitarian crises and achieve peace and reconciliation.

And even if recordkeepers have made those records a priority, digital government locator systems, where they exist, are often too difficult for those who most need to use them without in-person assistance, or cannot lead people through the maze of records offices and processes

involved in completing a transaction such as proving ownership of a particular property, or to obtain the necessary form of a record. Archival descriptive systems can similarly fail because they are too hard for the uninitiated to understand, and are insufficiently granular and at the same time too standalone to be able to pick up and knit together traces of individuals, families and communities, thereby making them whole again, not only in life but, in the case of the scant and often deliberately decontextualised physical traces identified from mass graves and other sites where bodies were disposed, of those who were killed, also in death – something that is of tremendous emotional importance to those who have lost loved ones.

As already indicated, records and archival access policies and services fail because they may require travel, time and funds for in-person consultation, language competency, and the production and translation of certified copies. We have not lobbied or written model legislation for local and international legal acceptance of digital copies that are digitally certified and accessible through secure systems, without cost from anywhere to anywhere in the world and without requiring anyone to make an often expensive, perilous and trauma-inducing journey back to the place from which they were forced to leave and to interact with bureaucratic systems that may have been a major source of their oppression, just to obtain a copy of a vital record about oneself or one's prior family members (if such a record has even survived purges and conflict damage). In fact, exploiting the popularity of genealogy, many archives and for-profit businesses have been using the digitisation and reproduction of vital records with the opposite intent, as a revenue-generating activity or, in the records offices located in places from which people have been displaced (many of which also charge significant fees for every aspect of records production, certification and translation), as a continued mechanism of persecution or active discouragement of return of those forcibly displaced. Our codes of ethics have failed because they assume that records-creating-and-keeping institutions and governments all play by the rules and equitably serve all interests, when in fact they do not.

In other words, these issues, and the possible solutions to them, are bigger than our individual institutions and even nations. Yet there is no supra-national way to look at the practices and effects of records creation and archiving practices and policies, or at how to support the immediate needs for records of those who move through and across many systems, people who are often perceived and rendered uni-

dimensionally as a demographic or now, with stepped up technological and bio-technological efforts to establish and authenticate identity unambiguously, as a DNA profile.

Recordkeeping, Archives and Societal Grand Challenges

Massive population movements and forced diaspora resulting from conflict, persecution, famine and economic exigency are integrally bound up with the so-called societal grand challenges around which our personal and professional minds, individually and collectively have such difficulty wrapping themselves. Societal grand challenges present as massive scale, unsolvable, inevitable, impossibly and impassably complex and paradoxical problems that threaten entire regions or even the world, and yet, for humanity's sake, absolutely need to be solved and the cycle of their inevitability broken. I want to mention briefly in this respect the work of the AERI community. AERI, the Archival Education and Research Initiative, of which I am the director, is a forum and international community that, since 2009, has brought together archival and recordkeeping scholars – academics, students and increasingly practitioners – from every continent in the world, to present and critique research, network with their peers, and work together both inside and outside its annual institutes to develop the infrastructure necessary to make archival and recordkeeping studies a robust presence within the academy and a rigorous source of theoretical and empirical support for the archival and recordkeeping profession. The AERI community has argued that concerted transformative research and development relating to archival and recordkeeping imperatives, frameworks, processes, technologies and standards can contribute in significant ways to addressing many of society's most pressing grand challenges.²³ In work that has been conducted so far in AERI addressing several selective areas where there is community expertise – Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility, Climate Change, Global Health, Human Rights and Social Justice, the Information Society, and Peace and Security – it has become apparent that similar concerns often surface across multiple areas, even if they are positioned differently depending upon the interests and perspectives of the framers.

This work also indicates that there is a core set of recordkeeping/archival concerns that surface repeatedly in connection with multiple grand challenges, thus suggesting some particularly fertile areas where concerted efforts by both research and practice in the field might prove to be transformative. These include cultural and community

considerations relating to recordkeeping, archives and memory; the role and use of records in supporting accountability, sustainability, decision-making and program assessment; education and capacity building in archival and recordkeeping skills; best practices and standards development; compliance management; scalable systems and services infrastructure development; metadata implementations and their implications; promoting open access to archives while addressing privacy and security concerns/vulnerabilities; and, among these, perhaps of the highest priority, is global integration and accessibility of archival and recordkeeping systems and holdings. The latter is itself a grand challenge for the recordkeeping field, requiring supra-national and meta-archival action and presenting not only huge technological and descriptive issues, but also raising all of the questions of privacy, security, surveillance and commercial exploitation already discussed and overall requiring a profound reorientation to how our field conceives of its societal role and local responsibilities. It should be remembered, however, that all grand challenges are truly complicated problems where recordkeeping is but one aspect, and that even within that one aspect, no one approach or action will be sufficient. Nevertheless, while tackling them will require systemic, multi-party efforts even small actions can be important contributions.

