

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES AND THE ARCHIVAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Independent community-led archives have been a feature of the archival landscape in the UK for several decades, with numbers growing steadily. Only in more recent years, however, has this informal activity been recognised by the formal heritage sector, and efforts made by professionals to engage these independent groups. This research investigates the position of community archives from the perspective of the formal and accredited archives sector, including analysis of the scope and nature of the outreach projects initiated by professional archival bodies, as well as the motivations, both stated and perceived, for doing so. The results of the research will be used to form a discussion of the nation's 'archival community', and the place of independent archives in relation to the formal, established sector. The thesis will conclude with speculation about the potential for future collaboration between archive services in the UK, and aims to offer a perspective on the evolving role and function of both archives and archivists.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AHD	Authorised Heritage Discourse
ARA	Archives and Records Association
ATF	Archives Task Force
CAHG	Community Archives and Heritage Group
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
ICA	International Council on Archives
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
NCA	National Council on Archives
PRO	Public Records Office
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Many independent or community archives face long-term challenges relating to resources and in some cases technical expertise to ensure their sustainability and long-term preservation. It may be that ultimately many of their collections will find their way into more formal repositories. But it should also be incumbent upon archivists and other heritage professionals to support, in creative and in post-custodial ways, the physical and digital futures of those independent archives which are outside the walls of the formal archive or museum.

- Andrew Flinn¹

i. Background and Context

The emergence and development of community archives in the United Kingdom has been the topic of much discussion in recent years. In addition to surveys of the nation's archives sector performed by government funded non-departmental public bodies, academic research has been carried out with the aim of assessing the role of independent community-led archives and their contribution to the documentation and preservation of Britain's cultural heritage. Linked to this recent 'discovery' of the extent of community archiving activity in the UK is the government's vision for twenty-first century archives. Symbolised by the creation of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 2000, which placed archives alongside museums and libraries as a key functionary in the heritage sector, the role of archives has been promoted to a much greater extent. As a result, professional heritage bodies have demonstrated efforts to develop greater cooperation between the various archives services in the country.

Connected to the promotion of the importance of archives for the nation's cultural heritage is the evolving role of the archival profession itself. Other factors, such as technological changes and the increase of born-digital material have prompted writers to comment on this new role of the archivist. Nicole Convery, for example, has described it as changing from one of custody to facilitation.² Rather than being the keepers of records, archivists are now asked to reach out to the public and encourage the democratisation of archiving.

¹ Andrew Flinn, 'An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship? Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge' (Ariadne, Jan 2010), paragraph 19.

² Nicole Convery, 'Information management, records management, knowledge management: the place of archives in a digital age' in *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader*, ed. Jennie Hill (London: Facet, 2011), p.

A number of interested parties and stakeholders have already articulated the importance of establishing these new archival functions as a core skill within the profession. A notable individual amongst these commentators is Victor Gray, former President of the Society of Archivists in the UK. Speaking from his position and experience as an archivist, Gray reflects on the importance of the diversification of the skills of archivists in order to foster innovation within the profession. In his view, outreach should be included as one of the core skills of an archivist, so that these skills can be taught to others, safeguarding the future of archiving and preventing the ‘freezing’ of the sector into a compartmentalised role and function.³

Establishing sustained and equitable relationships between professional and non-professional archival bodies is a crucial part of the new outreach role foreseen for archivists, with the aim of contributing to both the development of the independent groups themselves, and to the evolution of the role of the archivist. Moreover, as illustrated by the above quotation, a large part of the responsibility for initiating mutually beneficial collaboration is perceived to lie with the mainstream organisation.⁴ Therefore, it is important to consider the growth of community archive activity from their perspective, and assess how such professional institutions have responded to this call.

An interesting element of Flinn’s statement above is the notion that independent archives exist and operate ‘outside the walls of the formal archive or museum’. This reference to walls evokes the sense that tangible barriers have been created by the professional heritage sector, composed of standards and traditional practice, which prevent informal and community-led initiatives from gaining a place within the recognised domain.

ii. Purpose

Regardless of their unofficial status, the benefits of these grassroots archive initiatives have been praised by both the communities who create them and by the professionals who recognise their relevance to wider cultural heritage agendas. However, the aim of this research project is not to repeat existing studies by investigating the significance and value of these archives, but rather to examine the value that is conferred upon independent groups

³ Victor Gray, ‘Who’s that Knocking on Our Door?’: Archives, Outreach and Community’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 6.

⁴ Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, ‘‘It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri.’ Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream’ in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet, 2009), p. 16.

receive by the formal heritage sector. This can be found in the form of policy documents concerning community-based collections, and also constitutes more direct engagement through outreach initiatives and provision of personal training or guidance. Examining surveys of the archival landscape in the UK and reports of specific outreach initiatives, this thesis will assess the role of independent archives and their place in wider society as perceived and foreseen by professional and governmental bodies. In the process, related questions will be raised about the position of community archives in relation to the formal sector and their status as archives as recognised by larger institutions.

Through detailed examination of the documentation reporting on the intended outcomes and results of this top-down orchestrated interaction, I aim to make some conclusions about the current status of community archives in the eyes of archivists and other heritage professionals in Britain. Furthermore, I aim to consider relevant questions about the motivations for offering this kind of formal assistance. I also wish to ask whether independent archives are considered to be a part of the archival community, or if a divide remains between professional and volunteer archivists. The unease experienced by professionals regarding community archives has been documented in the literature, and it is therefore of interest to consider how this has affected outreach approaches, and to examine further the problematic relationship between official and unofficial archive organisations.

iii. Research Question

The primary question posed by this research is: **In what ways have professional archival institutions and heritage organisations in the UK sought to interact with independent community archives through official policy and outreach initiatives?**

In exploring this question, four subsidiary questions are asked:

- How are community archives and professional archives differentiated?
- What are the aims and motivation for professional archival institutions to initiate interaction with independent community-led archives?
- What is the nature and scope of the outreach initiatives?
- Does this interaction between the mainstream sector and independent archives support an inclusive and collaborative archival community?

Consideration of these questions will help to direct the course of the discussion, and facilitate a more in-depth exploration of the main research question. In response to the need for further research identified by Procter and Shepherd, it is also the aim of this study to provide deeper insight into the UK archival landscape;⁵ these questions have been formulated to this end.

iv. Definitions

As Fisher has noted, those who write about archives find it necessary to define their terminology to ensure a common basis for discussion and understanding.⁶ Accordingly, there are a number of key terms used throughout this research which require definition, in order to clarify the terms and meaning of their use.

- **Community archives**

A important detail bearing significance on the direction of this project is that the term ‘community archive’ is not universally understood in the same way, a fact which Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd have helpfully drawn attention to.⁷ For the purposes of this research, the following definition formulated by Flinn will be used: ‘community archives are the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential’.⁸ The element of community control and independent practice is a crucial issue to include in relation to the relationship between professional and community archives, which is the focus of this research.

‘Independent’ is another term often employed by previous researchers to refer to community-led archives, and therefore has also been considered appropriate for use in this research. This status refers to the desire to retain direct ownership and physical custody of material, in addition to financial or organisational independence. On the other hand, ‘dependent’ archives may be seen as official archive services reliant on a parent institution, such as local authority archives and county record offices.

⁵ Margaret Procter and Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘Writing the Record Office’ in *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 34:1 (2013), p. 6.

⁶ Rob Fisher, ‘In Search of a Theory of Private Archives: The Foundational Writings of Jenkinson and Schellenberg Revisited’ in *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009), p. 6.

⁷ Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn and Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on’ in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16:1-2 (January-March 2010), p. 60.

⁸ Andrew Flinn, ‘Community Histories, Community Archives: Some opportunities and Challenges’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28:2 (October 2007), p. 153.

Although a number of definitions have been used in various publications, the exact limits of this term remain blurry. Crucially, a number of organisations that perform the same activities as community archives do not self-identify, or have not been identified by other parties, as such. This creates some ambiguity around other terminology used by professional bodies; for example, as collections of material in private hands operating independently from the public sector, community archives could reasonably be included instead under the term ‘private archives’. In cases where this term is used in documentation, it has been assumed to encompass the archives of all private or independent organisations, including community archives, even if these are not specifically referred to. However, it should be noted that while the term ‘community archives’ may be used to refer to both the collections of material and to the group or organisations engaging in community archiving activity, for the purposes of this research only the second context applies.

Another important element of the label ‘community archive’ that must be taken into consideration is the terms of its use: is it a label conferred on groups by professionals, or one that the groups choose for themselves? This important question will be explored in more detail throughout the course of this research.

- **Professional archives**

Throughout this thesis, the terms ‘formal’, ‘professional’ or ‘mainstream’ are used to refer to bodies operating within the established heritage sector. They may be used to refer to organisations such as the Archives and Records Association (ARA), as well as archival institutions, ranging from The National Archives itself to smaller repositories such as local record offices. As Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn have noted, when distinguishing professional and community archives it is important not to over-simplify the differences between them.⁹ However, for the purposes of this research it was not considered unreasonable to adopt the categorisations used in previous studies and to identify community archives as separate from the rest of the archives in the UK.

⁹ Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn, ‘Community Archives: What are we really talking about?’ - Keynote Speech delivered at the CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference (2013), p. 11.

- **Outreach**

‘If you are a public service, then where you should truly be is serving the public – reaching out – outreach’.¹⁰ With this statement, Victor Gray succinctly demonstrates the relevance of outreach to the archival profession, a key objective of which is keeping an archive in touch with its community. Therefore, examples of outreach activity have included initiatives designed to generate new users of existing archives and make them more accessible. Demand for such outward-looking action from archives has inevitably grown as a result of changing demographics; with greater social diversity in Britain, it is important that archives develop in order to reach different groups and promote social inclusion.

In the same way, the changing archival landscape of the UK also necessitates a different approach to outreach; Gray identifies the growth of the number of community archives in recent years as an important challenge to the current outreach programs of archival institutions. In his view, it is important that archivists become more adaptable and incorporate outreach into the core professional skills, showing willingness to teach these skills to others.¹¹ Therefore, the term ‘outreach’ is employed within this research to identify the efforts made by formal archival institutions to provide information or support specifically to community archives; for example, offering help and guidance, and sharing their knowledge and expertise about archives with community-based groups.

v. **Scope**

On a basic level, the boundaries of this study have been determined by limited access to source materials. Although the initial objective was to conduct a multinational comparison between the UK and Canada, it has been decided to confine the scope of the research to the United Kingdom, as the resources available did not allow for a full evaluation of both countries. Moreover, the research will primarily be concentrated on England, as more detailed information regarding the archives sector is available for this country compared to other parts of the UK.¹² This study aims to examine outreach that has been implemented on a

¹⁰ Victor Gray, ‘Who's that Knocking on Our Door?': Archives, Outreach and Community’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 1.

¹¹ Gray, ‘Archives, Outreach and Community’, p. 5.

¹² Chris Pickford, ‘Archives: A Statistical Overview’ in *Cultural Trends* 12:48 (2002), pp. 1-36.

national scale, although some individual case studies of regional initiatives will also be included. Where appropriate, some reference will be made to similar forms of outreach in an international context, in order to place the results of this research in a wider global context.

To avoid duplication, the study excludes any in-depth discussion of engagement initiatives from the perspective of the community archives. This research is interested in the response of professional archivists and the formal archives sector to community archive activity, and will therefore examine the motivations and intended outcomes of outreach initiatives as outlined in the official reports and policy documents.

As noted previously, interest in community archives from an academic and professional perspective has emerged only recently, within the last two decades. This is reflected in the literature; the 2008 edition of the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* contains a number of articles dealing with the topic of community archive activity and the future role of the archives profession, including a reflection on the relevance of the Jenkinsonian tradition by the Chief Executive of The National Archives.¹³ Moreover, regarding the documentation of the professional archives domain, community archives have received greater recognition within the last fifteen years. Therefore, it has been decided to limit the scope of this study to the twenty-first century. This research will endeavour to incorporate the most recent developments, in order to establish the state of the current archives sector as far as possible. This will enable some speculation about the future of the archives sector in the UK, and the place for community archives within it.

vi. Theoretical Framework

This research is motivated by an interest in the concept of a national archival community, and which archive organisations are considered to be a part of this community. The hypothesis is that the adherence to standardised methods of practice and strict accreditation criteria determined by the mainstream archives profession creates barriers for less formal independent archiving groups to gain access to this exclusive community. The lens through which this research is viewed is the theory of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), as described by Laurajane Smith in her book, *Uses of Heritage* (2006). Smith proposes that

¹³ Natalie Ceeney, 'The Role of a 21st-century National Archive – The Relevance of the Jenkinsonian Tradition, and a Redefinition for the Information Society' in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), pp. 57-71.

embedded within this discourse is the idea that ‘the proper care of heritage lies with the experts’, which places all non-experts in an audience role and inhibits full and equal participation in heritage activity, such as archiving.¹⁴ Although Smith focuses on the authority and influence of international heritage organisations, such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, the concept of AHD can also readily be applied to the archival profession, which relies on standards and enshrined principles to regulate the custody and use of records.

An element of Smith’s thesis which bears great significance on the current research is the idea that it is the commitment to a set of guiding principles that establishes, maintains and defines the limits of the expert community comprised of authorised practitioners and institutions of heritage.¹⁵ Applying this assertion to the idea of an archival community would suggest, therefore, that it is only through conforming to the standards outlined in the relevant charters and documents that membership of the community may be granted. As a result, many informal institutions that do not meet the predetermined criteria are excluded from the community, and are not eligible for professional status.

Moreover, Smith argues that AHD creates roles for different organisations and affects the manner in which professional heritage bodies interact with their audience; it not only ‘legitimises and defines the identity of a range of social actors’, thus determining the opposite roles of expert and audience, but also ‘mediates the social relations between them’.¹⁶ In this way, AHD can be seen to govern that outreach activity which this research aims to investigate, and is therefore an appropriate concept to apply to the results.

However, as former research has shown, community archives often question such entrenched traditions. In their willingness to collect and preserve a diverse array of records, which many professional archivists would consider inadequate in terms of authenticity, independent archives problematise conventional notions of what constitutes a record.¹⁷ Thus, the growing presence and activity of community archives represents a challenge to traditional archival thinking, and questions the value of the very principles and charters which this authorised

¹⁴ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 29.

¹⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 93.

¹⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 43.

¹⁷ Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream’ in *Archival Science* 9 (2009), p. 74.

heritage discourse is founded upon. Furthermore, described as ‘activist in their very nature’,¹⁸ community archives test the boundaries of the traditionally passive relationship of non-experts with heritage practice.¹⁹ This thesis will consider the manner in which outreach activity can be perceived as a means of reinforcing the traditional dynamic and reasserting the authority of the archives profession.

vii. Research Methods

This study aims to determine the perceived role of community archives in relation to the established archival domain, from the perspective of professional archivists and the relevant government-funded public bodies. Whereas valuable research has already conducted case studies of community archives from a bottom-up perspective, using ethnographic research methods to ascertain opinions and experiences of these groups, the current study will be desk-based, investigating the situation from a top-down approach using published material and policy papers.

Potential source material was identified via an initial search of the website of The National Archives, in order to establish the stated policy on outreach. The sources to be used in this study were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research question; therefore reports of other outreach programs, intended to diversify the users of archives, for example, have not been included. In order to gain an overall picture of the archives sector, only reports produced by organisations operating on a national level have been selected for comparison. However, these do include case studies of regional initiatives, which will be used as examples in the current study.

viii. Thesis Overview

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides further context for the research by critically reviewing relevant concepts from archival literature, as well as identifying the strengths and limitations of existing research on community archives in the UK.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to introduce the idea of community archives as presenting a challenge to traditional archival practice. A brief examination of the development of

¹⁸ Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce and Helen Partridge, ‘Archivist as activist: lessons from three queer community archives in California’ in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), p. 295.

¹⁹ Flinn, ‘An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?’, paragraph 27.

community archives in the UK facilitates an understanding of how they can be differentiated from the professional sector. This chapter also seeks to problematize notions of what constitutes a professional archive and, by extension, what defines a professional archivist.

Chapter 4 asks how the professional domain has valued and interpreted this grass roots archiving activity, and questions the motivations behind the development and initiation of formal outreach projects. This will broaden understandings of how and why such engagement policies have been designed and followed.

Chapters 5 and 6 investigate the scope and nature of outreach programs in more detail. These can be summarised according to the two principal forms of outreach identified by the author. The first model places community-led archives in a passive learning role, guiding them towards the adoption of professional standards through provision of information. The second approach offers a supportive infrastructure and aims to broker links between community archives and the mainstream sector.

The most recent trends in outreach activity will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. These can be seen as representing a movement away from direct engagement towards a more facilitating role, allowing community archives to develop organically, according to their own priorities. This part of the thesis will also draw upon more theoretical concepts to explore the idea of the archival community in the UK

The final chapter shares the conclusions the author has reached as a result of the research, and reflects upon developmental trends identified during the course of the discussion, using them to make some suggestions about future place of community archives within the sector.

ix. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to explore the approach of the mainstream heritage sector towards informal archiving activity by assessing their efforts to interact and engage with independent community-based archives through outreach. Analysis of findings allows some conclusions to be drawn about the nature of the archival community in the UK. It is hoped that this research will prove to be a relevant addition to the growing body of literature on community archives.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

i. Introduction

The literature selected for review has been chosen on the basis of its consideration of the relationship between community and professional archives. Therefore a central purpose of this literature review is to identify the approaches that have already been taken towards the study of community archives, and to determine how further scholarship can develop the existing knowledge on the subject. This discussion also provides the opportunity to locate this research within the context of the existing literature, relating to areas in which more research would be useful. It will also aim to identify some of the principal areas of debate that have already arisen, and discuss how such conflicting views have influenced and directed the aims of the current study.

A further aim of this literature review is to identify any significant gaps in the existing research. For example, a project carried out by researchers at University College London (funded by the Arts and Heritage Research Council) between 2008 and 2009 entitled ‘Documenting and Sustaining Community Heritage’ focused on such questions as, ‘How do community archives contribute to the process of identity production among diverse communities in Britain, and what contribution might they make in building a more multicultural society?’²⁰ While this is certainly an interesting and relevant question, it is very much focused on the work and impact of the community archives themselves. The project also considered how professional archivists could support the development of community archives, but this was more from the perspective of what *should* be done, rather than an objective look at what initiatives had been put in place. Therefore, this project aims to supplement existing research such as this, and present the findings from a new perspective.

