This PDF includes a chapter from the following book:

Reassembling Scholarly Communications

Histories, Infrastructures, and Global Politics of Open Access

14   Preserving the Past for the Future: Whose Past? Everyone's Future

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History is important. Accurate, inclusive history is absolutely vital. In an era of "fake news" and "alternative facts," the importance of preserving and providing access to the scholarly record goes beyond a passing responsibility to preserve and maintain the status quo.[1] In fact, accurately preserving the past is an essential component of creating and disseminating scholarship, even in the "open" era. The creation of the scholarly record goes beyond documenting knowledge creation for the moment. It is a means of tracking the ways in which knowledge has been created and shared across generations.[2] Thus, natural questions when looking at the scholarly record for any group or time period are: *Whose record is documented here? What is present? What is missing? Where are there gaps in the knowledge record?* When only mainstream, dominant scholarship is prioritized and preserved, the record becomes skewed in such a way as to render invisible the important work being done by those at the margins.

It is crucial, however, for an empowered, informed citizenry that the scholarship of the past and present be preserved in an open and inclusive way. As librarian Rebecca Hankins notes, "Providing a population access to information and history that is inclusive, broad, and diverse gives a sense of agency to all citizens."[3] This work necessitates a two-pronged approach, looking both to secure a more inclusive view of knowledge creation from the past and to create a more inclusive survey of today's scholarship for the future. Adopting theory and methods from archivists, librarians, and other information professionals, we can address gaps in the scholarly record in a way that provides a more inclusive and accurate view of knowledge at any given moment in knowledge history. Thus, in identifying and filling the gaps in the records of our past and present, we can ensure that we are

preserving material produced at the margins of society, begin to embrace scholarship more fully as an open, inclusive conversation, and in so doing, change our scholarly and cultural values for the better.

Preservation at the Margins

Any examination of the gaps in the scholarly record must begin with a conscientious and reflective examination of the ways in which the biases and oppressions of broader society become recreated in the dissemination and preservation of knowledge. As archivist Rodney G. S. Carter notes, these "archival silences" in the record are rooted in systems of power and oppression; those from the dominant perspective are more likely to be over-represented in the record, while those from the margins are relegated to the silent and forgotten annals of time.[4] Moreover, these silences of the past and present adversely affect the quality and completeness of scholarly work now and moving forward. For instance, archivist Kate Theimer notes, regarding the use of available text corpora for digital humanities scholars, that "the materials that have been digitized and marked-up serve as a kind of 'corpus' for this group of scholars. It is this corpus that is incomplete, and for the foreseeable future always will be."[5]

A concrete example of the ways in which archival silences affect current and future scholarship lies in the work of digital humanist Nicole Brown and her fellow researchers. In their research, applying the principles of Black feminist thought to digital humanities methodologies, Brown et al. discovered a marked discrepancy in the number of available texts relating to the Black experience and culture.[6] Specifically, of the more than 13 million texts housed in the HathiTrust corpora, fewer than 25,000 were classified under the subject heading "African American."[7] That's less than 0.002 percent of the texts in Hathi. Certainly, HathiTrust is widely recognized as a valuable source of scholarship and has done exceptional work in helping to preserve and make available the scholarly record. Nonetheless, this discrepancy makes clear that even within the realm of openness, systemic marginalization continues to play a significant role.

Another concrete example of archival silence in the scholarly record involves the work of archivist Rebecka Sheffield. In her research on archival documentation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic, plus community (LGBTQIA+) history,

Sheffield describes the haphazard and serendipitous way in which early LGBTQIA+ history has been collected and preserved, and even that has been done almost exclusively by and among activist communities.[8] Sheffield notes that much of what is known about LGBTQIA+ history often begins with the Stonewall riots of 1969 because they constituted an event that was deemed of significant importance to the broader mainstream community.[9] However, LGBTQIA+ resistance to discrimination and struggle for liberation had existed long before that.

Sheffield discusses the importance of scholars and information professionals working conscientiously to help steward and preserve these stories that run the risk of being lost at the margins. Rather than referring to them as "untold" or "silent" histories, she adopts archivist Rabia Gibbs's term "unexplored histories" to refer to these materials as works that have full existence and importance, even if they have largely been ignored by mainstream scholarship.[10] Sheffield also highlights the importance of these histories being stewarded rather than owned or even necessarily collected by the mainstream. Citing cultural theorist Roderick Ferguson, she writes, "just because a university preserves unexplored history does not mean that it is ready to acknowledge or confront any of the structural inequalities that exist in order to create the conditions in which that history remains unexplored to begin with. Preservation of unexplored history cannot take place if systems of power are also preserved."[11]

The question thus remains: if structural inequalities create these archival silences and gaps in the scholarly record, then what can we do to prevent them going forward?