Permeating and Breaking Down Binaries

The irony is that the same technologies that are fuelling such aspects of the grand challenges are also providing us with tools and rationales to work at a much more intimate individual level, and in a scalable, impactful way, if we could just accommodate them more in our practices and do so in ways that permit traversing different records systems and recordkeeping institutions and agencies. As we contemplate how engaging with societal grand challenges might draw us out of our archival and recordkeeping silos and safespaces to contemplate the “supra” and “meta” aspects of our work, our attention is once and for all being drawn away from the physicality or materiality of the record to the data and metadata out of which it is composed and which seem today to be infinitely linkable, accessible, exploitable, repurposable and recombinant. It is also leading us into more encounters with the imaginings about and longings for records and recordkeeping that themselves have been shown to have power and consequence. These factors draw us toward a more aporetic discussion about what the record means to different communities, and how it can be made to appear or disappear through acts

of will, imagination, hermeneutics and technological and professional intervention across time, space and belief.

What I want to propose, therefore, in addition to the kinds of actions relating to official recordkeeping and supra-national and meta-archival approaches that I have already mentioned, is a very different outlook on the nature of records and their role in society, as well as our practical and ethical orientations to both. I am proposing that we acknowledge, respond to and reorient our ideas and practices to include the ways in which resourceful humanity, either through technological developments or through acts of imagination and belief, have found other ways to deal with some of our own field's grand challenges relating to how a global records corpus can be created and navigated, as well as how to think about, cope with and recover from absences, silences and losses in the record that we believed were irremediable.

Doing so challenges three interrelated purported *binaries* about records that, while often unstated, have undergirded many of our professional assumptions, practices, preferences and comfort zones – cherished archival notions about ideal records that are enduring, instantiated, and actualised (i.e., real) comprise one side of each binary, while what is often viewed to be their inverse – records that are transitory, latent, and imaginary comprise the other. Of course, the notion that these are binaries at all is itself largely professionally constructed in order to delimit the parameters of our field. Each of these binaries frames where we draw professional, institutional and personal boundaries around what our work is about, where it begins and ends, where we should ethically engage, and, by implication, the ways in which it is integral to the problems identified as societal grand challenges. At the very least, these binaries can be demonstrated to be permeable, if not entirely false but convenient dichotomies.

If we start with the binary that archivists perhaps uphold most often, that between the enduring and the transitory record – most of us are well aware that it is fundamentally challenged by how digital networking works – a record can appear to be transitory when it is binned or simply not officially archived, and yet it endures in different instantiations in different places on a network, caught incidentally and accidentally, although not necessarily in the permanent, authentic, complete form to which archival ideals aspire. And yet, perhaps we *can* make use of these traces, as I will discuss below. This binary is also challenged in a different way by the stance of community archives and community-based archiving – often constructed to meet the needs of

the present but not necessarily for the future. As research by Flinn and others have demonstrated, the imperatives of immediate accessibility and the contribution of the archives to voice and activism, and as spaces of aspiration and possibility and of participative practice in the present may outweigh concerns about the sustainability of the archive and the records it holds into the future.²⁴

This leads us to a second binary, which has to do with how a record can be constructed out of what Steedman has termed “archival dust”²⁵ – those physical and digital traces of human life and activity that were never intended to endure, or that archives have deemed to be too insubstantial, too inconsequential or too unauthoritative to acquire and/or describe at any kind of item level. Suzanne Briet, in her classic 1951 treatise *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* [*What is Documentation?*] discussed the inter-documentary nature of all documentation that participates in human activity and how, in certain cases, it can result in the creation of a new record “through the juxtaposition, selection, and comparison of documents...”.²⁶ While the practices of our field are directed to the record it can readily hold, see and authenticate (i.e., that which is instantiated, whether physically or digitally) others have been preoccupied with the record they could potentially discern. The world of citizen archivists and big data and data analytics have been supporting scholars and communities in exploiting this inter-documentary capacity. Working in concert, they have been tracking down, indexing, digitising, compiling and ultimately generating or recovering records that lie latent in this archival dust – records that render visible, or at least glimpsable, those lives that were previously invisible and the experiences that were considered to have gone undocumented or to be of too little consequence to draw out. If we think of archives as either physical embodiments or symbolic representations of relationships of all kinds, then they not only reveal but also validate records that can help to make whole individuals and families that had before only been only uni-dimensional or hopelessly fractured and fragmented. So, if we come back to how our current practices, will, and prioritisation of our limited resources have failed to address the needs of and documentation about those millions of displaced people today, what can we learn from the records that others’ compilations and analyses of archival dust have been able to yield about the past lives and experiences of those in historical diasporas? I am thinking, for example, of digital media scholar Vivek Bald’s reconstruction of the lives of early Indian traders as they moved around the world based on traces left in passenger manifests, boarding house records and

