

ABSTRACT

“Creating New Archives and Reinventing the Old”:
The Development of Authority and Professionalization in Archives and the Challenges to
Them

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Archives management has developed from a subcategory of history to its own profession through measures such as guidelines for archival practices and access, as well as standards in education and certification, all of which established professionalization and authority. With the establishment of professionalization and authority there have been challenges to both the physical and intellectual contents of archives such as the questioning of the use of science to authentic documents, the alteration of the archival record through addition, theft, and alteration of documents, and the advocating of archives to expand their collections to include underrepresented groups. These challenges have caused archivists to reevaluate and alter their policies in order to better serve the community and preserve their collections.

“Creating New Archives and Reinventing the Old”:
The Development of Authority and Professionalization in Archives and the Challenges to
Them

by

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DEDICATION

To my amazing parents.

Having parents like you, I came into this world with everything I ever needed. I never could have done this without your support and encouragement

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“What’s past is prologue,” states the Shakespeare quote that is inscribed on the National Archives building aptly describes the reason that archives exist. In order to better understand the past as well as to prove the validity of facts, archives house and preserve the documents that establish these things. As part of their code of ethics, archivists are expected to preserve the physical and intellectual content of documents, which has been done by establishing a level of authority that seeks to set boundaries and ensure the proper care and interpretation of their collections.

Archives originally began as a collection of documents related to state activities. As they developed into repositories for a wide variety of institutions, more regulations were needed in order to ensure that accuracy was retained in the documents. For many decades, archivists worked mainly with historians to help them do research, but as archives quickly began to expand due to an increasing amount of documents, as well as, historians’ wishes to preserve as many documents as possible, archivists began to form their own profession that focused on the care of the records themselves. As part of this process, archives established a form of authority regarding the collections they housed in their archives as well as policies for adding collections and allowing researchers access. With these changes came professionalization for archivists in the form of Library and Information Science degrees that taught correct archival procedures, the use of the Society of American Archivists reviews and guidelines for archives, as well as the

establishment of the Academy of Certified Archivists which allowed for accreditation within the field.

With the establishment of this professionalization and authority over the archive came challenges to the archivist's authority in a variety of forms. Some historians questioned the authenticity of documents in archives because they presented a different viewpoint than the one that had been commonly accepted. Unscrupulous people, often posing as researchers or abusing the privileges granted to them as researchers, sought to alter the content of archives through theft, addition, or alteration of the documents. Although these are negative challenges to an archive, there are also instances of positive challenges such as requests to expand the collections to include the records of typically underrepresented groups.

Just as historians are charged with portraying history in a manner in which people can understand the past, archivists must preserve the documents that support these interpretations. By using the authority which they have established in the archive to protect the documents physically and intellectually, archivists are able to give future generations the opportunity to interpret history based on the documents that have been preserved.

CHAPTER TWO

“Defining the contours of historical present and its positive futures”: Literature Review

Overview

Today, the word archive is associated with collections of documents that have what is referred to as “enduring value.” They are considered the important documents of a society, such as the Declaration of Independence in the United States and the Magna Charta in Great Britain. But archives are more than this; they house the records of civilizations, as well as evidence of daily business of that society. Archives began as a place to store documents, mainly pertaining to government transactions. Since the beginning of civilization people have generated documents pertaining to life, whether that was recording history or regarding how they would manage society through business, government, and individual life. In fact, one of the best known examples of an ancient archive was the Domesday Book, which was a census of the inhabitants England in the Middle Ages.¹

But archives did not always fit into the modern connotation of an institution that houses documents pertaining to everyday life and transactions. In fact, as James O’Toole and Richard Cox note, “the word *archives* was used in the ancient world to designate any collection of written records, including materials we now would consider the domain of

¹ James M. O’Toole and Richard J. Cox, *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), 49.

libraries, and not just those of enduring value, as modern usage implies.”² For most of history, archives were used to house the documents that had little to do specifically with the lives of individuals, as many records today do. While they did include census records such as those in the Domesday book, they were mainly concerned with the matters of the state and the church. As Francis X. Blouin, Jr. states,

With the beginning of the Christian era in the West, the idea of “vital” records took on an additional sacramental importance. Archives now gave structure and social purpose to the church as the epicenter of community in the ways it officially recognized birth, marriage, and death. The process of recording these life moments provided additional links between church and state.³

This in turn also led to a sense of authority in the records that archives contained.