It is also useful to explore some of the concepts that will be referred to throughout the course of this research, including the notion of an archival community. The review will examine different viewpoints on the interrelated nature of records and record-keeping practices, and relate these to the status of community archives in relation to professional archive services.

²⁰ ICARUS (International Centre for Archives and Record Management Research), ‘Community archives and identities: documenting and sustaining community heritage’ (Research project: 2008-2009). Available at: <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dis/icarus/projects/community-archives>> [accessed 20 June 2014]

ii. Defining Community Archives

To begin with, it is necessary to examine the different ways in which the term ‘community archives’ has been employed in the literature. In general, authors have used this label to refer to grass roots archival organisations, formed on the initiative of a particular group, and independent from state structures.²¹ As stated in the introductory chapter, the definition employed for the purposes of this research corresponds with that used by Andrew Flinn, who may be regarded as the leading scholar on community archives in the UK, having written and contributed to a number of publications on the subject. As a result, his definition has been applied in various other studies, including those examining community archives in an international context.²²

It is also important to consider the use of the term ‘independent’ in relation to community archives, as it emphasises the extent to which self-definition and self-identification is a central aspect of the ethos of these groups. As Gilliland and Flinn have discussed, the identification of a formal definition of community archives is somewhat superfluous; however, the use of the terms independent community archive, community-based or community-led archive at least indicates that the control of activity is embedded within the group in question.²³

Further definitions that can be included, and will be discussed further throughout the course of this thesis, are those employed by the professional archive sector. For example, the UK Community Archives and Heritage Group have developed its own description and definitions of community archiving. The CAHG describes these bodies as ‘collections of material that encapsulate a particular community’s understanding of its history and identity’, a definition which implies that these archives and the history that they represent is a particularism of society that is unique to that group.²⁴

²¹ Elizabeth Crooke, ‘An exploration of the Connections among Museums, Community and Heritage’ in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 422.

²² See, for example, Joanna Newman, ‘Sustaining Community Archives’ (Unpublished MA thesis: Victoria University of Wellington, 2010)

²³ Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn, ‘Community Archives: what are we really talking about?’ - Keynote Speech delivered at the CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference (2013), p. 3.

²⁴ Community Archives Development Group, *Helpsheet: Guidance for community archives on engaging with wider social agendas* (NCA, 2005), p. 3.

iii. Social Diversity and Community Archives

In order to fully appreciate the relationship of community archives with the mainstream sector, it is essential to give some attention to the reasons why grass roots archiving groups have developed in the UK. A primary reason, as identified by scholars, relates to the power of dominant heritage narratives. Schwartz and Cook have observed the enormous power that archives wield over the formation of identity, both personal and collective. Ultimately, they argue, archives inform and validate the way we know ourselves as individuals, groups and societies.²⁵ However, Cook has noted elsewhere that archives can also inhibit this form of self-realisation, as they may be used as a tool for legitimising those with power and marginalising those without it.²⁶ As a result, many voices in society remain absent from the archival collections of the mainstream heritage sector, and are not given sufficient representation in the greater public record. This has led many groups to assert their own counter-narratives, taking measures to safeguard their own unique heritage through the formation of independent community archives.

Most frequently, therefore, the term suggests some form of resistance to dominant heritage narratives, and connotes a desire for self-representation and the reclamation of the past, especially for those groups who may have felt disenfranchised from the national historical or archival record; in the context of Australia, for example, Lyndon Ormond-Parker and Robyn Sloggett have discussed the ‘intersection of archives with Aboriginal empowerment’.²⁷ The suggestion of a community being empowered through control of its own archival heritage implies the achievement of a positive sense of belonging, which has not previously been realised by the representation of that group by mainstream collections. This form of archival activism has been viewed in both positive and negative terms, however. For example, David Lowenthal has commented on the restrictions of access enforced by some communities, and perceives this is a challenge to enshrined archival principles.²⁸ On the other hand, Terri Janke and Livia Iacovino have considered the ability of indigenous peoples to be the primary

²⁵ Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’ in *Archival Science* 2 (2002), p. 2.

²⁶ Terry Cook, ‘What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift’ in *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), p. 18.

²⁷ Lyndon Ormond-Parker and Robyn Sloggett, ‘Local archives and community collecting in the digital age’ in *Archival Science* 12 (2012), p. 192.

²⁸ David Lowenthal, ‘Archives, Heritage and History’ in *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 198.

guardians and interpreters of their own unique cultures as essential for community cohesion and identity.²⁹

However, it is not only indigenous populations who can benefit in such a way: as Stevens, Shepherd and Flinn found in their research of community archives in the London area, particularly those formed by ethnic minority groups, many had expressed a wariness towards involvement with the mainstream, a sentiment which is said to be rooted in ‘long and bitter experiences of exploitation and discrimination’.³⁰ This further implies that there exists a substantial degree of conflict between the aims and values of the individual group and professional archival institutions, a thesis which is supported by various case studies, in which community archives have expressed a strong desire to remain autonomous rather than collaborate or be integrated within a mainstream collection. This confrontational aspect of the relationship between professional and non-professional archival groups will have a direct impact on the nature, and moreover the outcomes of, any integration or outreach policies put in place by archival institutions, and is therefore an important element to consider in the context of this research.

Moreover, the literature suggests that a strong desire for autonomy may be a source of tension not only in the relationship between community archives and mainstream institutions, but also within the community groups themselves. As Joanna Newman concluded in her study of the sustainability of community archives in New Zealand, there exists a complex dynamic between the wish to remain independent and the necessity of accepting external assistance in order to succeed in remaining a functional and sustainable organisation.³¹ This suggests that without professional guidance or public financial support, many community archives will be unable to continue their work. This indicates the importance and relevance of conducting further research into the nature of support that mainstream institutions are willing and able to provide.

²⁹ Terri Janke and Livia Iacovino, ‘Keeping cultures alive: archives and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights’ in *Archival Science* 12 (2012), p. 153.

³⁰ Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn and Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on’ in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16:1-2 (January-March 2010), p. 69.

³¹ Joanna Newman, ‘Sustaining Community Archives’ (Unpublished MA thesis: Victoria University of Wellington, 2010), p. 33.

iv. Community engagement and participatory archiving

It has been stated that the purposes of this research are to investigate the nature of such engagement; therefore, it is helpful to consider how the need for collaboration has been documented in the literature. Several authors have commented on the need for the involvement of mainstream institutions with independent community archives. For instance, Flinn has written extensively about independent community archives and their relationship with mainstream heritage bodies, reaching the conclusion that outreach activity needs to become a core principle for professional bodies, and should not be regarded as an optional extra to their existing engagement policies.³² It is only with such commitment from the mainstream, Flinn and Stevens have argued, that progressive and mutually beneficial partnerships can be established.³³ Similarly, Christopher Hives has stated that is the responsibility of professional archival associations to provide infrastructural support, leadership and educational opportunities, in order to help ‘foster an environment in which records creators can develop their own archives’.³⁴ Therefore, it seems that there is general agreement within the literature that it is up to these professional archives to take the initiative and support community groups in creating and developing their own collections. Therefore, it will be interesting to examine in more depth the form that such outreach has taken, and whether it corresponds to these recommendations.

A particularly valuable contribution to the literature on community archives and the mainstream sector consists of an article published as the results of research carried out by the team from UCL. Based on the premise that archive professionals are increasingly being encouraged to engage with community archives, the UCL research used an ethnographic participatory observation approach to identify a range of existing models of engagement, in order to consider the obstacles that prevented equitable relationships between the professional and independent archives. This provides a useful model for the current research, which aims to also consider how outreach initiatives may be affected by wider agendas. As described, the team in question elected to approach the question of engagement from the perspective of the

³² Andrew Flinn, ‘The Impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice’ in Jennie Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), p.164.

³³ Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, ‘‘It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri.’ Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream’ in Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (eds.), *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet, 2009), p. 16.

³⁴ Christopher Hives, ‘Thinking Globally, Acting Locally’ in *Archivaria* 38 (1994), p. 160.

community archives;³⁵ as a result of this approach, a rather one-sided perspective was obtained during the research, as the motivations of the formal sector for engaging in this form of cooperation in this were not considered.

Therefore, it seems that the focus of much research on outreach and engagement thus far has been to establish the needs of community archives in this process, identifying the experiences of the grass roots organisations from a bottom-up perspective. While this is of course a legitimate approach, it does not consider the viewpoint of mainstream institutions, and thus focuses on the outcome, rather than the reasons and motivations for, any engagement initiatives. On the contrary, this research will approach the topic from a top-down perspective, seeking to understand the discourses that surround this form of heritage-based outreach. Furthermore, although previous literature on the subject of community archives has included discussion of outreach programmes and guidance provision, the results have not been examined in great detail. Moreover, this study will aim to move the focus beyond London, which has been the location of the majority of existing research, and consider outreach in the broader, national context. This is especially relevant when analysing outreach initiatives that have aimed to bring together archives across the UK in a national network, supporting the idea of a shared archival heritage. It is therefore relevant to this research to consider what has been written on the notion of collective memory and heritage.

v. Is there a national archival heritage?

The limitations of archives have often been acknowledged. As Verne Harris has discussed at length, the archive presents only a sliver of a sliver of a sliver of the greater public record, meaning that even the most dominant groups can only ever achieve partial representation.³⁶ Therefore, it is hardly possible for the full spectrum of social diversity to be accurately reflected within national archival holdings. Moreover, even if some trace of marginalised groups can be found, they are likely to be presented from a singular or biased perspective. In societies such as the UK, which define themselves as multicultural, it is therefore questionable whether mainstream archives should attempt to incorporate collections from every minority, or whether a supported network consisting of archives of all size and type, including community archives would better serve society, and especially the minority groups

³⁵ Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd, 'New Frameworks for Community Engagement', p. 60.

³⁶ Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa' in *Archival Science* 2 (2002), p. 64.

in question. As will be shown in this discussion, various conflicting viewpoints on this subject have been presented in the literature.

First and foremost, the term multiculturalism itself has been strongly contested, and there is significant debate about what this label entails, and whether or not it can continue to be relevant to contemporary society. For example, Gerard Delanty has taken a highly sceptical stance, stating that the limits of use for the term ‘multiculturalism’ have been reached because ‘the assumption that ethnic groups are internally homogenous and therefore distinct from the national community is no longer valid’.³⁷ The approach taken by Delanty, although sociological rather than archival, can nevertheless be applied to the question at hand. In stating that minority groups are not separated from the rest of society, his assertion challenges some of the principal notions surrounding the origins for community archives. For instance, the perceived and often stated need for self-representation and a re-telling of historical narratives amongst a disenfranchised group with a sense of cultural heritage distinct from mainstream heritage narratives. On the other hand, Delanty’s statement implies that the whole of society shares a single archival heritage, therefore challenging the notion that cooperation between community archives and the mainstream sector is problematic due to fundamental differences in ideas of heritage and memory-making processes.

vi. An Archival Continuum

Indeed, this is the position taken by the archivist Eric Ketelaar, who argues that the various sections of society, including migrant and indigenous peoples, are not distinct from another in terms of heritage and memory but rather function in a flow of continuous interaction, all contributing towards collective memories within society at large.³⁸ In terms of this research, Ketelaar’s approach is significant in that it points strongly towards the notions of both a memory continuum and ‘community of records’, and thus supports the idea that successful collaboration between independent and professional archives is not only possible, but also natural: if the various groups within society are not exclusive, as has been suggested elsewhere, but are in fact ‘mutually associated’, then the different archive services and archival organisations throughout the country, whether operated by trained experts or community-led volunteers, can be seen as contributing equitably to an archival heritage that is shared by the whole society.

³⁷ Gerard Delanty, *Community* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 110.

³⁸ Eric Ketelaar, ‘Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records’ in *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005), p. 55

Flinn has found that it is not the universal aim of community archives to remain fully autonomous, which is an important conclusion that challenges the notion of community archives as adopting a position of opposition to the mainstream sector, inhibiting any sustained or productive cooperation. These findings have also been shared by others: for instance, in their study of immigration and citizenship in Canada, published in 2004, Ley and Hiebert concluded that ‘some immigrant groups reject the implication of inherent and permanent difference from the mainstream that a hyphenated cultural identity seems to bestow upon them’.³⁹ This implies a desire among such groups to be seen as part of the larger collective, rather than identified as a particular minority. Therefore, one can question the extent to which the activity of community archives may be interpreted as contradictory to the ‘archival mission’; on the contrary, as Fortier has suggested, the origins of independent archives may lie not in a desire to be fully autonomous, but rather to achieve a sense of belonging to wider society through positive reinforcement of identity. As a result, community archives can be seen as a neutral, rather than confrontational, contribution to the archival endeavour. This is an important factor that will be taken into consideration throughout the course of this research.

Other perspectives on the notion of a memory continuum have also been persuasively argued. For example, Millar asserts that, due to the evolution of society since settlement and migration, the knowledge systems and memory-making practices of all groups within society have become inextricably linked.⁴⁰ This is not to say that communities should not have their own archives, but suggests that these collections can be incorporated within or regarded alongside mainstream archives, rather than as fully separate or even subordinate. The links between knowledge systems identified by Millar suggest that minority groups are compatible with and can thus enrich the heritage of the majority. This notion of bringing specialised community knowledge from without to within the mainstream heritage sector, as suggested by Dennis Ocholla,⁴¹ also supports the idea of an archival continuum, as it implies a certain amount of fluidity and is strongly suggestive of borders that are not fixed, but rather permeable and transient. This suggests that interaction between mainstream and independent groups can be positive and fruitful. Moreover, it suggests that different levels of archival

³⁹ David Ley and Daniel Hiebert, ‘Immigration policy as population policy’ in *The Canadian Geographer* 45:1 (2001), p. 123.

⁴⁰ Laura Millar, ‘Subject or object? Shaping and reshaping the intersections between aboriginal and non-aboriginal records’ in *Archival Science* 6 (2006), p. 330.

⁴¹ Dennis Ocholla, ‘Marginalised Knowledge: An Agenda for Indigenous Knowledge Development and Integration with Other Forms of Knowledge’ in *International Review of Information Ethics* 7 (2007), p. 2.

activity are not separated by strict definitions of professional and non-professional; but rather that all such activity can be considered as part of the same endeavour. With this in mind, community archives should be seen as part of the whole archiving community, rather than a fully separate entity.

vii. The Archival Community

This discussion now turns towards different views regarding the nature of the archival community, and which groups, organisations or individuals this is considered to include. In general, this term has been employed in the literature to refer to those employed within the archival profession, which is also supported by the use of the term by bodies such as the Archives and Records Association (ARA), which offers differentiated membership options according to level of qualification.⁴² This application of criteria to joining this community supports the notion that non-expert or community archivists are included. However, this limited definition not only excludes non-professional archivists, but also creates barriers between archivists and other heritage sectors; for instance, Laura Millar refers to organisations such as the Heritage Council of British Columbia as being ‘outside’ the archival community.⁴³ Therefore this definition can be seen as an obstacle to a more integrated approach to knowledge management that has been seen to benefit some minority communities, due to the fact that informal heritage organisations can often be considered not exclusively as archives, but as ‘archives-cum-libraries-cum heritage centres-cum museums’.⁴⁴ In asserting itself as autonomous and separate from other bodies, the archival profession can be considered to be inhibiting the development of a fully cooperative and accessible heritage sector, as community archives have also been perceived as doing, which is an interesting dynamic to consider in the context of professional attitudes and approaches to outreach initiatives.

However, the questionable and more fluid nature of the archival community is also reflected in the literature, resulting in a clearly identifiable debate between the two perspectives. While some authors have intimated that the attitude of the archival profession is one of inclusivity and acceptance, others have strongly disagreed. As shown earlier, Terry Cook represents the

⁴² Archives & Records Association (UK & Ireland), Membership Categories (last updated 12 March 2014). Available at: <<http://www.archives.org.uk/membership/categories.html>> [accessed 28 May 2014]

⁴³ Laura Millar, ‘The Spirit of Total Archives: Seeking a Sustainable Archival System’ in *Archivaria* 47 (1999), p. 59.

⁴⁴ Lawson, ‘Precious Fragments’, p. 176. Millar, ‘Subject or object?’, p. 345.

first perspective; praising the Canadian archival system, he states that the existence of a national network facilitates coordinated efforts and activity amongst institutions, with the result that local perspectives are able to influence national priorities set by the Canadian Council of Archives.⁴⁵ On the other hand, commenting on the situation for community archives in the UK, researchers at UCL have found that ‘being taken seriously’ as an archive is the biggest challenge faced by independent groups who start their own collections. This implies that professionals regard independent archives with some scepticism. Furthermore, individuals interviewed by Flinn and the rest of the UCL team experienced a clear double standard for non-professional archives; whilst taking part in collaborative work with centralised heritage bodies, the community groups were expected to perform to a professional standard, without being afforded professional treatment.⁴⁶ This indicates that, in the UK at least, community groups are not considered to be of equal status to mainstream archives, and therefore are not included as part of the archival community.

However, Flinn has expressed the opinion elsewhere that there is significant potential for building ‘sustained equitable relationships’ between conventional bodies and community groups.⁴⁷ The emphasis on ‘equitable’ suggests that, although relationships are already in existence, situations like the one described above, where double standards are apparent, are unfortunately the norm. This thesis aims to investigate whether or not the current support for community archives originating from or initiated by professional archival institutions can constitute as development of an archival community, or whether or not community archives remain excluded, as they are not seen to be professional enough. It will therefore be interesting to consider which perspective on the nature of the archival community is more substantiated by the results of this research.

A key element of this research is to examine outreach from the perspective of the professionals. Therefore, some consideration must be given to the motivations for providing support to independent community-led archives, and whether any related issues can be identified. Many academics in the heritage field have written about the need to build trust between communities and mainstream institutions with a clear focus on the benefits for the community archives. However, Elizabeth Crooke also notes the need for professionals to be

⁴⁵ Terry Cook ‘Archival Principles and Cultural Diversity: Contradiction, Convergence or Paradigm Shift? A Canadian Perspective’ in *Comma: International Journal on Archives* 3/4 (2007), p. 46.