newspaper advertisements; or of the Transatlantic Slave Database, and its virtual reconstructions and visualisations of the routes and frequency of voyages between Africa and the Americas based on the indexing and digitisation over the years by many scholars of the different records and other traces they have encountered in archives and elsewhere; or of the ongoing US Holocaust Museum project to compile all extant records and other traces relating to the Holocaust. Should we leave this work to such projects undertaken by others, or should we undertake it ourselves, scaling up and making more robust existing efforts at linkages across institutions and geographies?

The third binary, actualised/imaginary, is perhaps the hardest to contemplate, and yet almost every archivist, upon reflection, can come up with an example. Michelle Caswell, and I have argued in recent papers that it is important to take into account not only actualised but also *imagined* records and archival imaginaries:²⁷

Because of their predominantly affective nature, imagined records can potentially be initiators of powerful and often spontaneous impulses and aspirations that are deployed in situations where the legal, administrative or historical records and their interpretations are deemed by the imager to be erroneous or to have failed and that justice has not been served. In some cases, actualised and imagined records confront each other with alternate realities, one representing “the establishment” and the other, disaffection with or opposition to the establishment. In others they interact in ways that co-constitute new realities or open up new possible futures.²⁸

Archival imaginaries and imagined records both find resonances in diaspora and dispossession experiences – whether forced through conflict or famine, or inflicted through colonialisation and genocide – where personal and community memory and history have been ruptured, language and other forms of cultural expression have been lost, place has been irrevocably altered, rights have been removed, ignored or violated, and perpetrators remain unaccountable and in power. They find resonances where there is little understanding of what actually happened, for example, during the last living moments of those whose remains have been recovered from mass grave sites or from desert crossing locations, or when foreign policy or military records are opened in one country but their counterparts remain closed in another country. They find resonances anywhere where a community needs to support a sense of belonging. And they provide an important complement to latent records in supporting both recovery and revitalisation.

In conclusion then, I would exhort all of us – as practitioners, as researchers, and as educators – to allow more permeability of some of our most closely held ideas and practices and accommodate, honor, and indeed embrace the transitory, the latent and the imaginary, and all of the possibilities and new perspectives that they afford. And to employ the digital not just to further enrich our understandings of those privileged slivers of actions and lives that we currently capture and to further meet the needs of the citizens that we currently serve. The goals of equality and its frequent correlate, openness, that are so often used rhetorically in discussions of the potentials of the digital world for archives do not, in fact, float all boats equally – instead they can have the opposite effect of exacerbating existing inequities. Those who are already the richest and most enfranchised in terms of knowledge, access, control and tools for manipulating and compiling record content – for example scholars for whom cyberinfrastructure is designed and to whose practices digital description and analytical and compilation tools are most oriented – will inevitably become even more so in this world; and while digital infrastructures and tools also certainly help many others in terms of accessing the archive and interacting with government records and recordkeeping, at the same time these are often inaccessible, unusable or simply not useful for many of the world's most vulnerable citizens who have the most immediate and urgent need for responsive usable spaces and systems for safeguarding and accessing records related to themselves or otherwise affecting their lives and well-being. In the spirit of the Universal Declaration, we should act on behalf of all citizens of the world, especially those who have been displaced and dispossessed, historically and today, whose needs we have so often failed and whose lives and experiences have so often only endured as archival dust.

Endnotes

1. This paper was first presented as a keynote paper "Permeable binaries and the twenty-first century record," at *Footprints in Space and Time*: ARANZ 2015, September 8, 2015 in Auckland, New Zealand. A version of this paper was also presented at *Digital Equality/Equity: The Contribution of the Archive?* – a public lecture in celebration of 25 years of records continuum research and education at Monash University, September 17, 2015.
2. In this paper I am addressing all areas of recordkeeping and all those engaged it, from records officers and registrars in government agencies, universities and other bureaucracies, to institutional archivists, to those who lead community archives and memory projects. Although the term "recordkeeping" as used in the records continuum is certainly applicable across this entire spectrum, I am consciously choosing to use the phrases "archival and recordkeeping" field/profession and community-based archives, even if it is a tautological phrase in order to be as clear as possible about who has a role to play.
3. Anne J. Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Educators and Education in the Twenty-first Century," *Archival Science* 11 nos. 3-4 (2011): 193-209.
4. The Symposium on Affect and the Archive held at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in November 2014 explored and exposed scholarly and professional understandings of and encounters with affect in the archive as well as in broader record- and memory-keeping