Scholarship as Open, Inclusive Conversation

One way to help ensure a more inclusive scholarly record, both from the past and within the present, is to approach scholarship as an open, inclusive conversation. The Association of College and Research Libraries has recently adopted "Scholarship as Conversation" as one of the foundational threshold concepts for information literacy in higher education. Librarians are encouraged to teach new researchers that the scholarly record is built through an iterative process and that so-called "experts understand that a given issue may be characterized by several competing perspectives as part of an ongoing conversation in which information users and creators come together and negotiate meaning."[12]

This may be the aspirational goal of those engaged in teaching information literacy, but it is far from the nature of traditional scholarship today. The traditional mode of scholarly communication—with a limited selection of materials on a limited selection of topics published by a limited selection of gatekeepers and housed behind paywalls accessible only to a limited selection of researchers and users—constitutes a closed conversation at best, an extended monologue at worst. It is not the "scholarship as conversation" that we envision when we talk aspirationally about the function of scholarly discourse. It is not discourse at all.

Pursuing openness and inclusion, however, allows for scholarship to take place as a real conversation—a conversation that is not only open in access but also open in scope of ideas and topics, and open in participation in terms of the voices represented, including those voices that are normally relegated to the margins. This type of open and inclusive scholarship demands that scholarly discourse be more than an echo chamber, in which the same articles and ideas are preserved and reused well into the future. Open and inclusive scholarship allows for previously silenced voices and discussions to be heard and for those discussions to be preserved for the future.

In a primary way, creating open and inclusive scholarship as conversation means opening up the research process beyond the realm of the final research output or product. In other words, going beyond the Western mode of knowledge creation that must always result in a written, published book or article, to different, decolonized ways of thinking and knowing; ways that involve collaboration, self-reflection, and slow, purposeful methodology and theorizing. In their article "For Slow Scholarship," geographers Alison Mountz et al.[13] provide an important reflection on slow, conversational scholarship that goes beyond the current "counting culture" of modern-day neoliberal research institutions. As Mountz et al. note, "overzealous production of research for audit damages the production of research that actually makes a difference."[14]

Another way to create a more open and inclusive scholarly record—thereby bringing marginalized voices into the conversation of scholarship—is by opening scholarly discourse up beyond the researcher. Open, inclusive scholarship necessitates disrupting the town-versus-gown divide and bringing voices from outside the ivory tower into scholarly discourse. Too often, nonacademics are seen as not being intellectuals and are not included in scholarly communication except as subjects of study.[15] With

the principles of openness and inclusivity, it is possible to bring more marginalized voices from outside of academia into scholarly conversations and thereby benefit from their direct knowledge and experience. In this way, the conversation of scholarship can go beyond the researcher to incorporate and preserve the voices of the researched.

This focus on open, inclusive scholarly discourse ties closely with shifts in archival theory pushing for more "post-custodial" approaches to the collection and maintenance of research collections. As touched upon by István Rév in his chapter, archival scholars Ricardo Punzalan and Michelle Caswell describe this reinterpretation of archival concepts as a shift in the ways information professionals deal with the issue of provenance:

> [In the archival world], provenance has been recast as a dynamic concept that includes not only the initial creators of the records, who might be agents of a dominant colonial or oppressive institution, but more importantly the subjects of the records themselves, the archivists who processed those records, and the various instantiations of their interpretation and use by researchers.[16]

Thus, among information professionals, the conversation of scholarship surrounding primary source material is being opened to include not only the voices of the researcher, but the perspectives of the community creators and even the material curators. These additional voices are becoming more centered in scholarly discourse and being preserved to provide a more inclusive record for the future.