⁴⁶ Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd, ‘New Frameworks for Community Engagement’, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁷ Flinn, ‘The impact of independent and community archives’, p.163.

discerning: ‘as museum professionals begin to engage in forms of community development activity, they have to ask themselves whether the community they are engaging with is representative’.⁴⁸ This suggests that professionals are perhaps more selective in their outreach activity than has previously been assumed, and that the scope for engagement is dependent on certain criteria. This is an interesting aspect of outreach that has not been discussed in any great detail; therefore effort will be made to incorporate it into this research.

viii. Conclusion

To conclude, the literature included in this discussion indicates that while there is no significant dispute over the value and importance of community archives, there is nevertheless some debate surrounding their status and role in relation to other archive services in the UK, and within the archival community. These findings have impacted the course of this research, which will aim to consider some of the reasons for the ambiguous place of community archives within the sector. This will be achieved through analysis of the selected source material, and application of concepts identified in the literature review. In light of the recommendations made by Flinn, among others that outreach should be a core policy of professional archives, it will also be interesting to consider if the reality of outreach corresponds to these suggestions in practice.

Further conclusions can be made regarding the situation of the current research in relation to previous investigations. During the course of the analysis of the selected literature it becomes clear that while previous researchers have investigated the motivation, form, challenges and impacts of independent community-led archives, comparatively little attention has been given to an in-depth analysis of the response to this activity from the formal heritage sector. Therefore, this research should hopefully provide a new perspective on the subject of UK community archives.

⁴⁸ Crooke, ‘Museums and Community’, p. 184.

CHAPTER 3. THE 'UNOFFICIAL HERITAGE SECTOR'⁴⁹

i. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to further explore the notion that community archives present a challenge to traditional archival practice, and to identify tensions that can be seen to exist between official and unofficial heritage organisations. In order to do so, it is necessary to address the question of how 'unofficial' community archive activity can be seen as distinct from formal and 'official' archive services. A unique feature of community archives is the purpose for which they are created; in contrast to the primarily informational function of other records collections, privately or community owned archives are often motivated by a particular interest or political viewpoint, and exist to support or safeguard the culture of a specific region or community group. Therefore universal public access to their collections is not always a high priority. By contrast, access is considered by professionals to be the most important aspect of an archive's function. In this way, community archives can be seen to challenge established traditions and problematize conventional notions of the archive.

ii. The nature and purpose of community archives in the UK

As a result of their propensity to stray from conventional archival practice, and in their independence from mainstream heritage structures, community archives have been described as 'the embodiment of activism in the archives'.⁵⁰ This presents them as inherently political, which some certainly are: Fentress and Wickham have described 'the decision by one community to capture its memories separately from others' as 'one of the most effective recourses any social group has to reinforce its own social identity in opposition to that of others'.⁵¹ It is indeed the case that some independent archive groups are motivated by the desire to present a subversive challenge to dominant heritage narratives, as demonstrated by the 'Community Archives and Identity' project conducted by a team of researchers at University College London, the results of which are reported by Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd.⁵²

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Crooke, 'Museums and Community' in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 172.

⁵⁰ Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce and Helen Partridge, 'Archivist as activist: lessons from three queer community archives in California' in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), p. 295.

⁵¹ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 114.

⁵² Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, 'Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream' in *Archival Science* 9 (2009), pp. 71-86.

However, it is not the universal purpose of community archives to represent a political statement. In some cases independent archiving activity is deliberately activist, such as the Black Cultural Archives in London, which was explicitly founded to fight against ignorance and denigration;⁵³ in others, it simply arises organically from the interests of a particular group or local community, who may join together to compile a collection of records about a specific topic or region. Therefore, community archives exist for many different reasons, evolving out of diverse and unique circumstances. For example, the Keswick Historical Society formed an additional Archive Group after receiving a donation of two collections;⁵⁴ this can therefore be seen as a reactionary response to accommodate existing collections, rather than as an example of a deliberate and conscious decision to present memory in an alternative form or context. Such examples as these serve to exemplify the range of community archive activity that is currently present within the UK.

As a result of their diverse origins and circumstances, community archives are not representative of a homogenous archiving movement. Nevertheless, the use of ‘community archives’ as an umbrella term for independent groups and collections has become commonplace. Within professional circles, this could be perceived as an attempt to place boundaries around this kind of activity; for example, while discussing the increasing diversity of these groups, Gray has concluded that ‘widely different in their purpose and background they may be...they all fall happily into the drawer marked community archives’.⁵⁵ The suggestion of compartmentalizing independent archives in this way is an important reason why the whole concept of community archives must be problematized, as it has become a way for professionals to identify and label different archiving activity. Although the term ‘community’ implies grassroots origins and independence from state structures, this usage as an umbrella term shows that it has also been harnessed by professionals in order to classify these groups according to their own standards and criteria. Flinn has also identified this important issue of labeling groups in this way:

⁵³ Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, ‘It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri.’ Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream’ in Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (eds.), *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet, 2009), p. 12.

⁵⁴ Community Archives and Heritage Group. ‘Keswick Historical Society Archives Group: Case-study showing the impact of community archives’ (last modified 26 June 2007). Available at: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/keswick-historical-society-archives-group> [accessed 29 June 2014]

⁵⁵ Victor Gray, ‘Who's that Knocking on Our Door?': Archives, Outreach and Community’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 4.

A further problem is that ‘community archives’ has been employed to define a potentially disparate range of activities going under many different names as something resembling a coherent community archive movement.⁵⁶

The observation that community archiving activity is undertaken under many different names is highly relevant, as not every group self-selects the term ‘archive’ to describe their work. The reasons for doing, and for not doing so, are of great interest, and will be examined further below.

iii. Challenging traditional notions of the ‘archive’

As researchers have observed, community archives are far more flexible in their practice than formal archival institutions and, in many cases, combine the functions of libraries, archives and museums.⁵⁷ Therefore, choosing to be known as an archive is a meaningful statement. It may be that self-selecting the label of archive indicates a wish by the group to attach an element of authority and skill to their work, as the term typically evokes a sense of historical significance. Rather than identify as a historical society or heritage trust, as some independent records-collecting groups have done, using the term ‘archive’ confers a greater sense of professionalism and active purpose.

The value embodied in the name ‘archive’ is linked to the concept of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), which was introduced in the first chapter. As Laurajane Smith argues, the identity and assumed authority of the ‘archivist’ is enshrined in this discourse, which establishes an important sense of professional validity for heritage practitioners.⁵⁸ The existence of this exclusive professional identity, founded upon a specific body of knowledge and practice, is evidenced by initiatives such as the 2011 Twitter event *#AskArchivists*. This campaign invited questions from the public, which clearly places professionals in the position of offering expert advice to a non-expert audience.⁵⁹ The archives sector has thus gained authority by establishing and reinforcing its expertise and knowledge through the use of certain terminology and the observation of a set of standards. The professional identity of archivist is also guarded, in order to uphold the authority and expertise that it signifies;

⁵⁶ Andrew Flinn, ‘Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions’ in *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7:2 (2011), p. 6.

⁵⁷ Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd, ‘Whose memories, whose archives?’, p. 74.

⁵⁸ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 93.

⁵⁹ Charlene Jensen and Anneke van Waarden-Koets, ‘About’. *#AskArchivists* (Blog: 2011). Available at: <http://askarchivists.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed 29 June 2014]

therefore the objective of campaigns such as *#AskArchivists* can be interpreted as defending the position of power held by the profession ‘in order to control the exchange value of the services it renders to society’.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is the opinion of some that, in claiming to be archivists, informal and non-professional community groups are imposing upon this position and threatening to compromise its authority.

The use of the term ‘archive’ by independent community-based groups can be interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, by adopting the term, independent groups identifying themselves as community archives could be seen to accept and legitimise this discourse, seeking to use it to raise their own status; in this way, the use of the term ‘archive’ by a community group to describe their organisation may constitute an attempt to seek entrance to the professional community. On the other hand, rather than an effort to professionalise their own activity, the adoption of the label ‘archive’ by some groups may be understood as representing a direct challenge to the authority of the mainstream sector. As Smith also states, one of the main functions of AHD is the disqualification of any form of critical engagement on the part of ‘non-expert users of heritage’, sanctioning instead a hierarchical top-down relationship between experts and ‘audience’.⁶¹ This can be understood in terms of the linear, one-directional relationship that many heritage organisations cultivate with users, maintained through the delivery of authorised information with limited audience participation.

This research has found that the hierarchical relationship is maintained even when greater involvement of the public is invited; for example, a campaign launched by TNA in 2013 was designed to increase public awareness of the essential role of archives in society. ‘Explore Your Archive’ is an initiative that encourages the public to discover archives for themselves, implying a certain level of user autonomy. However, a further objective of this initiative is to ‘underline the skill and professionalism of the sector’, and so the delivery of this program retains users in the role of passive audience and reinforces the authority of the expert community.⁶²

⁶⁰ Theo Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power – On the independence and autonomy of archival science’ in *Arhivski vjesnik* 42 (1999), p. 155.

⁶¹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 34.

⁶² ARA, ‘Explore Your Archive: campaign announced to sector’ (14 May 2013). Available at: <http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/explore-your-archive-campaign-announced-to-sector.html> [accessed 20 June 2014]

However, rather than conforming to this passive role dictated by AHD, community-led archives are establishing themselves as an active part of the UK heritage sector. As Gray admits, some professionals have perceived this as an encroachment onto their territory, resulting in a somewhat hostile and defensive attitude towards the growth of non-expert archiving activity.⁶³ For some in the profession, which places high value on training and adherence to best practice, the growth of community archive activity has been an uncomfortable development; in challenging notions of what an archive is by using the term to describe their (sometimes) unconventional approaches,⁶⁴ independent groups are, by extension, challenging notions of what it means to be an archivist. Reluctant to concede the 'right' to hold archives to untrained groups, professionals have elected to stand aloof from grassroots initiatives, which limits the potential for outreach activity.⁶⁵

It is important to emphasise that not every group performing archive activity identifies as a 'community archive', and therefore does not present themselves to the public as such; on the other hand, some groups can be 'purposefully isolationist', choosing not to make themselves widely known.⁶⁶ As discussed previously, this makes it extremely difficult to establish how many independent archiving groups there are in the UK. Moreover, this also restricts the scope of support from the professional sector, as the potential for engagement is limited to groups that have established a public presence. The visibility of community archives is therefore another important factor in determining the scope of professional outreach. The nature of outreach identified by this research suggests that those community archives that have a more developed organisational structure, and the aim to make their collections available outside of the immediate group, are more likely to be receptive to, or targeted by, professional outreach initiatives. It must be noted, therefore, that a number of community-based archives groups likely remain unidentified and unaffected by this outreach.

iv. The relation of community archives to the mainstream heritage sector

An important part of this research has been an evaluation of the archival landscape in Britain today, in order to determine the position of independent archives. Results have shown that

⁶³ Gray, 'Archives, Outreach and Community', p. 4.

⁶⁴ Andrew Flinn, 'The Impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice' in Jennie Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), p. 155.

⁶⁵ Gray, 'Archives, Outreach and Community', p. 6.

⁶⁶ Jura Consultants, *Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda* (London: MLA, 2009), p. 42.

community archives are a significant presence within the country, with numbers likely growing year by year. Surveys carried out by a specially appointed Archives Task Force in 2004 found that community archives constituted 13% of the total number of archival institutions in the UK. This figure can be compared with the number of formally recognised local archives, which were found to comprise 14% of archives services.⁶⁷ It must be noted, however, that if measured by content and volume of archival material rather than number of organisations, the relative proportion of community archives within the archival landscape would be lesser.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the figures show that Britain's community archives are almost equal in number to its local record offices, and therefore have significant role to play in the country's archiving activity. Moreover, the figure arrived at by the Task Force in 2004 only includes those groups which identify as a community archives; as discussed above, many more organisations exist that perform the same activities but operate under a different name, and are therefore less easily identified. The actual number of groups which meet the definition of community archive employed in this research, as set out in the introductory chapter, is therefore likely to be even higher.

However, while they may be equal in number, arguably they are not equal in status. Even though the work they do is significant, and recognised as such, in the majority of cases community archives remain somewhat outside of the mainstream archives sector. This is sometimes a matter of choice, with groups electing to remain fully autonomous and not wishing to interact with other institutions due to an element of distrust, or simply a commitment to self-determination.⁶⁹ In other cases, this continued separatism can be a cause of serious frustration for independent groups who actively seek to form partnerships with formal institutions, and can therefore inhibit their development: 'being taken seriously as an archive' by professionals is reportedly one of the most common challenges faced by community-led archives seeking credibility.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future: Report of the Archives Task Force* (London: MLA, 2004), p. 75

⁶⁸ MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Flinn and Stevens, 'Telling our own story', p. 6.

⁷⁰ Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd, 'Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream' in *Archival Science* 9 (2009), p. 70.

v. The role of archives in Britain

In order to determine the ways in which community archives are regarded as separate from the formal archives sector, one must also consider the existence of an archival tradition in the UK. As Elizabeth Shepherd illustrates in her valuable and comprehensive survey of the history of archiving in twentieth-century England, archives have been developed for different purposes and at varying rates all over the country, resulting in a ‘wide spectrum of archives’ managing records from all types of organisation.⁷¹ This diversity is also reflected in the report of the Archives Task Force, which identifies nine groups within the sector, including religious, business, and museum and gallery archives.⁷² As Natalie Ceeney has also commented, although most archives in Britain have common activities, they have been created for different purposes and so their role in society remains radically different;⁷³ for example, the purpose of business archives is often heavily based upon providing evidence.

However, in recent years attempts have been made to emphasise a common role for all archive services in the country: to support the strategic aims of the wider sector to conserve, enhance and share the UK’s diverse heritage.⁷⁴ Developments at the end of the twentieth century, such as the creation of a National Heritage Fund in 1980, gave national heritage and culture a higher profile in Britain, and promoted it as a crucial aspect of supporting the wellbeing of communities.⁷⁵ This coincided with increased recognition of archives on equal terms with their partner domains of museums and libraries in providing a vital link to the past; Chris Pickford has even stated that archives ‘ultimately provide the bedrock of heritage evidence underpinning the wider cultural sector’.⁷⁶ Promoting archives was seen as a means to ensure that everyone in the country could learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage. This has been an important element in the growing recognition of community archives, as local and regional archives are considered better placed to support community-focused agendas, one of which is to encourage more people to be involved in and make decisions about their heritage.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Elizabeth Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 126.

⁷² MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 75.

⁷³ Natalie Ceeney, ‘The Role of a 21st-century National Archive – The Relevance of the Jenkinsonian Tradition, and a Redefinition for the Information Society’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 58.

⁷⁴ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Our Heritage, Our Future: Strategic Plan 2008-2013* (July 2007), p. 4.

⁷⁵ Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists*, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Chris Pickford, ‘Archives: A Statistical Overview’ in *Cultural Trends* 12:48 (2002), p. 34.

⁷⁷ UK Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, *Government Policy on Archives* (December 1999), p. 11 (7.2).

However, despite the growing emphasis on the heritage-supporting functions of archives today, the work done by community archives is often still regarded by the formal sector as non-professional in comparison to other local archive services, in part due to the fact that many have few or no trained staff and rely on volunteers. While the traditional role of records is informational, it is often perceived that community archives exist to support memory, and are therefore not as concerned about verifying accuracy for evidential use. For their own users, this aspect of community archive is perhaps the most valuable, as it increases the personal relevance of the material in the collections. However, as previous research has shown, community archives are not exclusively archival in their content, but also contain wider object collections and intangible heritage such as memory and song.⁷⁸ Such materials do not always conform to the standards of authenticity and integrity observed by professional archivists, and therefore would not be considered for inclusion in more formal records collections.⁷⁹ It could thus be argued that while the heritage agenda raises the profile of community archives, it also further limits their function to a purely cultural one, preventing them from being considered by professionals as valuable and relevant within the whole spectrum of archival functions and services. This is a further example of how barriers are constructed between the formal and informal archives sectors.

Moreover, while many archive professionals are in agreement with the government's wider heritage agenda, some have expressed concerns about the lack of balance in this approach, arguing that the focus on heritage detracts from the informational and evidential value of archives.⁸⁰ Cook has identified this 'memory-evidence' tension as a long-standing feature of the profession, as a result of two contrasting archival discourses. Focusing on the record as evidence demands that control is exerted and expertise is imposed, on both records and users, through a single method of practice, in order to ensure consistency. On the contrary, directing practice towards memory requires a more flexible and pluralistic approach, encouraging multiple viewpoints.⁸¹ This oppositional dynamic existing between the cultural and

⁷⁸ Cultural Consulting Network, *Community Archives Landscape Research: A report for MLA and CADG* (June 2004), p. 4.

⁷⁹ Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn and Elizabeth Shepherd, 'New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on' in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16:1-2 (January-March 2010), p. 60.

⁸⁰ Louise Ray et.al., 'Funding archive services in England and Wales: institutional realities and professional perceptions' in *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 34:2 (2013), p. 190.

⁸¹ Terry Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms' in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), pp. 11-12.

informational values of records is also reflected in the discord between community and professional archives.

vi. Conclusion

Before the outreach activity of professional archival institutions can be discussed in more detail, it was found necessary to show the problems surrounding the term ‘community archive’ and how it determines the scope of this engagement, with regard to how community archives are identified by the formal sector. Therefore, this chapter has aimed to provide some background to the current position of community archives and their relation to the professional archival domain, in terms of the ways in which they present a challenge to some of the values of the sector. This chapter has also drawn attention to the power of AHD to limit the role of community archives, which will be explored further throughout the course of the thesis. The next chapter will look at how professionals have responded to this challenge, and the concerns that have been voiced about the suitability of independent organisations to care for records. In subsequent chapters, specific examples of how community archives have been approached by the mainstream through formal outreach projects will be analysed.