- contexts. This was followed up by a special issue of *Archival Science* on Affect and the Archive, Anne J. Gilliland and Marika Cifor, eds. See also Anne J. Gilliland, "Studying Affect and its Relationship to the Agency of Archivists Since the Yugoslav Wars," Chapter 2 in Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead and Eleanor Mattern, eds. *Studies in Archival Education and Research: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference* (Litwin Press, in press); Michelle Caswell and Anne J. Gilliland, "False Promise and New Hope: Dead Perpetrators, Imagined Documents, and Emergent Archival Evidence," *International Journal on Human Rights* 19 no.5 (2015): 615-627; and Anne J. Gilliland, "Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-conflict Croatia," *Archival Science* 14 nos.3-4 (2014): 249-274.
5. Gilliland, "'Studying Affect,'" op.cit. See also the 2008 PBS documentary film, *Objects and Memory* recounting, in part, how curators, archivists and other memory professionals responded in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks in New York, <http://www.pbs.org/program/objects-and-memory/>.
 6. Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing Twenty-first-century Archives* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2014).
 7. Eric Ketelaar, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2 nos. 3-4 (2002): 221-238.
 8. Sue McKemmish and I have previously called out the rhetoric in the Declaration, challenging whether: "... existing archival models and their open access regimes support human rights agendas? Do they deliver when it comes to the pressing identity, memory and accountability needs of the victims of human rights abuse? How well do they support reconciliation and recovery?" Anne J. Gilliland and Sue McKemmish. "The Role of Participatory Archives in Furthering Human Rights, Reconciliation and Recovery," *Atlanti: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice* 24 (2014). We have also argued that the Declaration provokes questions that speak to the complexities of archival realities in living up to this rhetoric in the many, many situations where there is a history of contestation of rights or memory, or of oppression, marginalisation, or even obliteration of individuals or communities. Do they deliver and protect (and do so equitably) when it comes to the pressing identity, memory and accountability needs of all citizens and all agents in the records in such contexts? Anne J. Gilliland and Sue McKemmish. "Rights in Records as a Platform for Participative Archiving," chapter 14 in Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead and Eleanor Mattern, eds. *Studies in Archival Education and Research: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference* (Litwin Press, in press).
 9. Heather L. Johnson, *Borders, Asylum and Global Non-citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
 10. Tamara Mišković, "Disparity Between International Conventions and their Implementation Outcomes Through Local Laws: Making Decisions About the Protection of Children During the War," paper presented at Srebrenica 1995-2015: Evaluacija Nasliedâ i Dugorocnih Posljedica Genocida, Sarajevo-Tuzla-Srebrenica (Potocari) Conference, July 9-11, 2015.
 11. Manny Fernandez, "New Barrier for Immigrants: Texas Birth Certificate," *New York Times* (17 September, 2015), <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/new-barrier-for-immigrants-texas-birth-certificate/ar-AAeq5pg?li=AAa0dzB>.
 12. Gilliland and Halilovich, "Migrating Memories: Transdisciplinary Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching About Diasporic Memory and Identity in Archival Studies," paper presented at The Commonwealth and its People: Diasporas, Identities, Memories, 2015, Conference, Malta, June 2015.
 13. See, for example, Katarzyna Grabska and Lyla Mehta, eds. *Forced Displacement: Why Rights Matter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
 14. It is useful here to note that such circumstances underscore the ways in which all the dimensions of the records continuum can be present at any place within the continuum. An example is how we must conceive of creation – while we certainly wish to specify and encourage the creation of the best possible records in a given context, we must bear in mind that many related records will also be created or appear at different moments, for example survivors may not be emotionally ready to testify or tell their stories until decades after the events they survived, a record that was thought to be lost or never created may resurface or be discovered, or a record that is latent among traces may be actualised (see later discussion in this paper).
 15. See also Nina Porzucki, "The Things They Carried With Them: What Refugees Take on Their Journey," PRI The World, <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-09-04/things-refugees-carry-them-their-journey>.
 16. To gain official status and protection as a refugee, "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." For this reason, a person may carry some document that proves this to be the case. United Nations, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (Geneva, 2010), <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>.
 17. These fleeing people face an entirely different records quandary once they reach a country within the European Union. The Dublin Regulation requires that asylum seekers are registered and fingerprinted in the first EU country they enter. That country becomes responsible for processing them and those who then who move on to other countries can be returned to the country where they are registered ("Dublin transfers"). Because the first country may not be their most desired destination, migrants may try to avoid being registered and