Empowering and Involving Marginalized Communities

One of the keys to preserving a more inclusive scholarly record for the future lies in empowering and involving marginalized communities in the creation and preservation of scholarship. This essentially involves broadening the spectrum of what is meant by "scholarship" to include decolonized ways of knowing and knowledge creation. Again, the work in the archival field is instructive here, as archivists such as Caswell, Alda Allina Megoni, and Noah Geraci demonstrate in their work on community archives as sites for "representational belonging."[17] Too often, as has been seen, the intellectual work from marginalized communities remains in the margins and becomes relegated to the forgotten discard heaps of the scholarly record. However, by empowering these communities to respond "to being symbolically annihilated by mainstream repositories" by developing "independent,

identity-based community archives [and knowledge collections]," they can preserve their own voices to be heard throughout future generations of scholars.[18]

A number of groups have begun facilitating this kind of representational work by putting the power of the researcher into the hands of the traditionally researched. For example, the content management system Mukurtu and its partner project Local Contexts provide infrastructure for indigenous communities to collaborate with local cultural institutions to digitally preserve and share their cultural and intellectual heritage in ways that are meaningful for their unique communities.[19] Mukurtu provides the online platform for the preservation and sharing of indigenous cultural and intellectual materials, and Local Contexts, a digital licensing and labeling process for traditional knowledge, allows communities to protect their intellectual property and restrict access to their materials in ways appropriate to their cultural norms.[20] Rather than leaving indigenous heritage to be lost to future community members or scholars, or worse, allowing that heritage to be exploited by colonizing institutions for research by outsiders, Mukurtu and Local Contexts provide power and agency to indigenous communities wishing to preserve and share the objects of their knowledge creation.

Another effort in this vein is Documenting the Now, a community-based platform for collecting, using, and preserving born-digital social media content.[21] Developed in the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which arose following the police killings of unarmed Black people throughout the United States, Documenting the Now couples a user-friendly interface with strong ethical standards for documenting community reactions to such tragic historical events.[22] The intention of the platform and its community is simple: to provide a counternarrative to the official government, police, and media reports of tragic events happening in marginalized neighborhoods across the US and around the world. By placing the power for developing, sharing, and preserving their narratives in the hands of the members of the community, these marginalized voices can ensure that their ways of knowing and seeing the world do not become silenced.

Changing Values

Through efforts like Documenting the Now, Mukurtu, and Local Contexts, the scholarly record is beginning to expand to include more marginalized

perspectives and sources of knowledge creation. This work helps to ensure that efforts to preserve the past for the future involve preserving *everyone's* past for *everyone's* future. However, it is not enough. In order truly to ensure a more complete and inclusive scholarly record, we must change our scholarly criteria for determining what is of value for creating, sharing, and preserving in the realm of knowledge creation. Nonetheless, it is important to note, these preservation decisions are made not only on the basis of intellectual value but also on the basis of economic value.[23] The preservation of material culture, including scholarly works, requires funding and human labor—finite resources that will only ever be spent on that which meets certain criteria for priority. Essentially, that which is valued is that which is preserved, so we must critically examine our values if we wish to make meaningful change to the ways we preserve the past and present for the future.

A critical step in transforming scholarly values lies in diversifying those who serve as gatekeepers to knowledge creation and sharing. It is important to incorporate more diverse voices to break out of the current echo chamber of scholarship. We need more diverse perspectives among scholars doing the actual labor of research and writing; we need more diverse perspectives among reviewers who determine what scholarship is worthy of publication and what is not; we need more diverse perspectives among publishers packaging this research and making it available; and finally we need more diverse perspectives among librarians who are organizing and curating this material and making it discoverable to researchers. As librarian Charlotte Roh notes, we need "to push back against these biased systems and support publications that might not otherwise have a voice."[24] Likewise, Mountz et al. provide crucial advice:

> We should take time to seek out unfamiliar names that may be attached to high quality, original work, names we do not recognize because they have been mapped as marginal to the field by gendered, racialized, classed, heteronormative, and ableist power relations. We can recognize the value of collective authorship, mentorship, collaboration, community building, and activist work in the germination and sharing of ideas.[25]

As we work to preserve the past and present for the future, we need to do so with an intentional aim toward creating a more inclusive record of knowledge creation using a more inclusive method of knowledge sharing and preservation. We must, as librarian Melissa Adler encourages, "bear in mind that the power to establish … what counts as knowledge operates through reiteration

and citation, but also through exclusion. In fact, power relies on the things it excludes, producing absences and silences through acts of refusal, concealment, exclusion, or restriction."[26] To preserve a true vision of our scholarly past for the future, we must challenge our current values and power structures and work to ensure that all voices are heard throughout the ages.