CHAPTER 4. RECOGNISING COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

i. Introduction

Discussing the archival landscape in Britain today, Gray identifies the growth of community archives as the development to which some, but by no means all, archivists have found it most difficult to adjust.⁸² As a result, the relationship between formal and informal archives remains somewhat undefined: ‘community archives: are these distant cousins, or orphaned waifs to be taken in, or plain imposters?’⁸³ Gray’s question is useful in identifying some of the positions taken by the professional sector in relation to community archives, and in assessing the reasons and motivations for providing support. The means by which professionals have drawn barriers between informal archives and the formal sector has been exemplified through the manner in which community archives are identified and labelled by professionals. However, this authoritative approach also extends to their methods of support, which are often contingent on certain factors, and involve the measurement of community archive activity against accepted criteria. Further analysis, will show that outreach activity has been used to reinforce authority and maintain the barriers that exist between independent and formal archives.

ii. The value of community archives

A renewed interest in heritage has recently become apparent in modern society, as noted by the French historian Pierre Nora, who observes a profound change in our relationship to the past, one aspect of which is a growing attachment to heritage linked to a sense of memory and identity.⁸⁴ This is reflected in the public sector: bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund in the UK have reiterated their commitment to supporting public access to the nation’s rich heritage, emphasising a knowledge and awareness of cultural heritage as an important aspect of societal development. Originating within local communities and inspired by the interests of committed individuals, independent archives therefore provide a key link to the past, facilitating a more personal connection between records and members of the public. As a result, they have an important part to play in wider heritage agendas aiming to raise the

⁸² Victor Gray, ‘Who’s that Knocking on Our Door?’: Archives, Outreach and Community’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 3.

⁸³ Victor Gray, ‘Archives and the Tribal Mind’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 27:2 (October 2006), p. 122.

⁸⁴ Pierre Nora, ‘Reasons for the current upsurge in memory’ in *Eurozine* (19 April 2002), p. 1. Available at: <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2002-04-19-nora-en.pdf> [accessed 20 June 2014]

profile of archives. The British archivist Gerry Slater goes so far as to place them at the very centre of the sector's identity:

Community archives are not merely a desirable facet of the wider picture that constitutes archives today, but rather they sit at the heart of what archives are and how they relate to individuals, community, and to modern society as a whole.⁸⁵

Similarly, praise for community archives has also been expressed on an institutional level: The National Archives has acknowledged the valuable work that is done by independent archives, and their contribution to safeguarding the nation's heritage. One TNA blog entry from 2013 states that 'these dedicated, community-owned archives preserve much that would otherwise have already been lost', thereby recognising the essential role which informal archiving activity plays in the overall archival endeavour.⁸⁶ This shows that community archives are seen as a worthwhile cause, as supporting them will not only benefit their development as archival organisations, but will also increase the cultural wealth of the nation.

However, structures are in place that may prevent independent community-led organisations from achieving recognition as 'official' archives. Most significant are eligibility criteria, which various national schemes and awards have enforced, even those that are aimed specifically at giving recognition to smaller archive services. For instance, *Your Family History Magazine* in the UK created the 'Archive of the Year' Award in 2010, with the aim of acknowledging the challenges faced by smaller archives in the financial climate. The winners of this award can enjoy greater credibility and an improved status within the sector; however, entries have been restricted 'to county or municipal record offices, local study centres, specialist and regional archives, and university or library manuscript collections'.⁸⁷ Due to the selection criteria, which include fully staffed search rooms and online access to digitized records, community-led archives were thus excluded from consideration for this award, even though readers and archive users may have nominated them due to other strengths, such as the helpful service provided by the organization. This suggests that value of archives is measured not by cultural or personal relevance to a community, but by the meeting of practical criteria.

⁸⁵ Gerry Slater, 'Confessions of an Archivist' in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:2 (2008), p. 144.

⁸⁶ Melinda Haunton, 'Documenting LGBT history across the UK', The National Archives Blog (22 February 2013). Available at: <<http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/blog/documenting-lgbt-history-across-the-uk/>> [accessed 20 June 2014]

⁸⁷ Nick Barratt, 'The Last Word: Archive of the Year Award' in *Your Family History Magazine*, Issue 12 (March 2011). Available at: <http://issuu.com/yourfamilyhistory/docs/archive_of_the_year_awards> [accessed 26 June 2014]

A further conclusion that may be drawn from examples such as the ‘Archive of the Year’ award is that, in addition to their lack of expertise, the limited resources of many community archives inhibit their ability to fully participate in the sector on the same level as other small collections-holding organisations, which may receive public funding. This disadvantage would therefore seem to be a good reason for the formal sector to provide support, such as advice about funding, in order to improve the services of community-based archive groups, which in turn will contribute to the overall archival mission of caring for the country’s collections. As a result, both professional archivists have considered outreach to be a chief responsibility of the formal sector. It is therefore recommended that, where appropriate, both national and local archival institutions provide assistance to community archives and enable them to access the resources that they are lacking.

iii. The scope of outreach

As shown by initiatives such as the ‘AskArchivists’ campaign, which invites the active participation of archive users, a number of projects have been implemented by the formal archive sector with the aim of making archival collections more accessible to a wider section of the public. This research also asks whether the same can be said for opening up the UK archives sector to non-expert organisations. A number of archivists and historians have expressed criticism of the narrow-mindedness of the formal sector, and their reluctance to diversify collections; for example, Ieuan Hopkins has asserted that the very existence of community archives is tangible evidence of how much material has been excluded from mainstream archival collections, and exposes the extent to which professional practice is responsible for this exclusion.⁸⁸ Therefore it has been deemed not only advisable but also essential that formal institutions contribute towards the sustainability of community archives in the form of outreach initiatives, in order to support the further pluralisation and democratisation of archival activity.

The results are relevant not only for community archives, but for the public as a whole: the willingness of professional archivists to fully recognise community archives as legitimate has been identified by Slater as a crucial aspect of the overall trend towards the democratisation of archiving activity. Slater notes that the potential for archiving to be fully democratic and open to all will be realised ‘in direct proportion’ to the commitment of resources to

⁸⁸ Ieuan Hopkins, ‘Places From Which to Speak’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 99.

community archives.⁸⁹ This shows how community archives are important to the wider agenda of promoting archives and heritage within society, and also emphasises the necessity for professionals to embrace independent and community-led archival endeavours. However, this research has found that the concerns of the professional sector regarding community archives are motivated by other factors, namely the development of standards which support the twin priorities of the sustainability of and access to community archives collections.⁹⁰

iv. Safeguarding access

In 2004 the Archives Task Force, specially appointed by the MLA to investigate the UK archives sector, published their report entitled *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*. This document contained the results of a comprehensive survey, carried out with the aim of producing an ‘in-depth analysis and review of the state of the UK’s unique and diverse archives’.⁹¹ An important outcome of this survey was the discovery and recognition of the extent of community archiving activity within the country; the official response was positive, with the Task Force declaring itself ‘convinced that such groups have much to offer’.⁹² The report also contains a number of recommendations for an action plan regarding independent archives; in line with their commitment to widen the public gateway to UK archives, the Task Force stated their full commitment to ‘the principle that the resources in Community Archive collections should be accessible to everyone’.⁹³ In addition to recognising their value, therefore, this report also demonstrates some of the concerns of the professional sector regarding community archives; namely, that public access to their collections may be compromised. In supporting community archives, professionals are not only contributing to their development, but also aiming to provide or safeguard access to those records that they fear may be compromised in terms of adequate preservation, or withheld from the public domain due to limited facilities.

Provision of access to collections is crucial for any archival organisation: as one manual for small archives states, ‘there is little point in keeping records unless they can be accessed by

⁸⁹ Slater, ‘Confessions of an Archivist’, p. 143.

⁹⁰ Community Archives and Heritage Group, ‘CAHG Constitution’ (June 2009). Available at: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CAHG_constitution1.doc> [accessed 29 June 2014]

⁹¹ MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 3.

⁹² MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 26.

⁹³ MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 43.

interested researchers'.⁹⁴ As a result, the autonomy of community archives has sometimes been perceived as a challenge to the central purpose of archivists to secure access to collections within the public domain. An example of the reservations expressed by the formal sector can be found in a 2002 report of the National Council on Archives (NCA):

Recent years have seen a growing desire by Black communities in Britain to preserve their culture...for some, these matters are so important that they want to create showcases for their heritage distinct from the archives of the rest of the people in Britain.⁹⁵

The stance of the NCA can be interpreted as somewhat defensive, implying that rather than seeking to understand the reasons for which minority communities may seek to preserve their heritage autonomously, the professional archives sector simply perceives an unwillingness from community archives to operate with or alongside other archive services in the UK. Securing access to these collections is a central aim of professional archive services, as identified by this research, in supporting community archives. As a result, the approach of outreach is focused on this purpose, and does not always take into consideration the individual priorities or circumstances of each community group, and may not be suited to their needs. On the other hand, the offer of support is also conditional upon the ability or aspiration of a community group to provide access to its collections. For example, the Regional Archives Council for the East of England stated its commitment to support smaller archives-holding organisations 'provided their holdings can be accessed'.⁹⁶ Therefore, organisations holding collections solely for their own use are disqualified from this support.

A further example of the importance of securing access to community-based collections can be found on a regional level: in a collaborative project, the County Record Offices of Cheshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire produced a short guide, with the aim of providing guidance to those involved in building a community archive collection. These record offices are 'keen to provide this support to ensure the long-term preservation of and access to the nation's history'.⁹⁷ Moreover, the suggestion is made that, if providing in-house access is a problem, community archives may wish to consider transferring custody of

⁹⁴ National Archives of Australia, *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia: 2007), p. 39.

⁹⁵ The National Council on Archives, *Changing the Future of our Past* (Sheffield: NCA, 2002), p. 9.

⁹⁶ Gordon Chancellor, *Archives in the East of England: Final Report on East of England Archive Mapping Project 2003-4* (Bury St. Edmunds: EEMLAC, 2003), p. 4.

⁹⁷ Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, *Research Guide: Community Archives*, p. 2. Available at: <<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/Community%20Archives%20Research%20Guide.pdf>> [accessed 29 June 2014]

their collections to the local record office.⁹⁸ These examples show that, in providing guidance and offering support, formal archive services are concerned not only with the sustainability of the organisation, but for the overall care of community archive collections. As a result, a central aspect of the guidance that is offered by professionals is the desire to raise the level of practice of community-led archives to their own approved standards of preservation.

v. A universal standard for archives

According to the Community Archives Landscape Research Report, produced on behalf of the MLA, the meeting of accepted standards for archival practice is a central issue identified by professionals who wish to engage with community archives:

The need for standards, for example in cataloguing and legal issues...is key for many of the professionals wishing to work in partnership with community archives. This “next level” awareness may not initially be shared by people working in community groups without some education, encouragement or incentive from the formal archive sector.⁹⁹

This limited awareness is a primary reason why professionals have expressed concern about the ability of independent archiving groups to provide appropriate custody for records. Groups who do not observe the standards accepted by the profession are seen to be deficient in their practice, and unable to secure the long-term preservation of their collections. For instance, a clearly stated collections policy is seen as an essential element of best practice;¹⁰⁰ however, it has been observed that the preservation policies of community archives are often undefined, and many do not have one at all. Guiding independent archival organisations in best practice is therefore a priority for the professional sector.

Furthermore, research suggests that outreach is not just about proving the superiority of the sector to non-professional archivists, but also about bolstering the position of the archives profession within the wider heritage sector. Flinn has identified outreach as key strategy for formal archives services to maintain their current professional standing, and to prove their own continued value to the heritage sector:

In order to retain and enhance their status as trusted sites of information and memory, archives must justify their existence by working with others and offering their expertise in support of independent activity, helping to sustain different archival

⁹⁸ Worcestershire Archive Service, *Research Guide: Community Archives*, p. 12.

⁹⁹ Cultural Consulting Network, ‘Community Archives Landscape Research’, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation: Standard May 2013* (Richmond: TNA, 2013), p. 8.

initiatives.¹⁰¹

Offering expertise is thus considered to be a way in which the archives sector can reinforce the value of its service to society. An aim of the new heritage agenda is achieve the recognition of archives within the public heritage sector on equal terms with their partner domains of museums and libraries. Moreover, as Crooke has also suggested, links with ‘community’ promotes positive regard within the heritage sector, implying connections with alternative or unsung histories and voices.¹⁰² Therefore, by including community archives within their agenda, the formal sector can make itself even more relevant to the public. This objective is stated within one of the sector’s own publications: *Archives for the 21st Century* sets out the British government’s vision for the archives sector, including their ambition to ‘enhance the status and role of archives within communities, providing social benefits and opening up new ways in which the resources of archives are made available’.¹⁰³

vi. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that although professionals recognize the value of community archives, and also acknowledge the need to provide support, there are various conditions and criteria that must be met in order for community archives to be eligible. In some respect, this is due to a desire to ensure the best quality of care for the collections held by independent groups, including a commitment to provide access. However, it can also be interpreted as the intention to maintain boundaries between the professional and the amateur archivist.¹⁰⁴ As a result, community archives are prevented from achieving the same status within the sector as other small archives.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Flinn, ‘Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions’ in *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7:2 (2011), p. 15.

¹⁰² Elizabeth Crooke, ‘An exploration of the Connections among Museums, Community and Heritage’ in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 422.

¹⁰³ HM Government, *Archives for the 21st Century* (HM Government: 2009), p. 19, item 4.13.

¹⁰⁴ Flinn, ‘Activism’, p. 16.

CHAPTER 5. 'PATHWAYS TO LEARNING'

i. Introduction

This chapter will advance the argument made in the previous chapter that outreach initiatives aimed at providing support to community archives are underpinned by a form of authorised heritage discourse, and therefore also serve to reinforce the authority of the archives profession. Secondary to establishing a wider gateway to archives, a key aim of outreach for the professional sector is to create 'pathways to learning', a term used by the NCA.¹⁰⁵ For the purposes of the current study, this objective has been interpreted as the instruction of all non-professional archivists, including independent archiving groups, in generally accepted principles and practice, which reflects the assumption that there is a single correct standard to adhere to. Using examples from the source material, this chapter will therefore show how these methods of opening up archives to non-professionals are based on propagating the values and standards of the established sector. It will then consider the effects of this, and examine some of the problems that have occurred as a result of this almost exclusively top-down approach.

ii. The authorised discourse of outreach

As Smith has aptly stated, 'attempts at inclusion into heritage programmes are expressed in assimilatory terms'.¹⁰⁶ In other words, heritage programmes are not adapted to be more inclusive of diverse values; instead, those outside of the professional sector are required to conform to its framework of standards in order to participate. This trend can clearly be identified in the sources examined throughout this research; rather than projects that are tailor-made to suit the circumstances of each community archive, and entail a substantial level of flexibility on the part of professionals, the majority of outreach initiatives are implemented with the aim of raising the level of community archive activity to meet accepted standards. The result is that existing professional values are safeguarded, which does not allow for the full and equal participation of community archive groups, as there is no potential for alteration or adaptation of standards according to the diverse priorities and circumstances of different organisations. The maintenance of a single code of practice

¹⁰⁵ The National Council on Archives, *Changing the Future of Our Past* (Sheffield: NCA, 2002), p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 44.

guarantees the continued superior authority of the professional sector, which oversees the enforcement of this code.

A primary charter or code of practice of specific relevance to the archival profession is the Code of Ethics, adopted by the International Council on Archives in 1996. The authority and status of such documents not only guides policy and practice, but also ‘establishes and maintains a community of expertise’ through commitment to its principles.¹⁰⁷ According to this document, all new members of the archival profession should be introduced to accepted standards of conduct, so as to ensure the protection of the integrity of archival material.¹⁰⁸ It is therefore considered to be a responsibility of the professional sector to share its knowledge with others, in order to uphold universal best practice. As the lead institution of the UK archives sector, The National Archives is ideally placed to perform this instructive role, and a clear example of their aims to do so can be found in their engagement policy. The Public Engagement team has been specially created for the purpose of sustaining the ‘regulatory role’ of TNA, and describes their mission statement as such: ‘to develop a strategic and proactive approach to sector development through advice, advocacy, innovation, and sharing best practice’.¹⁰⁹ In order to ensure the maintenance and development of the professional nature of the archives sector, it is desirable that the values underpinning this authority are observed by all; as Thomassen has shown, the status of a profession is dependent upon the degree to which it is capable of imposing its own definitions, standards and values to both its members and to society as a whole.¹¹⁰

iii. A shared understanding of standards

The ICA Code of Ethics also states that ‘archivists must act in accordance with generally accepted principles and practice’.¹¹¹ For instance, the adoption of a collections policy is considered to be essential for an archive of any size, in order to define a sense of purpose. However, as discussed previously, community archives develop with hugely different aims and do not all intend to operate in the same way as public-funded institutions. The adherence

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, pp. 92-3.

¹⁰⁸ International Council on Archives, *Code of Ethics* (1996), Introduction, article A.

¹⁰⁹ Archives and Records Association, ‘Public Engagement Team at TNA takes shape’ (7 September 2012). Available at: <<http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/public-engagement-team-at-tna-takes-shape.html>> [accessed 29 June 2014]

¹¹⁰ Theo Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power – On the independence and autonomy of archival science’ in *Arhivski vjesnik* 42 (1999), p. 155.

¹¹¹ ICA, *Code of Ethics*, Code, item 2.

to a single notion of best practice that should be adopted by all archives does not take this into consideration, and fixes the interpretation of heritage practice according to normative standards. For example, the Regional Archives Council of the East Midlands aims to ‘support archives to develop a shared understanding of learning outcomes and standards’ and to ‘advocate that all of the region’s archival accommodation meets recognised standards’, such as the General International Standard of Archival Description adopted by the ICA.¹¹² By consequence, the priorities and values of community archives are relegated to a subordinate level of importance. In this way, instructing community groups about best practice can also be seen as a means of keeping them in the role of passive audience; as Smith describes, ‘excluded groups are invited to ‘learn, ‘share’ or ‘become educated’ about authorised heritage values and meanings’.¹¹³ Community archives are invited to participate in this instructive activity and are encouraged to adopt professional standards; however, they are not welcomed as active participants within the sector, as their own individual methods of practice are not recognised as fully legitimate.