- fingerprinted – a situation being encountered not only in Croatia, a recent entry into the EU, but also Italy and Greece. This is exacerbated in Croatia's context since, together with other Balkan states of Bulgaria and Romania, it is not within the Schengen area of the EU. Within a Schengen country (which begins with Croatia's neighbour, Slovenia), individuals can usually move without being required to produce identification documentation.
18. Osorio makes this argument with regard to the case of the *Bracero* Program, which brought millions of Mexican guest workers to the United States between 1942 and 1964. The US Government withheld approximately 10% of these migrant workers' wages as "forced savings" which were sent to Mexican banks and subsequently disappeared. *Braceros* could only file for compensation, up to \$3500, if they could produce documents such as pay stubs, work visas or labour contracts as proof that they had worked in the US during those years. Jennifer Osorio, "Proof of a Life Lived: The Plight of the Braceros and What It Says About How We Treat Records," *Archival Issues*, 29 no2. (2005): 95-103.
 19. For an example of research and advocacy addressing issues surrounding biometrics and border crossings, see Virtual Divides: Biometrics, Bodies, and Borders. An International Symposium, University of Arizona Institute of LGBT Studies, Tucson, AZ, November 9, 2011, <https://www.lgbt.arizona.edu/events/virtual-divides-biometrics-bodies-and-borders-international-symposium>.
 20. See Gilliland, "Moving Past."
 21. See, for example, Dimo Todorovski, Jaap Zevenbergen, and Paul van der Molen, "Land Administration for Post-Conflict Contexts," in Jaap Zevenbergen, Walter de Vries, Rohan Mark Bennett, eds., *Advances in Responsible Land Administration* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015); United Nations, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (The Brahimi Report) (New York: United Nations, 2000).
 22. Dragan Primorac and Moses Schanfield, eds., *Forensic DNA Applications: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, 2014); Emily Holland, "Moving the Virtual Border to the Cellular Level: Mandatory DNA Testing and the U.S. Refugee Family Reunification Program," *California Law Review* 99 no. 6 (December 2011): 1635-1682; Aliyah Sternstein, "DHS Delays Refugee Rapid DNA Tests Aimed at Stemming Human Trafficking," NextGov, September 4, 2015, <http://www.nextgov.com/defense/2015/09/dhs-delays-dna-tests-refugee-camps-aimed-stemming-human-trafficking/120356/>.
 23. Anne J. Gilliland, "Archival and Recordkeeping Traditions in the Multiverse and their Importance for Researching Situations and Situating Research," chapter 1 in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish and Andrew J Lau, eds. (Melbourne: Monash University Press, in press); and Anne J. Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "Recordkeeping Metadata, the Archival Multiverse, and Societal Grand Challenges," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications 2012*, Kuching, Malaysia, September 2012, 106-115, <http://dcpapers.dublincore.org/pubs/article/view/3661>.
 24. Andrew Flinn, "Archival Activism. Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7 no. 2 (2011), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9pt2490x>; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd. "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream." *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 71-86; Anne J. Gilliland, and Andrew Flinn. "The Wonderful and Frightening World of Community Archives: What Are We Really Talking About?" in *Proceedings of CIRN 2013 Community Informatics Conference: Nexus, Confluence, and Difference: Community Archives meets Community Informatics*, Prato, Italy, 28-30 October 2013 (February 2014), http://ccnr.infotech.monash.edu/assets/docs/prato2013_papers/gilliland_flinn_keynote.pdf; Caswell, Michelle. "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives: Lessons from Community-Based Archives." *Archival Science* 14: 3-4 (2014): 307-322.
 25. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
 26. Suzanne Briet, Ronald Day and Laurent Martinet, trans. and eds. *What is Documentation: English Translation of the Classic French Text* (Scarecrow Press, 2006), p.6.
 27. Michelle Caswell, "Inventing New Archival Imaginaries: Theoretical Foundations for Identity-Based Community Archives," in *Identity Palimpsests: Ethnic Archiving in the U.S. and Canada* (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2014), pp.35-55; Michelle Caswell and Anne J. Gilliland. "False Promise and New Hope: Dead Perpetrators, Imagined Documents, and Emergent Archival Evidence," *International Journal on Human Rights* 19 no.5 (2015): 615-627; Anne J. Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, "Impossible Archival Imaginaries and Imagined Records," (*Archival Science*, forthcoming).
 28. Gilliland and Caswell, op.cit.