Notes

1. Grace Githaiga, "Fake News: A Threat to Digital Inclusion," *Media Development* 65, no. 1 (2019): 35–38. For more on this, see also John Holmwood's chapter in this volume. Eric Bradner, "Conway: Trump White House Offered 'Alternative Facts' on Crowd Size," CNN, January 23, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/22/politics /kellyanne-conway-alternative-facts/index.html.

2. Historian Anthony Grafton describes it thus: "No apparatus can prevent all mistakes or eliminate all disagreements. … Nonetheless, the culturally contingent and eminently fallible footnote offers the only guarantee we have that statements about the past derive from identifiable sources." Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). I would further argue that careful attention must be paid to *what* is preserved in order to furnish a broad range of "identifiable sources," comprising multiple and differing voices and perspectives.

3. Rebecca Hankins, "Racial Realism: An African American Muslim Woman in the Field," in *Where Are All the Librarians of Color? The Experiences of People of Color in Academia*, ed. Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juárez (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2015), 212, http://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/156069.

4. Rodney G. S. Carter, "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence," *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 217–218.

5. Kate Theimer, "Two Meanings of 'Archival Silences' and Their Implications," *ArchivesNext* (blog), March 27, 2012.

6. Nicole M. Brown et al., "Mechanized Margin to Digitized Center: Black Feminism's Contributions to Combatting Erasure within the Digital Humanities," *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 10, no. 1 (2016): 110–125, https://doi.org/10 .3366/ijhac.2016.0163.

7. Brown et al., "Mechanized Margin to Digitized Center."

8. Rebecka T. Sheffield, "More than Acid-Free Folders: Extending the Concept of Preservation to Include the Stewardship of Unexplored Histories," *Library Trends* 64, no. 3 (2016): 574–575, https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0001.

9. The Stonewall riots took place over two days in June 1969 when NYC police attempted to "take over" Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. Bar patrons overpowered the police and resisted their attempts at violent abuse of power.

10. Sheffield, "More than Acid-Free Folders," 573–574; Rabia Gibbs, "The Heart of the Matter: The Developmental History of African American Archives," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 196, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.75.1.n1612w 0214242080.

11. Sheffield, "More than Acid-Free Folders," 580; Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, Difference Incorporated (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

12. Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), "Scholarship as Conversation," Text, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, February 9, 2015, http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#conversation.

13. Alison Mountz et al., "For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14, no. 4 (2015): 1244.

14. Mountz et al., "For Slow Scholarship," 1241.

15. Philosopher Paolo Virno refers to the concept of "mass intellectuality," based on the Marxist ideas of knowledge as labor, and distinguishes between this and a "labour aristocracy" centered on "scientific erudition," Joss Winn, "Mass Intellectuality," *Josswinn.Org* (blog), June 4, 2014, https://josswinn.org/2014/06/04/mass -intellectuality/; See also Joss Winn and Richard Hall, eds., *Mass Intellectuality and Democratic Leadership in Higher Education* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

16. Ricardo L. Punzalan and Michelle Caswell, "Critical Directions for Archival Approaches to Social Justice," *The Library Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2016): 29, https://doi .org/10.1086/684145.

17. Michelle Caswell, Alda Allina Migoni, and Noah Geraci, "Representation, Symbolic Annihilation, and the Emotional Potentials of Community Archives" (Gender and Sexuality in Information Science Symposium, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC, 2016).

18. Caswell, Migoni, and Geraci, "Representation."

19. Mukurtu, "About"; Local Contexts, "About," accessed May 1, 2019, http:// localcontexts.org/about/.

20. Mukurtu, "About"; Local Contexts, "About."

21. DocNow, "About," Documenting the Now, accessed May 1, 2019, https://www .docnow.io/.

22. DocNow, https://www.docnow.io/.

23. James Currall and Peter McKinney, "Investing in Value: A Perspective on Digital Preservation," *D-Lib Magazine* 12, no. 4 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1045/april2006 -mckinney.

24. Charlotte Roh, "Library Publishing and Diversity Values: Changing Scholarly Publishing through Policy and Scholarly Communication Education," *College & Research Libraries News* 77, no. 2 (2016): 82–85, https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.77.2.9446.

25. Mountz et al., "For Slow Scholarship," 1250.

26. Melissa Adler, "Classification along the Color Line: Excavating Racism in the Stacks," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 24, https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i1.17.