In addition to examples from the UK, outreach programmes from other countries and contexts have also been identified during this research. In 2007 the National Archives of Australia published a booklet entitled *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives*, the purpose of which is stated as such:

This guide provides practical advice on how to establish and maintain a small community archives. It will also help organisations decide whether they have the resources to commit, on an ongoing basis, to such a project.¹¹⁴

This example demonstrates that sustainability, alongside access, is a key objective of professional outreach. The first item on the ICA Code of Ethics identifies the primary duty of archivists as ‘to maintain the integrity of the records in their care and custody’.¹¹⁵ Thus, if a repository or organisation cannot provide appropriate care for their collections, they are not fulfilling this most important responsibility. This issue has been raised previously; studying the sustainability of community archives in New Zealand, Joanna Newman based her research on the premise that, if the mission or role of an organisation is to preserve and make accessible archival records, it should have in place all the factors necessary to ensure that this

¹¹² East Midlands Regional Archives Council, *East Midlands Archives: A Regional Vision, 2005-2008* (Leicester: EMRAC, 2005), p. 4 (2.1).

¹¹³ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 44.

¹¹⁴ National Archives of Australia, *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia: 2007), p. 5.

¹¹⁵ ICA, *Code of Ethics*, Code, item 1.

responsibility can be met.¹¹⁶ The above example suggests that this is considered by the formal archives sector to be a prerequisite for the successful execution of an archives project, and outreach is therefore aimed at ensuring this is fully understood. The Community Archives landscape research project in the UK, conducted in 2008 on behalf of MLA, also stresses that the enthusiasm of independent groups is valuable, but may not be sustainable due to the constantly changing circumstances of members; on the other hand, the ‘relative stability of the more traditional archives’ is considered to be a situation that community archives would benefit from, and so community archives are advised to emulate best practice as far as possible.¹¹⁷

Targeted at non-professionals, the Australian guide is purposefully designed to enable community archivists to gain the basic knowledge required to operate according to established understandings of best practice. Another example relevant to this discussion is a longer guide published by the Society of American Archivists in 2012. *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository* ‘offers guidance on how to handle common work demands while promoting archives best practice’.¹¹⁸ As the title suggests, this publication is aimed at individuals working in small institutions with few staff and limited resources. In providing practical advice and sharing expertise, *The Lone Arranger* also claims to offer ‘the opportunity to connect to the broader community of professional archivists’. The following section will consider the extent to which outreach initiatives have created stronger links between community-led archives and the wider archival community.

iv. Connections to the professional community

While a mutual observation of standards and shared code of practice may help to establish stronger links between community archive groups and the formal archives sector, it does not guarantee entrance to the professional community. As Thomassen has shown, professional archivists are able to dominate the field of archival practice due to the specific body of knowledge that underpins their work and uniquely identifies the profession.¹¹⁹ Although the guidebooks discussed above share this knowledge, it is to a limited extent, and in very basic

¹¹⁶ Joanna Newman, ‘Sustaining Community Archives’ (Unpublished MA thesis: Victoria University of Wellington, 2010), p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Cultural Consulting Network, *Community Archives Landscape Research: A report for MLA and CADG* (June 2008), p. 24.

¹¹⁸ The Society of American Archivists, Online Bookstore, ‘The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository’ (2012). Available at: <<http://saa.archivists.org/store/the-lone-arranger-succeeding-in-a-small-repository/2526/>> [accessed 20 June 2014]

¹¹⁹ Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power’, p. 153.

terms. *Keep it for the future!* exemplifies this restriction of expert knowledge to the professional community with the disclaimer that, ‘archivists have a language all their own, and this book explains the terminology and presents in plain English principles to establish and manage an archives’.¹²⁰ Therefore, a superior understanding of these terms and principles creates an exclusive archival community, and in communicating this expertise with others in ‘plain English’ the non-expert receptive role of the reader is reinforced. Rather than supporting an open dialogue, utilising language that is simple and authoritative does not invite response and thus inhibits the questioning or challenging of this expertise.¹²¹

Therefore, through controlled sharing of knowledge, professionals are thus able to regulate the roles performed by other, non-professional, bodies. Smith contends that AHD not only establishes a sense of professional community identity, but also defines the identity of other social actors and mediates the relations between them.¹²² An example of this can be found in advice to the sector provided by TNA on ‘Developing Your Audience’, which includes a section dedicated to working with Community Groups. In such cooperative initiatives, it is seen as important that boundaries are defined; a crucial aspect of community engagement is to establish clear roles for both parties, as shown by the following recommendations:

- Ensure that there are clear parameters and that both sides define responsibilities.
- Communicate regularly and make information easily accessible. Be clear about how community groups are involved and what role they play.¹²³

These elements of the engagement strategy are of particular significance in the context of this discussion. It is apparent that audience development and participation must be managed and delivered on the terms of the formal organisation, rather than according to an agenda mutually agreed upon by both parties. Identifying ‘clear parameters’ and clarifying the role that should be played by community groups is of central importance, and reflects the objective of the professional sector to strengthen and enhance their expertise and influence, and also delimit entrance to the profession. By controlling the roles played by non-professionals, the sector is able to ensure that its own expert role is maintained, and that the value of its professional service is upheld.

¹²⁰ National Archives of Australia, *Keep it for the future!*, outside back cover information.

¹²¹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 103.

¹²² Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 43.

¹²³ The National Archives, ‘Developing your Audience: Community Engagement’. Available at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/community-engagement.htm> [accessed 20 June 2014]

A further example of the regulation of the role of non-professionals can also be found in the Australian manual created for community archives, which states that:

If volunteers are used, they should be trained by experienced staff or volunteers. It is useful to have a volunteer policy that sets out the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, the training they are required to undertake, and how the volunteers will be recognised.¹²⁴

Like the engagement policy of TNA, the above advice shows the level of importance attributed by the professional sector to regulating and managing the participation of non-expert individuals or groups. Smith emphasises this point using the example of the Burra Charter, the most important professional code of conduct for the Australian heritage sector.¹²⁵ This document states that ‘competent direction and supervision [of volunteers] should be maintained at all stages’, which clearly restricts autonomy and prevents equal participation in collaborative projects.¹²⁶ Furthermore, this example supports Smith’s argument that non-expertise is considered as an additional aspect of archives care that must be managed, thereby suggesting that, without guidance, volunteers and community-led archives are not themselves competent of undertaking archives management to approved standards.¹²⁷ As highlighted by the UK Community Archives Landscape Research Report of 2008, volunteers may have only a basic understanding of best practice, and therefore ‘don’t know what they don’t know’.¹²⁸

In this way, competency is measured and defined according to criteria, and is another means by which the authority of the profession is safeguarded. For instance, a glossary of terms produced by TNA relating to approved standards for archives describes a competent individual as ‘someone who has the necessary and sufficient training, knowledge, experience, expertise, skills, and/or other qualities to complete their allotted task safely and effectively’.¹²⁹ This definition implies that only those with the appropriate training are considered to be capable of caring for archival collections, an idea that is embedded within the authorised heritage discourse.¹³⁰ The application of these standards to archives, regardless of type or status, also reflects a prioritisation of skill level and quality of practice over concerns about the suitability of professional standards to community archiving. However,

¹²⁴ National Archives of Australia, *Keep it for the future!*, p. 45.

¹²⁵ Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell, ‘The Utility of Discourse Analysis to Heritage Studies: The Burra Charter and Social Inclusion’ in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12:4 (July 2006), p. 341.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 105.

¹²⁷ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 106

¹²⁸ Cultural Consulting Network, *Community Archives Landscape Research*, p. 24.

¹²⁹ The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation Glossary* (Richmond: TNA, March 2013).

¹³⁰ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 29.

rather than raise competency, working to mainstream standards can actually inhibit community archive activity, as the following example will show.

v. The application of professional standards in a voluntary context

This research has found that implementing professional standards in the work of community archives can in fact be detrimental to their work. One case that proved to be unsustainable is the Commanet software, launched in 2000, and designed to enable community groups to create and present local history archives in a digital format and manage their collections online. However, Commanet went out of business in 2009, and the website content it managed became unavailable; inevitably, this problematized the ability of some participating community archives to provide digital access to their collections. These concerns were voiced by users of an online forum for community archives, and exemplify problems encountered as a result of subscribing to professional standards. For instance, a member of the Leeds Children's Theatre Archive Group commented in 2011:

Due to Commanet going out of business, guests/visitors no longer have online access to our archive via the web. Using services and software that is 'specialist' leaves users vulnerable to such events, and for small, unfunded archives it's an expensive risk.¹³¹

This user identifies some important issues: the imposition of professional standards on an organisation without the appropriate resources or infrastructure leaves them dependent on a parent institution or organisation, and may ultimately imperil the sustainability of their collections. In this way, the observation of 'specialist' practice is not always sustainable, and has shown to be counter-productive to achieving the standards that outreach is designed to uphold; in contrast to concerns that care of archives by non-experts limits access, attempts to abide by professional standards of practice may in fact reduce access altogether.

On the other hand, other initiatives have proved to be more successful than the Commanet software. In 2006 *CommunitySites* was launched, which specialises in providing easy-to-use cataloguing software for community archives. A team of professionals provide some training and offer guidance, but the use of the software requires minimal support, which is more in line with the aims of community archive groups. One user provided the following feedback:

It's nice to know that *CommunitySites* is there in the background, but if we needed too much support it would be counter-productive; we want to be independent.¹³²

¹³¹ Community Archives and Heritage Group, Online Forum, 'Problems as a result of Commanet going out of business'. Available at: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/page_id_1093_path_0p6p76p.aspx> [accessed 16 May 2014]

This statement supports the argument that autonomy is highly valued by community archives, and that engaging in mainstream practice can, in some cases, inhibit their ability to achieve their own aims. In this way, some forms of outreach can be perceived as the ‘inappropriate imposition’ of professional standards in an independent context.¹³³

vi. Conclusion

The aims of instructional outreach are often stated to be advising community archives on best practice, which implies that, if these levels of practice are attained, community archives may be recognised alongside other approved archive services. However, due to other criteria and methods of recognition, community archives remain outside the walls of the established sector. Moreover, what is understood as best practice is defined exclusively according to the standards and resources of the formal sector, and is not always best suited to the needs of smaller archives. This shows that outreach is not always appropriate for community archives, and the imitation of professional standards without the necessary resources or infrastructure can be counter-productive. The following chapter examines how such infrastructures and networks have been developed in order to support the development of community archives.

¹³² Judy Faraday, ‘John Lewis Partnership Archive’. Testimonials, *CommunitySites* (11 April 2008). Available at: <http://www.communitysites.co.uk/page_id_99_path_0p62p.aspx> [accessed 20 June 2014]

¹³³ Terry Cook, ‘Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms’ in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), p. 112.

CHAPTER 6. 'CREATING PARTNERSHIPS'

i. Introduction

Recommendations for a more collaborative culture within the heritage sector can be identified as a primary feature of the reports and policy examined within the scope of this research. This encompasses all bodies within the archives, museums and library sectors, and is also directed at establishing stronger links between individual archival services, in order to develop a stable, coherent archive network. Significantly, community archives are considered to be an important part of this cooperation, and professionals have voiced the need to develop partnerships between different cultural institutions and community groups.¹³⁴ Therefore, in addition to the instructive role played by the formal archives sector, professional agencies have also identified the facilitation of networking to be another key element of outreach.¹³⁵ In contrast to the previous chapter, which focused on the delivery of information, this chapter will interrogate the view expressed by the professional sector that engagement with community groups should be viewed as a partnership.¹³⁶ The argument to be advanced in this chapter is that this networking element of outreach, whilst establishing connections, does not dematerialise the barriers between formal and informal archiving.

ii. Cross-sectoral cooperation: Museums, Libraries and Archives

The creation of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 2000 symbolised the British government's vision of a more cooperative heritage sector for the 21st century. Chief amongst the benefits identified for cross-sectoral collaboration are improved efficiency and the more effective and economical delivery of heritage services.¹³⁷ Moreover, greater cooperation between heritage organisations would better enable different bodies within the sector to share their skills and expertise and improve the quality of services, which is considered to be an important aspect of professional development; as stated in the ICA Code of Ethics, 'archivists should promote the preservation and use of the world's documentary heritage, through working cooperatively with the members of their own and other professions'.¹³⁸ The move towards a national policy for records preservation began before the

¹³⁴ National Council on Archives, *Changing the Future of our Past* (Sheffield: NCA, 2002), p. 26.

¹³⁵ Jura Consultants, *Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda* (2009), pp. 37-8.

¹³⁶ Jura Consultants, *Sustainable Communities Agenda*, p. 39.

¹³⁷ UK Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, *Government Policy on Archives* (December 1999), p. 8 (6.2).

¹³⁸ ICA, *Code of Ethics* (1996), Code, item 10.

creation of the MLA; for instance, Paul Eden and John Feather conducted a study in 1996 with the aim of producing guidelines on good practice in preservation management in libraries and archives. In the course of their research, they identified many more areas of common interest and concern than differences between librarians and archivists.¹³⁹ Moreover, a report released by the Public Records Office (now TNA) in 2001 regarding cross-sector working documented the ‘willingness and ability of archivists to develop constructive partnerships...to achieve common goals and objectives’.¹⁴⁰ This accepted commonality between the concerns of librarian and archivist carries implications for an increased flexibility of these professional roles. In the context of this discussion, one can therefore consider whether the same can be said for professional and community archivists: do they share sufficient common goals and objectives for the barriers between these, somewhat oppositional, identities to be removed?

A further important development that has occurred as result of greater cooperation within the heritage sector is the increased recognition of cross-domain archival repositories; a survey conducted in the East of England found that up to 30% of the region’s archival material was actually held in museums or libraries.¹⁴¹ The sector determined that these collections should still be recognised within the total archival holdings of the region, and so greater cooperation between institutions is necessary in order to make this material accessible.¹⁴² This desire to identify all archival collections, even those existing ‘outside the walls’ of the formal archives sector, has important implications for community archives, and for the material held in their collections. Firstly, the need to ensure interoperability implies a greater willingness to adapt practice to suit the needs of both domains. Secondly, this increased openness towards including so-called ‘wild’ archival collections suggests that community archives could also be accommodated within the sector. Indeed, part of the government’s vision was to ‘promote close cooperation and effective partnership with all relevant bodies, including private organisations and individuals’,¹⁴³ which could be seen to include community archives. Significantly, this development reflects the notion that boundaries between cultural institutions are ‘artificial’, and should be removed in order to improve access to the country’s

¹³⁹ Paul Eden and John Feather, ‘Preservation in libraries and archives in the UK: towards a national policy’ in *Library Review* 45:8 (1996), p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Public Record Office, *Our Shared Past: Phase Two: Developing 21st Century Archives Services* (Richmond: Public Record Office, 2001), p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Gordon Chancellor, *Archives in the East of England: Final Report on East of England Archive Mapping Project 2003-4* (Bury St. Edmunds: EEMLAC, 2003), p. 8.

¹⁴² Chancellor, *Archives in the East of England*, p. 10.

¹⁴³ UK Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, *Government Policy on Archives* (December 1999), p. 7 (4.2.7).

heritage.¹⁴⁴ This suggests that those barriers between independent community archives and professional archive services may also be removed, and effective partnerships created through outreach.

iii. Establishing a dialogue

In contrast to the one-directional form of outreach in providing instruction to community archives, the creation of partnerships implies a reciprocal and dialogic form of engagement. As the Archives Task Force declared in its 2004 report,

There is much that the professional archival community can give in terms of knowledge and understanding and much that can be gained through partnerships between community archives and the established archive domain.¹⁴⁵

An important part of outreach policy is to increase communication between community archives and other archives services. In addition to promoting best practice, this is considered important for enriching archive services and increasing the potential for interoperability and the integration of resources.

One such example of a supportive infrastructure for networking is a project initiated by the MLA in 2008, with the aim of recording the impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. ‘The People’s Record’ sponsored a number of partnership projects and saw museums, libraries and archives around the UK supporting community groups to collect and create material related to the Games, the results of which are showcased online. These projects were intended as a means for community archives to contribute to the recording of the ‘full Games story’.¹⁴⁶ The emphasis on recording the ‘full’ story indicates recognition of the ability of community archives to capture material that otherwise would have been lost. These projects were delivered by a lead organisation (usually a professional heritage institution) and involved the participation of community groups or individuals. For example, a series of workshops at Hackney Museum and Hackney Archives in East London were designed to enable the Asian Women Network to create a community archive, ‘with input from Hackney’s Principal Archivist’.¹⁴⁷ Although this was a collaborative effort, there is still

¹⁴⁴ NCA, *Changing the Future of Our Past*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ MLA, *Report of the Archives Task Force*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ ‘The People’s Record: Recording the impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games’. Available at: <<http://www.peoplesrecord.org.uk/about>> [accessed 26 June 2014]

¹⁴⁷ Arts Council England, ‘People’s Record – 2012 Projects’. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/xls/Peoples_Record_2012_projects.xlsx> [accessed 9 May 2014]

a clear instructional aspect, with sessions orchestrated by a professional organisation. This networking approach still features evidence of the expert and volunteer relationship identified in the previous chapter, with the role and input of volunteers being managed by professionals.

A further objective of The People's Record was to enable cooperation between community groups, linking their work through the showcasing of projects on the website. Brokering links between community archives has also been identified as important, evidence of which can be found on The National Archives' website. TNA offers the following recommendation regarding the development of archive services:

Think about what you can offer to community groups to support their work. Do you have space or other resources that they can use? Can you help them to organise events and publicise their work? Can you facilitate networking between different groups? ¹⁴⁸

This reflects a more indirect form of outreach, as groups are encouraged to support one another, allowing them to develop according to shared priorities. In addition to sharing their professional expertise, formal archive services are thus encouraged to create new networks and facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge between community groups.

iv. Creating a 'Community Archive' community

The clearest example of the facilitation of peer networking is the Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG), launched in 2006 as the Community Archives Development Group. As a Special Interest Group of the ARA since 2012, the CAHG is an example of top-down orchestrated engagement.¹⁴⁹ This is reflected in the composition of the executive committee, which includes a number of individuals with an education and professional background related to archiving; Andrew Flinn, Reader in Archival Studies and Director of the Archives and Records programme at University College London, is the current vice-chair. However, a minority of members are also representative of grass roots community archiving activity, and possess no professional archival background. The CAHG can therefore be seen as an example of collaboration between independent archives and the mainstream heritage sector. Indeed, this is one of the primary aims of the group; CAHG was intended specifically for the purpose of supporting and promoting community archives in the UK and Ireland, as well as bringing together bodies and organisations concerned with community archives.

¹⁴⁸ The National Archives, 'Community Engagement'. Available at: <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/community-engagement.htm>> [accessed 20 June 2014]

¹⁴⁹ Jura Consultants, *Sustainable Communities Agenda*, p. 38, item 5.3.2.

The approach of this organisation is therefore dialogic as well as instructive: facilities provided by the website include various resources offering advice on funding applications, in addition to a participatory forum, allowing members to share views and information. This commitment to developing equitable partnerships is reflected in their vision statement:

Acting as a point of contact between community archive activists and other community development practitioners and cultural heritage professionals to enable, where appropriate, mutually beneficial relationships.¹⁵⁰

Without conducting full case studies, which are outside the scope of this research, it is not possible to make a fully informed judgement about the extent to which the relationships between parties are mutually beneficial. However, some observations can be made about whether the needs and priorities of community archives are taken into account. One way to approach this issue is through examining the results of a survey conducted by the CAHG in 2007 at their annual summer conference. This survey asked the question, ‘What support do Community Archives need?’ and was answered jointly by both professional and community archivist members of the group. The answers were ranked in order of priority, and therefore provide a helpful picture of the nature of engagement with the formal sector that is considered most appropriate or beneficial by both parties. Out of the top ten needs that were expressed, ‘Developing relationships with local institutions’ is ranked as seventh, but ‘Advice and assistance with storage’ is number one.¹⁵¹ This suggests that community archives seek practical advice, but do not want to be shepherded; as Terry Cook has commented, the developing relationship between community archives and the mainstream sector should not be based upon professionals ‘jumping to the rescue’, but should be about each party learning from the traditions of the other.¹⁵² It is hard to establish how exactly these needs have been met, but the redirected approach from instruction to more impartial facilitation somewhat reflects this change in prioritisation. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Although this research has aimed to present outreach from the perspective of the formal sector, it is also relevant to include a brief consideration of the incentives for independent groups to participate in this engagement. The primary benefit for community archives, as

¹⁵⁰ Community Archives and Heritage Group, ‘CAHG Vision Statement’ (March 2011). Available at: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CAHG_Vision_1.doc> [accessed 20 June 2014]

¹⁵¹ Jack Latimer and Vic Gray, ‘What support do community archives need? Summary of findings from a survey in 2007’ (15 March 2008). Available at: <<http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/what-support-do-community-archives-need>> [accessed 20 June 2014]

¹⁵² Cook, ‘Four shifting archival paradigms’, p. 115.

identified by the professionals, is attaining greater credibility; for example, included in the Archive Service Accreditation Eligibility Criteria of TNA is the advice that, for organisations who do not have qualified staff managing their collections, eligibility can be achieved if some form of professional archival advice and support is obtained.¹⁵³ Therefore, the benefit of receiving support from professionals is shown to be the receipt of further recognition from the formal sector. However, as research by Flinn and Stevens has shown, although a commitment to complete autonomy is not universal among community archives, neither is a desire for greater recognition from or interaction with the mainstream sector.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, recognition from the sector does not equate to recognition *within* the sector. In 2011 the first ‘Community Archive and Heritage Awards’ were presented by the CAHG. These awards were created as a means of ‘celebrating the contribution of community archives within the archive sector and to promote and share good practice in community archives’.¹⁵⁵ However, rather than recognising the work of community archives within the sector, it seems that this celebration maintains the separation of independent archives from the formal sector, as this specially created award emphasises their status as a specialist group, not eligible for consideration of other, more mainstream awards.

v. Continued separation from the formal sector

In this way, the facilitation of networking also encourages the continued separation of community archives from the mainstream sector. Partnerships between formal and informal archive groups, while building connections, also emphasise the differences. Moreover, as a form of outreach, peer networking arguably defines community archives as a separate group that is not recognised as a ‘peer’ of the formal sector. The status of CAHG as a special interest group of the ARA also indicates that community archives are seen as external to the mainstream archives agenda, requiring specialist representation. Other structures reflecting a lack of flexibility are also in place, prohibiting community archives from reaching the same level of recognition as other small archives. For example, national league tables have been created for local record offices, which promote smaller archives within the sector; in 2011 Northallerton County Record Office was voted best in the North and received a four-star

¹⁵³ The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation Eligibility Criteria* (Richmond: TNA, 2013), p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Flinn and Stevens, ‘Telling our own story’, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ ARA, ‘Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG)’ (last modified 5 February 2014). Available at: <http://www.archives.org.uk/si-cahg/community-archives-a-heritage-group-cahg.html> [accessed 20 June 2014]

rating by TNA.¹⁵⁶ Such awards mean that awareness of smaller archives is raised, but community archives remain somewhat unknown, as they often do not meet the criteria required for inclusion in such league tables.

It is also possible to demonstrate how other networking initiatives have excluded or disqualified community archives. First and foremost, this research has found that community archives have frequently been omitted from surveys of the sector. From 2003-2004 the Regional Archives Council of the East of England conducted an archives mapping project as the first phase in the process of creating an archive network for the region. However, the final report states that independent archiving activity could not be accommodated within the criteria used for the survey: 'we made no attempt in this study to identify community archives which, when we do, will probably require a fifth level of classification'.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, the region's film archives, also incompatible with 'traditional' concepts of an archive, were happily included. Similarly, the online Data Archive, which has no public facilities in the usual sense and is thus almost impossible to accommodate in existing classifications, was nevertheless judged to be 'an archive of the highest importance by all other criteria', and was included in the survey.¹⁵⁸ This would appear to indicate a double standard, as criteria is adapted to accommodate other examples of non-traditional archives, whereas community archives remain excluded, preventing them from taking a place alongside other archive services.

vi. Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to show how the formal archives sector has endeavoured to encourage and support networking amongst archival organisations, including community archives. One method identified by the research is to broker collaborative partnerships between professional and informal archives, as demonstrated by the People's Record project. It has been argued that, although they are in many cases beneficial, such partnerships are also strongly coloured by the values underpinned by AHD. A primary aim of networking is to facilitate learning and the sharing of professional knowledge; therefore partnerships often function on the basis of an instructor – learner relationship, and so the dynamic between expert and non-expert is

¹⁵⁶ Ashley Barnard, 'China takes lessons from North Yorkshire in how to preserve archives' in *The Northern Echo* (30 October 2013). Available at: <<http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/10772944.print/>> [accessed 20 May 2014]

¹⁵⁷ Chancellor, 'Archives in the East of England', p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Chancellor, 'Archives in the East of England', p. 8.

maintained. Moreover, research shows that community archives have also been excluded from some networking initiatives on the basis of their failure to meet certain criteria. In encouraging commonality of practice, determined according to established values, developing networks for archives can thus be seen to exacerbate the separation of community archives from the formal sector.

CHAPTER 7. 'STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY'¹⁵⁹

i. Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 have illustrated the ways in which a professional archival role is created and maintained through the possession of expert knowledge. In sharing this knowledge with community archives through instructive outreach initiatives and the creation of supportive partnerships, the professional identity is reinforced, and the binary between expert and non-expert is maintained. This chapter will consider a different, more indirect approach of outreach, which is more supportive of the continued organic and interest-led development of community archives according to their local circumstances and priorities. Following the previous chapter's discussion of networking initiatives, which can be seen as an effort to create commonality of practice, this chapter will examine how diversity within the archives sector has been encouraged. It will also consider how professionals have regarded community archives as capable of enriching the (already) varied provision of archive services and supporting the collective memory of Britain. The question is raised over whether authorized heritage values may be undermined by outreach, as dominant discourses are challenged by the increasing diversity of practice within the established archives sector.

ii. 'Our shared past': the memory of society

In a 2001 mapping project convened by the Public Records Office (now TNA), the stated vision for British archives in the 21st century included 'affirming the value of archives as "the memory of society"', with public, private and organizational archives all having their place in the "nation's archival heritage"¹⁶⁰. However, as previous chapters have shown, the place of each type of archive has been somewhat unequal; as a recent 'discovery' on the UK's archival landscape, community archives remain somewhat excluded; indeed, Gray has commented on the lack of a detailed map for the community archives 'landscape', which implies that they are considered by professionals to exist somewhere separate from the established plan of archive services.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 65.

¹⁶⁰ Public Record Office, *Our Shared Past: Phase Two: Developing 21st Century Archives Services* (Richmond: Public Record Office, 2001), p. 43.

¹⁶¹ Victor Gray, 'Who's that Knocking on Our Door?': Archives, Outreach and Community' in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 3.

On the other hand, more recent developments indicate an increased awareness of the advantageous potential for these independent and uncharted archives to contribute to the UK heritage base. The results of the current research suggest that there has recently been greater recognition and appreciation of the value of independent and local contributions to archiving and, more importantly, of the necessity for these groups to work to their own priorities, rather than having their actions determined by an overarching policy of inter-archive cooperation. For example, a 2009 vision statement for archives states that ‘collaborative culture should arise out of local need’ and should not be imposed.¹⁶² This suggests that the formal sector considers greater diversity of archival provision, rather than commonality of practice, to be the preferred way of developing the country’s archives, and reflects a more democratic approach by allowing local priorities to influence strategy. A further report published by MLA, also in 2009, identifies the benefits that community archive activity can offer to older people, such as supporting technology literacy, and recognises that community archives have a ‘growing role’ in the heritage sector.¹⁶³

Rather than embodying an authorized heritage that is defined by the knowledge and opinions of experts, the idea of a shared ‘memory of society’ implies that archives, here referring to both the collections and the organizations, should instead be representative of the values and experiences of all individuals in a society, with all perspectives being given recognition and representation in the archival record. The concept can be explicated further using Eric Ketelaar’s theory of a memory continuum, which proposes that memories exist not in isolation, but in a flow of continuous interaction.¹⁶⁴ As a result, the memories of both the dominant and minority groups within society are linked, creating a community of records and a shared archival heritage. Therefore, the collections held by all archives, whether professional or community-based, are all of equal significance and value and contribute to the collective memory. This would seem to dispute any fixed, pre-determined ‘heritage value’, by arguing that *all* material is relevant to the nation’s heritage, and not only those records cared for by experts in formal archival institutions.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, the notion of a continuum implies fluidity and adaptability, in contrast to the static values supported by AHD.

¹⁶² HM Government, *Archives for the 21st Century* (HM Government: 2009), p. 16, item 4.1.

¹⁶³ Fiona Aldridge and Yanina Dutton, *Building a society for all ages: Benefits for older people from learning in museums, libraries and archives. A report to the Museum Libraries and Archives Council (NIACE, 2009)*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Eric Ketelaar, ‘Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records’ in *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005), p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

However, the term ‘memory of society’ may also be seen to promote a consensus approach to heritage, smoothing over conflict and social difference to create a universally accepted narrative, reducing diversity, rather than encouraging it.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the fact that the formal sector regards community archives as contributors to this collective memory may also imply greater expectations for community archives to conform to professional standards of practice; as shown in previous examples, however, this is not always appropriate.¹⁶⁷ It is thus important to consider how local and community-led archives are perceived by professionals to contribute to the national archival mission, and what implications this has on the delivery of outreach and professional expectations of community archive activity.

iii. Devolution of archival activity

This research has found evidence of initiatives designed to facilitate the development of archives on a local level; for example, regional archive councils were formally established in the UK in 2000, one function of which was to provide a more accessible forum for collaborative projects between local archive groups.¹⁶⁸ Regional councils were considered best placed to connect with community groups, which implies that an over-centralised archives sector was not seen by professionals to be conducive to efficient or productive development.¹⁶⁹ This strategy thus recognises the importance of having local interests represented within the wider heritage agenda, which can be interpreted as a move towards opening up the discourse of authorized heritage and allowing in different perspectives. Moreover, it is understood by the formal sector that these regional archival collections are ‘of more than local significance’.¹⁷⁰ This is important because, as Affleck and Kvan have discussed, the ‘insider’ or local resident will usually value an item of heritage on a different basis, more concerned with past events and people than by the statements of worth made by outside experts.¹⁷¹ In this way, enabling diversity within the sector can challenge the authority of the dominant heritage discourse, as non-expert viewpoints may contradict accepted narratives or values.

¹⁶⁶ Laura Millar, ‘Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives’ in *Archivaria* 61 (2006), p. 120.

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 5 of this thesis, p. 46.

¹⁶⁸ Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England*, p. 165.

¹⁶⁹ Melinda Haunton, ‘County committee to county record office? The National Register of Archives and the growth of the county archive network’ in *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 34:1 (2013), p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ Public Record Office, *Our Shared Past*, p. 48.

¹⁷¹ Janice Affleck and Thomas Kvan, ‘A Virtual Community as the Context for Discursive Interpretation: A Role in Cultural Heritage Engagement’ in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14:3 (May, 2008), p. 270.

The support of archival devolution indicates the recognition that the sector can benefit from local input and specialized regional knowledge. As a result of their mapping project, the East of England Regional Archives Council concluded that local authority archives are fundamentally different from other types of archives, holding archives from many different bodies in addition to the local authority itself, and thus and having custody of a ‘far greater range of material’.¹⁷² Similarly, it has been recognized that archival innovation flourishes at a local level, as adapting to circumstances breeds new and creative solutions.¹⁷³ Therefore, community archives may be considered as another positive development that will help to energise the profession and broaden existing ideas of best practice. Nevertheless, it is considered desirable that connections are maintained between these disparate archives, in order to coincide various archival efforts into a concerted whole; as stated in the Government Policy on Archives of 1999, successfully linking archives ‘will only be achieved if the various elements of the archive community can work effectively together’.¹⁷⁴ It is therefore relevant to examine initiatives that allow independent development, but simultaneously maintains sufficient contact between official and unofficial archives.

iv. Stepping back: Advocacy and Facilitation

A detailed scoping study published in March 2009 considered the potential of community archives to support the government’s Sustainable Communities Agenda, aims of which include community cohesion and empowerment. As part of the study, a consultation was performed in order to assess the level of awareness of community archives amongst stakeholders, and to establish their perceptions of the role and benefits of community archives. A number of professional archival bodies, including MLA and TNA, delineated the strategy for their own roles in advancing the agenda through supporting community archives. As a result of this consultation, the report concluded that, ‘in terms of providing guidance, MLA’s aim should be to support community archive projects to grow and develop and to allow them to access the support which they need’.¹⁷⁵ This marks a significant shift from earlier outreach approaches, such as published guides and manuals, which have attempted to create and direct community archives projects according to accepted professional standards. On the contrary, this 2009 report acknowledges that community archives may feel threatened

¹⁷² Gordon Chancellor, *Archives in the East of England: Final Report on East of England Archive Mapping Project 2003-4* (Bury St. Edmunds: EEMLAC, 2003), p. 10.

¹⁷³ UK Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, *Government Policy on Archives* (December 1999), p. 11 (7.2).

¹⁷⁴ *Government Policy on Archives*, p. 5 (1.1.2).

¹⁷⁵ Jura Consultants, *Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda* (MLA: March 2009), p. 64.

by attempts by the formal sector to impose any level of control, and thus stresses that ‘any engagement should be viewed as a partnership, rather than a passing over of information’.¹⁷⁶ This change suggests that, over time, awareness of the necessity of community archives retaining their autonomy has increased, and also that recognition of the benefits of multiple viewpoints has become a more established feature of the professional archives sector.

An example of this new, more indirect approach to outreach in practice can be found in a project launched by the MLA in 2010 entitled ‘Opening Up Spaces’. Rather than targeting community groups directly, this initiative was aimed at local institutions such as archives and libraries, providing additional funding to encourage them to allow community groups, or ‘self-organised learning groups’ to use their space and resources for their own activities. For instance, North Yorkshire Archives purchased specialist equipment to support five local, independent heritage groups to create their own digitised records. The results of this initiative were considered beneficial to both parties, and enabled the community archives to remain independent; as the Archives Development Manager of the institution reported, ‘by providing them with the necessary equipment and work space they have been allowed to develop at their own pace and according to their own priorities’.¹⁷⁷ This is important because, in order to maintain the grass roots element that is so characteristic of community archives, it is acknowledged by the formal sector that their activity should remain interest-led and not directed by top-down initiatives or agendas.¹⁷⁸ As Gilliland and Flinn have also argued, ‘the “living” community-centric nature of the community archive will likely die if it is subsumed into a mainstream archive’.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, the success of the ‘Opening Up Spaces’ project made professional staff at the North Yorkshire Archives aware of the positive aspects of developing partnerships with community archive groups, and they were thus ‘much more open’ to future collaborations as a result.¹⁸⁰ This suggests that the work of community archive groups can become successfully integrated into the priorities of formal institutions, rather than absorbed by them, the latter perhaps incurring the loss of ownership or custody of collections. As a result, different approaches to archiving can be included within the same institution and new understandings

¹⁷⁶ Jura Consultants, *Sustainable Communities Agenda*, p. 39.

¹⁷⁷ MLA, *Opening Up Spaces* (London: MLA, 2010), p. 10.

¹⁷⁸ Jura Consultants, *Sustainable Communities Agenda*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁹ Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn, ‘Community Archives: What are we really talking about?’ - Keynote Speech delivered at the CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference (2013), p. 17.

¹⁸⁰ MLA, *Opening Up Spaces*, p. 10.

may be reached through networking with other groups and in communications between formal and informal organisations.

v. An archival patchwork

It would seem, therefore, that diversity within the archival landscape is considered beneficial by the formal sector; indeed, the existing complexity of the sector has been noted on more than one occasion. For example, on behalf of the Public Services Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies, Chris Pickford published a Statistical Overview of the UK archives sector in 2002. Through his analysis, he determined that:

The nature of service provision means that archives across the nation represent a patchwork of provision rather than an integrated network, with a myriad of private and specialist archives complementing the more structured provision in the public sector'.¹⁸¹

The patchwork model of archival provision identified by Pickford is thus suggestive of a collection of diverse entities contributing to a cohesive whole, which is arguably a positive outlook, and indicative of the sector's aim to 'support the development of archive collections that reflect the cultural diversity of the region'.¹⁸² Similarly, Shepherd's recent observations also support the view that records held by all types of archival organisation can contribute to and strengthen the overall richness of the heritage sector. As she describes:

By 2003, a wide spectrum of archives, including many held outside formal structures, managing records from all types of organisations and communities offered a complex and vibrant complement to The National Archives.¹⁸³

This places non-professional and community-led archives alongside TNA and other formal archives, including them within the spectrum, rather than outside of it. However, the use of the term 'complement' to describe the relation of community-based collections to mainstream archives, as seen in both these quotations, nevertheless implies some level of secondary importance. Although community archives are seen as related to the formal sector, there is still the suggestion of a barrier separating the two. It would seem that in 'complementing' the mainstream collections of TNA, community archives are seen as somewhat auxiliary; although valuable, they are not considered to be of central relevance to the archival mission.

¹⁸¹ Chris Pickford, 'Archives: A Statistical Overview' in *Cultural Trends* 12:48 (2002), p. 5.

¹⁸² East Midlands Regional Archives Council, *East Midlands Archives: A Regional Vision, 2005-2008* (Leicester: EMRAC, 2005), p. 6, item 1.2.

¹⁸³ Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England*, p. 126.

The current archive sector arguably remains as a patchwork of diverse archival provision, without a cohesive network or framework in place. However, this research has found evidence of attempts to include community archives alongside mainstream services in a comprehensive network. A proposed initiative that intended to incorporate the full diversity of UK archives into a single framework was the Linking Arms project, coordinated by TNA and NCA, with the aim of uniting official and unofficial archives in an interactive online directory. The vision for this project consisted of the following:

Linking Arms will bring together official and unofficial archives, private and community archives... It will also invite people to contribute their own history – or that of their family or community – to that ever-growing documentary heritage of our lives and to the ever-evolving national archive.¹⁸⁴

As the sample screen below indicates, a search of the catalogue would deliver results from all levels of archival provision in the country, listing independent community-led archives alongside The National Archives.¹⁸⁵

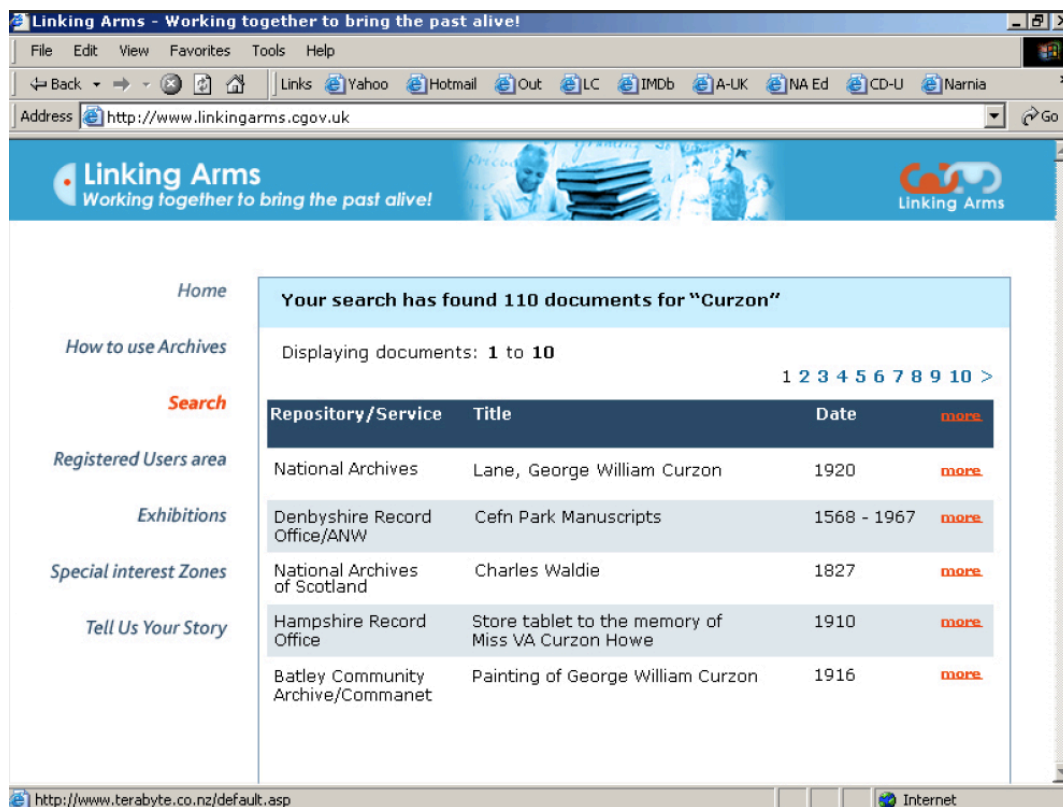


Figure 1: Sample screen of the proposed online service *Linking Arms* (TNA)

¹⁸⁴ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future: Report of the Archives Task Force* (MLA, 2004), p. 77.

¹⁸⁵ The National Archives, 'Linking Arms: Working together to bring the past alive. Sample screens: how the online service might look'. Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/screen_shots.pdf [accessed 26 June 2014]

This would appear to remove any barriers between the professional archival community and non-expert archiving groups, and emphasises the point that records held in community archives are of more than local significance. Furthermore, reference to ‘the ever-evolving national archive’ and the ability of all members of society to contribute to it – ‘Tell Us Your Story’ - implies that greater democracy of archives use is encouraged, and suggests willingness from the formal sector to embrace change and extend beyond traditional practice.

However, reportedly due to limited funding, implementation of the Linking Arms project was not carried out.¹⁸⁶ While the failure to realise a comprehensive national archival network can thus be attributed to financial restrictions, rather than lack of initiative on the part of the formal sector, the allocation of resources towards other projects is nevertheless suggestive of strategic prioritisation. The fact that projects such as Linking Arms are susceptible to budget cuts suggests that community engagement and outreach remains low on the agenda, rather than constituting one of the core policies of the archive sector, as Flinn has advocated.¹⁸⁷ According to the ARA, the primary aim of outreach initiatives such as the CAHG is ‘to work to mainstream and embed community archive work within the priorities of archive services’.¹⁸⁸ However, it seems that although community archives are recognised, they are not yet ‘embedded’ within the priorities of the formal sector.

vi. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how recent trends in outreach have contributed towards the greater diversification of the heritage sector. It is suggested that, to a certain extent, the relationship between community archives and the mainstream sector has developed from a one-way, linear model, consisting of the authoritative handing over of information, to a more circular, reflexive model, enabling active participation and multiple interpretations to co-exist, as in the case of the ‘Opening Up Spaces’ project. However, in spite of greater recognition of the valuable contribution of community archives to the diversity of the sector, it would seem that regional and community influences remain limited. As a result, there is

¹⁸⁶ Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England*, p. 61.

¹⁸⁷ Andrew Flinn, ‘The Impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice’ in Jennie Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), p. 164.

¹⁸⁸ Archives and Records Association, ‘Community Archives & Heritage Group (CAHG)’ (last updated 5 February 2014). Available at: <<http://www.archives.org.uk/si-cahg/community-archives-a-heritage-group-cahg.html>> [accessed 19 May 2014]

still a degree of separation between the official and unofficial archive sectors. Therefore, this more indirect approach to outreach, which supports the independence of community archives, cannot be seen to significantly upset the power relations that underline the dominant heritage discourse, as the major professional bodies still dominate the wider agenda. From these observations, it can be concluded that although community archives may be considered within the spectrum of archive services in the UK, they are not seen as an equal partner.

CHAPTER 8. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

i. Introduction

This part of the thesis expands upon ideas examined in the previous chapter concerning the community of memory that is reflected within a complementary patchwork of archives, both independent and professional, representing the diverse nature of British society. The work of community archives has been recognised by professionals as being of more than local significance; it is therefore necessary to consider how far attempts have been made to more fully democratise the archive sector, so that community-based organisations may be considered equally alongside archive services in the spectrum. Throughout the course of this discussion, barriers have been identified which inhibit the full participation of community archives in the UK archives sector, and keep them in a non-expert role. In Andrew Flinn's view, a reduction of these barriers does not demand a full denial of the archive profession, but rather a 'partial re-focussing and a re-articulation' of the archival mission'.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, this chapter will discuss the most recent developments within the leadership structure of the UK archives sector and, with reference to the recommendations of Flinn and other archive professionals, consider how the future direction of the sector may involve a re-articulation not only of the sector itself, but also a redefinition of the roles within it.

ii. A renewed vision for UK archives

In October 2011 The National Archives took over the archival functions of MLA, which was formally dissolved in 2012 in order to reduce the number of public bodies funded by the government. On the other hand, the museum and library responsibilities of MLA were transferred to Arts Council England, a non-departmental public body of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. After twelve years of cross-domain partnership, therefore, archives were once again separated from museums and libraries, with TNA as the new leading body for the sector. As a result, UK archives are now considered to be in a better strategic position, as they are under the leadership of an organisation that 'understands and empathises with what they are and can achieve'; in comparison with MLA, which had to share its resources over three areas, TNA is considered by external consultants to possess a better sense of drive,

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Flinn, 'Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions' in *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7:2 (2011), p. 16.

direction and commitment regarding the archive sector, which is therefore indicative of a positive future for the development of archives in Britain.¹⁹⁰

A call to action for all archives in the sector to contribute towards a proactive response to these recent changes was made in the form of a document published by TNA in 2012, *Archives for the 21st Century In Action: Refreshed*. This publication outlines five key recommendations, and offers prescriptions for how these objectives can be achieved through sustained partnerships within the sector. Most significant to this discussion is the stated commitment of TNA to ‘recognise, celebrate and support all parts of the sector’,¹⁹¹ which implies that all archives, regardless of type or status, will be able to take their place within archival landscape of the UK. This reinforces the trend that has emerged throughout the period included within the scope of this research towards greater participation of more diverse elements within the archive sector.

Laura Millar has identified the archival goal as ‘to recognise the dynamic nature of individual and collective memory and facilitate the preservation of memory tools to support the perspectives of all stakeholders’.¹⁹² In order to achieve this, she goes on to argue, the emergence of new and different memory institutions is a process that must be celebrated and supported, in order to promote valuable diversity.¹⁹³ However, community archives receive only a brief mention in the 2012 action plan, which suggests that they are not recognised as significant stakeholders in the direction of future archives policy. Rather than identify and support the needs and perspectives of all types of archives, the current leadership objective of TNA is to coordinate the country’s archives in working towards developing a functioning system. This goal is to be achieved by helping archive services respond to policy and develop ‘in ways that strengthen and reinforce the national network’.¹⁹⁴ This shows that, to some extent, outreach is strategic and aimed at directing the work of archives across the country towards a shared goal, one that is determined by the authoritative and expert voice of TNA as leader of the sector.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Katie Norgrove and Sophia Mirchandani, *Review of The National Archives sector leadership function: Final Report* (Cultural Consulting Network: December, 2013), p. 48.

¹⁹¹ The National Archives, *Archives for the 21st Century In Action: Refreshed 2012-2015* (Richmond: TNA, 2012), p. 4.

¹⁹² Laura Millar, ‘Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives’ in *Archivaria* 61 (2006), p. 124.

¹⁹³ Millar, ‘Touchstones’, p. 124.

¹⁹⁴ Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final Report*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁵ Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final Report*, p. 40.

A further source that gives a valuable insight into the future direction of the UK archives sector was published in December 2013. In order to measure its impact and identify areas of improvement, TNA commissioned a review of its sector leadership thus far, which was carried out by the Cultural Consulting Network. An important aspect of this review that has implications for the position of community archives within the sector is the discussion of the engagement role foreseen for TNA, which is described as such:

In taking on the leadership role, TNA has retained the historic basis for its credibility (as a service provider) at the same time as moving to develop a more pluralistic way of performing its leadership role – through facilitation, networking, enabling and supporting rather than exhorting or policing.¹⁹⁶

This statement exemplifies the two sides of the outreach approach of the archives profession that have been demonstrated throughout the course of this discussion; on the one hand, the formal sector identifies the need to maintain and reinforce its credibility, in order to defend the position of power it has cultivated within society, based on its expert knowledge.¹⁹⁷

On the other hand, the development of ‘a more pluralistic way’ of achieving the archival goal implies that, rather than operating in a strict hierarchical framework, the sector will enable multiple perspectives to be considered and incorporated. A suggestion of a move towards greater inclusivity can also be seen in the stated intention of TNA to ‘build networks of archive practitioners’.¹⁹⁸ Unlike the term ‘archivist’, which has connotations of a professional qualification, this new term implies a more flexible definition of who may be included in a community of such practitioners.

iii. Community Archives and the Archival Community

The understanding of an archival community employed for the purposes of this research draws upon Laurajane Smith’s concept of an authorised heritage discourse, which has been discussed in the earlier stages of this discussion. However, it is useful to revisit Smith’s argument with specific reference to how this community is created and maintained, in order to clarify the place of community archives in relation to it. The community of authorised heritage practitioners, which Smith describes, is based upon expert knowledge and shared

¹⁹⁶ Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final report*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Theo Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power – On the independence and autonomy of archival science’ in *Arhivski vjesnik* 42 (1999), p. 153.

¹⁹⁸ TNA, *Archives for the 21st Century in action: Refreshed 2012-2015*, p. 4.

observation of certain principles and standards.¹⁹⁹ This sense of fellowship supports a professional identity, establishing a binary between expert and non-expert, or those who do not share these values and knowledge. As a result, and as demonstrated throughout this thesis, community archives have been excluded from normative definitions of the established archive community, as they often do not operate according to best practice, in terms of acquiring specialist training for example.²⁰⁰

The recently developed UK *Archive Service Accreditation Standard* can be seen as an example of criteria that must be met in order to gain entrance to this exclusive community of recognised archivists. This Standard defines good practice for archives by providing a list of requirements, and is designed to strengthen the professionalism of the sector, by encouraging archives to seek external validation.²⁰¹ In doing so, it aims to create a network of archives that share common objectives and shared commitment to ‘seize opportunities which bring benefits across the service and mitigate potential risks to ensure the sustainability of the service’.²⁰² Achieving accredited status demonstrates that an archive complies with national standards of practice, and the scheme thus protects the values of authorised discourse by maintaining these standards. Moreover, entrance to this community of accredited archives is controlled by the enforcement of eligibility criteria, which must be met even before accredited status can be applied for. For instance, these criteria determine whether or not an archival collection is considered ‘significant’,²⁰³ which represents a clear application of an authorised discourse, disqualifying archives whose collections are not seen to be of ‘real’ heritage value.

Prompted by the growth of community archive activity, professional archivists have debated the need for a more inclusive definition of this archival community. For example, Gray has contemplated the issue with regards to existing divisions within the sector, asking the following question of those who practise his discipline:

¹⁹⁹ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 93.

²⁰⁰ Cultural Consulting Network, *Community Archives Landscape Research: A Report for MLA and CADG* (Cultural Consulting Network: June 2008), p. 24.

²⁰¹ The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation: Standard May 2013* (Richmond: TNA: 2013), p. 3.

²⁰² The National Archives, ‘First accredited archive services announced’ (9 December 2013). Available at: <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/897.htm>> [accessed 26 June 2014]

²⁰³ The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation Eligibility Criteria* (Richmond: TNA, May 2013), p. 5.

Is it more important to us individually that we are part of a large group which we might call The World of Archive Care, or that we are a Music Archivist, or a Community Archivist. Can we be both simultaneously?²⁰⁴

This supports the view that all those involved in archiving, whether expert or voluntary, may be considered as part of the archival community. Similarly, in a recent article, Terry Cook has considered an important question relating to the archival identity, asking ‘What makes us all archivists?’ He concludes that, beyond performing the same tasks, the true commonality between all archive practitioners lies in the fact that their work, whether performed in the public or private sector, has real societal significance.²⁰⁵ Thomassen has proposed that the objective of any profession is to control the value of the service that it provides to society;²⁰⁶ therefore Cook’s statement can be interpreted as a challenge to the position of power held by the profession, and to the boundaries of the professional community, by asserting that the services provided by informal archives are equally as valuable. This implies that shared social value is a more powerful source of community than the observation of standards. As a result, rather than amateurs performing an auxiliary function, those involved in community archiving may be considered as archivists in their own right.

Isto Huvila’s concept of a participatory archive also supports a more open interpretation of the archival community, proposing that:

The community is a sum of all individual structures, descriptions and viewpoints contributed by individual participating archive users, whether they are users, contributors, archivists, researchers, belong to a marginalised community or the majority.²⁰⁷

This situates professional archivists side by side with non-expert users and creators of archives within a single body of archive practitioners, regardless of training or qualification. Unlike the sense of community that is created and sustained by a commitment to authorised standards of policy and practice, the participatory archive assumes no predetermined consensus of values or meaning; instead, it is based upon the necessity of supporting access to the material, which is identified as the common purpose of all members of this community.

²⁰⁴ Victor Gray, ‘Archives and the Tribal Mind’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 27:2 (October 2006), p. 124.

²⁰⁵ Terry Cook, ‘Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms’ in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), p. 98.

²⁰⁶ Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power’, p. 155.

²⁰⁷ Isto Huvila, ‘Participatory Archive: towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management’ in *Archival Science* 8 (2008), p. 26.

Underpinning this is the understanding that users of the archive may be more knowledgeable about collections than the professional archivist, and should therefore have a greater role in its description.²⁰⁸ This represents a stark contrast the heritage domain supported by AHD, which, as discussed previously, leaves no room for active participation from a non-expert audience. Therefore, all individual archivists, whether professionally qualified or volunteer, constitute a broad and inclusive community, with no clear demarcations of status or identity. Flinn has also disputed the authoritarian notion of the definitive National Archives, and has proposed instead a more holistic, which would enable community archives, and indeed all repositories, to receive greater recognition as co-contributors to the country's heritage base:

Can all repositories in the country, whatever their relative status, be included in a notional "national" archive, because they all represent a part or fragment of the whole archival heritage?²⁰⁹

This re-articulation of the archival community, and of notions of archival significance, also requires a reconsideration of the role of archives in society and of the exclusivity of the archival discipline to the established profession.

iv. Redefining the archival role

The role of the archivist is changing. Most significantly, technological advances have increased the extent to which archiving has become a part of everyday life, with the whole of society creating, keeping and even describing records. As Nicole Convery argues, information has become a daily commodity, which challenges defining archival practices; preservation and access are no longer just technical issues, but also cultural ones.²¹⁰ As a result, archiving can no longer be seen the sole preserve of a small group of professionals, but is an activity that has an important role to play throughout society. This destabilises the place of the user as a passive consumer of information, as active contribution is facilitated through social media, for example. This amateur archiving activity, including the work done by community archives, has been perceived by some professionals as a 'worrisome and threatening' development that challenges the authority of the sector.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Huvila, 'Participatory Archive', p. 26.

²⁰⁹ Flinn, 'Archival Activism', p. 17.

²¹⁰ Nicole Convery, 'Information management, records management, knowledge management: the place of archives in a digital age' in Jennie Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), p. 192.

²¹¹ Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn, 'Community Archives: What are we really talking about?' - Keynote Speech delivered at the CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference (2013), p. 1.

On the contrary, others have welcomed this challenge as a positive thing. As a firm advocate of community archives, Flinn is among those who have considered the impact of community archives on professional thinking, concluding that the challenge they pose is not unique nor particularly innovative; rather, it is part of a series of new challenges to narrow archival thinking.²¹² In this way, community archives are perceived as being representative of a ‘vital and timely opening up’ of the archival endeavour, with the valuable potential to shake up the profession and contribute to innovative developments.²¹³ Gray also sees the necessity of responding to community archives as having the long-term effect of diversifying the skill-set of the profession, allowing it to grow and develop, and thus preventing it from ‘freezing into a corner’.²¹⁴ In this way, traditional notions of what archivists should be, and ‘should be doing’ can be stretched to incorporate new roles and definitions.²¹⁵

This positive potential has not gone unnoticed by the professional sector. In addition to facilitating diversified practice through outreach, initiatives have been put in place to encourage diversity within the archives profession itself. For example, the *Opening Up Archives* programme, currently being implemented by TNA, offers a number of placements for new employees at archives throughout the UK, providing an entry into the sector for those who have not followed a traditional qualification route:

Instead of focusing on specific qualifications, the programme seeks people who can bring talent and energy to the archival world, who are keen to develop their skills, who want to engage with their local community, and who want to create better online services. It also encourages archives to recruit a broader range of skills, with staff that is more reflective of their community.²¹⁶

This programme welcomes a diverse skill set that is not exclusive to the requirements of formal training. The emphasis on recruiting individual archivists who reflect, and wish to engage with, their community also implies recognition of local and regional heritage values, and a desire to incorporate these into wider policy agendas. This relaxation of barriers between the official and unofficial heritage sectors suggests that the same might be possible for the barriers between the expert and amateur archivist.

²¹² Andrew Flinn, ‘The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice’ in J. Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2011), p. 165.

²¹³ Gilliland and Flinn, ‘Community Archives: What are we really talking about?’, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Victor Gray, ‘Who’s that Knocking on Our Door?’: Archives, Outreach and Community’ in *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29:1 (April 2008), p. 6.

²¹⁵ Gray, ‘Archives, Outreach and Community’, p. 5.

²¹⁶ The National Archives, ‘Current Initiatives: Opening Up Archives’. Available at: <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/opening-up-archives.htm>> [accessed 28 May 2014]

v. Redefining the archival profession

Smith argues that the application of AHD not only determines heritage values and meanings, but also defines the role of social actors, legitimising the identity of professional and thus dictating who may be considered a member of the archival community.²¹⁷ Thomassen shares this view, arguing that the profession determines its own boundaries and decides ‘who is allowed to call himself a member of the profession and who is not’.²¹⁸ Therefore, initiatives that aim to ‘open up’ archives would seem to indicate a willingness of the profession to remove these boundaries, and reconsider the terms of entrance. *Opening Up Archives* also demonstrates that discussion of community archives is also relevant to other contemporary issues, such as social exclusion. Community archives not only challenge the profession to recognise them, but can also represent other marginalised entities. As Cook has suggested, professional orthodoxies define the identity of the archivist, and also their role in society;²¹⁹ how professionals respond to community and other non-expert archivists is therefore an indication of their attitude towards the societal ‘audience’ as a whole. For example, as Flinn has argued, the full democratisation of archives, for users as well as archive groups, will occur only by supporting the greater permeability of, maybe even dissolving, the barriers between the professional and the amateur.²²⁰ Therefore, reducing barriers and expanding notions of the archival community can lead to a more pluralist and democratic view of archiving in general. However, it seems that there is still some way to go before this can be achieved. Although TNA has stated its intention to extend its current engagement priorities to include work with private archives, this objective also highlights the fact that they are not currently part of the agenda.²²¹

Furthermore, the review of the leadership function of TNA only included a limited number of organisations as ‘stakeholders’, showing that, at present, the perspectives of community archives and other small repositories are not represented.²²² Supporting this conclusion is the fact that this review identified a lack of clarity and coherency across the sector, especially regarding private and voluntary archives. For example, one survey respondent, and volunteer archivist, expressed the opinion that TNA had shown little initiative to understand the needs

²¹⁷ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 42.

²¹⁸ Thomassen, ‘Archivists between knowledge and power’, p. 155.

²¹⁹ Cook, ‘Four shifting archival paradigms’, p. 96.

²²⁰ Flinn, ‘Archival Activism’, p. 16.

²²¹ The National Archives, *Responses to Recommendations* (Richmond: TNA, 2014), p. 2.

²²² Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final report*, p. 11.

of smaller archives, stating that ‘it would be good to feel that TNA cared about small repositories and wanted to find out more about their needs. I am not sure about that at present’.²²³ If the leadership of TNA is to remain relevant, then it will need to continually re-focus its priorities in order to keep up with the ever-evolving archival landscape.²²⁴

vi. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the place of community archives within the UK archives sector in the context of wider debates surrounding the nature of the archival community, and the identity of archivists within it. In doing so, it has been shown that the sector appears to be moving towards a more inclusive approach, with programmes initiated to incorporate more diverse skills and professional backgrounds. However, the argument advanced in this chapter is that, while the challenge represented by community archives has been regarded as one of a number of positive and productive developments in the discipline, contributing to an archival framework accommodating greater participation and flexibility or practice, it remains to be seen whether or not the archival discipline will become fully democratic, with all viewpoints considered equally. As Sassoon and Burrows have concluded, speaking for the profession, whether and how far we shift our archival minds to encompass a broader concept so as to incorporate voices, only time will tell.²²⁵

²²³ Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final report*, p. 28.

²²⁴ TNA, *Responses to Recommendations*, p. 1.

²²⁵ Joanna Sassoon and Toby Burrows, ‘Minority Reports: indigenous and community voices in archives. Papers from the 4th International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (ICHORA4), Perth, Western Australia, August 2008’ in *Archival Science* 9 (2009), p. 4.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

i. Introduction

This research set out to clarify the nature and scope of support that is provided to community archives in the UK from the formal archives sector. In doing so, it has considered other issues related to the function of archives, such as public engagement. An evaluation of outreach is also valuable in the context of the wider discussion concerning the archival profession and the challenges to its authority posed by community archive activity. This research has sought to exemplify the ways in which this discussion concerning the responsibility of professional archivists to support community archive groups has been translated into practice. As a result, observations have also been made about the methods used by the professional sector to reassert its expertise in the face of perceived challenges from this amateur archive activity. This allows some conclusions to be drawn about the conservative nature of the archival profession, and how this has limited the potential for community archives to achieve greater recognition within the sector. This chapter discusses these conclusions and makes some speculations about potential future developments. It also reviews the extent to which the research was successful, and suggests ways in which it could be supplemented.

ii. Investigating community archives and outreach

In addition to the principal investigation of the ways in which community archives have been supported through professional outreach initiatives, four subsidiary questions were formulated, the purpose of which were to direct the course of the research and also to facilitate exploration of the research problem in more depth. These questions were as follows:

- How are community archives and professional archives differentiated?
- What are the aims and motivation for professional archival institutions to initiate interaction with independent community-led archives?
- What is the nature and scope of the outreach initiatives?
- Does this interaction between the mainstream sector and independent archives support an inclusive and collaborative archival community?

It is now useful to consider each of these questions once more and summarise the principal conclusions, which have been arrived at as a result of the research.

This research suggests that community archives are largely differentiated from formal archives by criteria and classifications. For example, it has been assumed by professionals that community archives are less observant of the more technical or legal aspects of archiving. Furthermore, views have been expressed that indicate that community archives should not be included within the sector due to their difference in practice. For example, the new Accreditation Scheme for archives from TNA has been deemed unsuitable for informal archives, as ‘the gap between community archives and established archive services is just too big to be covered by one scheme’.²²⁶ This suggestion of a gap further shows the extent to which some professionals have perceived community archives as being wholly unlike mainstream archives. This delimitation can be perceived as an attempt by the archives profession to reinforce its own autonomy, and maintain its exclusive expert identity.

However, other professional perspectives have been examined which propose that the differences are not that great after all; for instance, Gilliland and Flinn have underscored the significant ‘blurring’ between the official and unofficial heritage sectors, arguing that no clear lines can be drawn between the two.²²⁷ This emphasises the extent to which the term ‘community archive’ has been assumed by the mainstream archives sector, and used to define boundaries. This also has an impact on outreach programs, as it would appear only organisations recognised as community archives’ by the formal sector are targeted.

In terms of the nature of outreach, the findings of this study suggest that, in short, it is mainly supportive. The aim is largely to secure access to all records held in community-based collections, and make them available in the public domain. This research has identified two principal forms of outreach have been pursued to this end, which chiefly provide instruction and networking support to community archives. However, findings also suggest that, at present, outreach is not designed to support all community-led archives, but is mainly aimed at those with the inclination to develop on an institutional basis. For example, the majority of outreach projects identified by this research have been focused on improving access to the public; therefore, it seems that, in terms of scope, outreach is only really available to those community archives that already have an organisational structure and the existing motivation

²²⁶ Katie Norgrove and Sophia Mirchandani, *Review of The National Archives sector leadership function: Final Report* (Cultural Consulting Network: December, 2013), p. 31.

²²⁷ Anne Gilliland and Andrew Flinn, ‘Community Archives: What are we really talking about?’ - Keynote Speech delivered at the CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference (2013), p. 12.

to make their collections widely accessible. Other community-based archives, which may not identify as archives and therefore are not widely recognised as such, are therefore not included within the scope of outreach activity.

In this way, outreach can be viewed as somewhat contradictory in nature. Simultaneously emphasising the significance of community archives to wider agendas relating to cultural heritage, which support the memory aspect of archiving, and stressing the importance of meeting accepted standards of practice, outreach initiatives thus present a dual message. The two sides of this message are not wholly in agreement, as the value of community archives, and of the cultural use of archives in general, is both confirmed and subordinated. In this way, outreach can be seen to reflect the tensions that exist within the profession between memory and evidence. However, Cook has argued that evidence and memory are two sides of the archival coin: therefore, they are not oppositional but rather complementary.²²⁸ In this way, community archives can be seen as akin to, rather than differentiated from, formal archives. For this reason, Cook has also suggested that community archives have a great deal to offer the sector, including the possibility for resolving issues and reconciling these ‘conflicting discourses’ with in the profession.²²⁹ In its move towards greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity, it would seem that the direction of the profession has been somewhat directed by the growth of community archives. It is thus interesting to consider whether this trend will continue in the future.

iii. Identifying trends

The study examined outreach within the period 2000 to 2013. During this time, a number of changes in the heritage landscape of the UK occurred, which are reflected in the outreach objectives of the archive sector. For example, the creation of MLA in 2000 apparently prompted greater interest in developing a coherent archives network, although at this time community archives did not receive a great deal of recognition. However, following the publication of the Archives Task Force Report in 2004, which Gilliland and Flinn identify as ‘a very influential milestone’ in the recognition of community archives,²³⁰ outreach was

²²⁸ Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Evidence and Memory: Thoughts on a Divided Tradition’ in *Archival Issues* 22:2 (1997), p. 79. Quoted in Rob Fisher, ‘In Search of a Theory of Private Archives: The Foundational Writings of Jenkinson and Schellenberg Revisited’ in *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009), p. 24.

²²⁹ Terry Cook, ‘Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms’ in *Archival Science* 13 (2013), p. 116.

²³⁰ Gilliland and Flinn, ‘Community Archives: What are we really talking about?’, p. 2.

directed more towards developing a shared understanding of standards between formal and informal archives, as evidenced by the East Midlands Regional Action Plan of 2005-6.²³¹

Later developments signify greater understanding that a ‘one size fits all approach’ to community archives is not appropriate.²³² Therefore this research shows an overall trend towards facilitation and advocacy, with the purpose of allowing community-led archives to develop naturally according to local interests. This would seem to support the opinion voiced by Eden and Feather that, in terms of creating guidelines for archives, ‘commonality of practice can never be, and should never be, imposed’.²³³ The different interests and circumstances of repositories across the country are recognised, and even valued as supporting diversity within the sector.

This research has also made reference to the possibility of the further democratisation of the archival profession; existing initiatives to this end, such as *Opening Up Archives*, also appear to be in pursuit of an archival heritage that is more representative of the diversity of British society. As suggested, a study of how the formal sector approaches community archives is also relevant to how professional archives relate to the wider community and to the public in general, especially concerning minority groups and contemporary issues of social exclusion. Indeed, outreach initiatives have been implemented alongside wider agendas concerning communities and minority groups. The findings have also demonstrated how community archives are identified by the formal sector as a tool in supporting these agendas; with their ability to bring people together based on common interests, while also exploring differences, community archives were considered ‘ideally placed’ to support the government’s sustainable communities agenda.²³⁴

However, the research suggests that an inclusive archival community, giving full and equal recognition to all archives regardless of size, type or status, has yet to be realised. The need for further transformation has been identified by a number of commentators, including Cook,

²³¹ East Midlands Regional Archives Council (EMRAC), ‘East Midlands Archives: A Regional Vision, 2005-2008’ (Leicester: EMRAC, 2005), p. 4 (2.1). Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111013135435/http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/download-publication.php?id=72> [accessed 26 June 2014]

²³² Jura Consultants, *Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda* (MLA: March 2009), p. 35.

²³³ Paul Eden and John Feather, ‘Preservation in libraries and archives in the UK: towards a national policy’ in *Library Review* 45:8, p. 39.

²³⁴ Jura Consultants, *Sustainable Communities Agenda*, p. 6.

who argues that rather than focusing on their role as elite experts, professionals need to work towards become facilitators of diverse archiving activity.²³⁵ However, as TNA has admitted, it is more comfortable with its role in policing standards than in other leadership functions, such as mentoring,²³⁶ this suggests that the traditions of the profession are therefore still very much embedded in its practice. Further research will therefore be useful in a continued observation of the future place of community archives within the sector.

iv. Further research

The contribution of this study to the field of community archives, and to archives in general, has been to provide a broad discussion of outreach initiatives proposed and implemented by the UK archive sector. The research has also considered the formal sector's vision for 21st century archives in Britain, and identified the place of community archives within it. However, as has been observed, the archives sector is 'ever-evolving' and community archives also continue to develop. It is therefore recommended that further research be undertaken in order to follow these changes. The National Archives has stated its intention to repeat a review of its leadership function at regular intervals, with the aim of ensuring its support for the sector remains relevant and appropriate.²³⁷ This is a line of research that could be followed, allowing comparisons to be made.

One disadvantage of this research was the limited scope; the methodological framework was determined by location and availability of source material. The examples utilised throughout the course of this study, while helpful in illustrating a general trend, cannot be seen as fully representative of the entire spectrum of outreach initiatives and professional opinions regarding community archives. Therefore, the method could be developed to ascertain more qualitative results, through interviews for example. This would enable a closer and better-informed analysis of the source material, facilitating more detailed conclusions of the different professional understandings and opinions of community archives in the UK.

Notably absent from this discussion are detailed observations of the reception of these outreach projects by those involved in community archive activity. Therefore, further research could also be undertaken into the perceptions of outreach from the perspective of

²³⁵ Cook, 'Four shifting archival paradigms', p. 114.

²³⁶ Norgrove and Mirchandani, *Leadership function: Final report*, p. 48.

²³⁷ The National Archives, *Responses to Recommendations* (Richmond: TNA, 2014), p. 1.

community archives, and their users. This would facilitate a comparative analysis of the experiences of outreach of both the unofficial and official sectors. Although Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd have already undertaken research into community engagement (2010) from a bottom-up perspective, an updated study combining both viewpoints and reflecting the latest developments would certainly be advantageous.

As discussed in the introductory section, an initial aim of this research was to conduct a multi-national comparative study, in order to examine further the implications of the different understandings of the term ‘community archive’ across the English-speaking world, and how this impacts upon professional outreach. This level of comparison was not possible within the scope of the current project; however, existing findings suggest that a study of community archives in both the UK and Australia, for instance, in addition to a consideration of the archival community in an international context, would be fruitful area of research.

v. Conclusion

Community archives have been recognised and valued as vital contributions to the nation’s archival heritage. It is therefore seen as important that the support they receive and the partnerships that are created remain relevant to their needs and interests, and also to subsequent developments within the wider heritage sector.²³⁸ It is hoped that by evaluating the response of the archival profession to community archives thus far, this research has further demonstrated the significance of this interaction to other archival developments and debates. However, while some questions have been answered, more remain. More than three decades ago, Hugh Taylor observed the need for multiple new approaches to archives and heritage to be accommodated within the Canadian sector; this entails the commitment of professionals to recognise diversity and enable it to flourish, allowing individuals and groups to develop their own personal relationships with heritage.²³⁹ As this research has demonstrated, this issue is still pertinent today: it remains to be seen how the heritage sector may be adapted or transformed to enable all archival groups and organisations to develop their own satisfactory roles within it.

²³⁸ TNA, *Responses to Recommendations*, p. 1.

²³⁹ Hugh Taylor, ‘The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage’ in *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83), p. 125.

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