Because there was a low literacy rate, the fact that information was recorded in a permanent form that could be preserved allowed oral history to be verified:

Over time, archival documents (and archivists) increasingly became the primary sources of proof and verification in contested claims and disputes, commonly between royalty and the papacy, between lesser nobles, between communities and monasteries, and later among royal heads of state. In the process, the conceptions of archives themselves evolved into places where careful research could resolve contested claims at the highest level, giving the idea of “judicious use” both literal and figurative meaning.⁴

While this gave authority to the documents that the archive contained, it also restricted access to these documents to those who could gain access to them, which was often a small elite group. Only those with a certain level of prestige could view them.

All of these archives were, of course, private institutions in the sense that they were closed for any but official use, which added to their authoritative role. Since

² O’Toole and Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*, 47

³ Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

a decision based on the authentic archival record was implicitly authoritative, archives themselves gained further social and political position as places of reference, verification, and adjudication based on truth.⁵

By now the idea of the archive being the authority that people could rely upon had been established. And the archivists were the authority figures that granted the documents their authority based on their location in the archive. As Blouin notes, this also ties into today's association of the archive with preserving the documents of endearing value: "Hence, too, the contemporary notion of archives as places that permanently memorialize what societies and institutions regard as essential transactions."⁶

The concept of the modern archive began with the French Revolution, which led archivists and governments to review the documents they were preserving and the methods they were using. The upheaval of the government called into question the necessity of records, such as the titles to nobilities' lands, as the nobility became obsolete with the inception of a new government. As Judith M. Panitch quotes from Ernst Posner's "Some Aspects of Archival Development Since the French Revolution":

The advances of that era, writes Posner, were three-fold. First, "the framework of a nation-wide public archives administration was established," encompassing the existing but defunct depositories, as well as active record-producing public entities. Second, "the state acknowledged its responsibility respecting the care of the documentary heritage of the past." And finally, the Revolution definitively established the principle that archival records should be accessible to the public.⁷

Once these principles were established, documents were divided into two separate categories, one that would be saved and the other which would not. "On the one hand,

⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷ Judith M. Panitch, "Liberty, Equality, Posterity?: Some Archival Lessons from the Case of the French Revolution. *The American Archivist* 59, no. 1 (Winder, 1996): 31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40293951> (accessed January 27, 2012).

they suffered in the by-now infamous campaign to eradicate all traces of the defeated monarchy... At the same time, a mood of conservation had taken hold, resulting in the establishment of museums, library and archival repositories.”⁸ In 1790 the National Archives were consolidated and with them the records of both groups were sorted and arranged as, “the Revolution was just as concerned with establishing archives as with eliminating them, and this concern extended—albeit belatedly and rather brutally—to the records of the old regime as well as the new. True, these records were preserved neither intact not in context. They were sorted and reordered, frequently abandoned and misused.”⁹ What Panitch notes as interesting in this sorting and arranging of the archives is “the way in which some records (principally the founding documents of the new order) appear invested of equal parts practicality and symbolism, while the significance of others (remnants of the Old Regime) shifted abruptly and entirely from the realm of practicality to that of pure symbolism.”¹⁰ Documents of the new order were included in the National Archives, while many documents of the now defunct Old Regime “were swept out of archives and consigned as ‘historic monuments’ to libraries, or were destroyed entirely.”¹¹

In the end, the new order used and developed the archives in order to reflect the history they wanted remembered. “The creation of the new repositories helped the Revolution to affirm its own identity, while the triage and reclassification of old records

⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹¹ Ibid., 44.

guaranteed that a particular interpretation of the past would be imposed upon succeeding generations.”¹² While seeming to destroy every vestige of the old monarchy including archives, the new order actually used the archives to their advantage. “Creating new archives and reinventing the old thus constituted a founding act of the new Republic.”¹³ Not only were archives an important tool for the revolution and its interpretation of events, but the French Revolution, in turn, was an important event for archives as it showed how important they were in relating and preserving history, and also brought about new techniques of organization.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, archivists began to realize that more documents were being produced than could be reasonably preserved, but historians still insisted on the preservation of them. With the increasing number of documents, archivists found there was less time to devote to the individual documents, and as always, less space to store them in. For historians, preserving all documentation in archives was essential to their research because any piece could possibly be useful to them in the future. But archivists began to separate into their own profession apart from that of historians. In working closely with historians, archivists had created a particular viewpoint of history that any one working with those documents would also employ. “More figuratively, archivists became the custodians of particular understandings of national histories. Since the authorities they deployed in processing these pasts structured an understanding of the agencies involved in defining the contours of historical present

¹² Panitch, *Liberty, Equality, Posterity?*, 47.

¹³ Panitch, *Liberty, Equality, Posterity?*, 47.

and its possible futures.”¹⁴ Through their own science of describing and arranging the collections, archivists were using their authority to shape and define the history that historians were writing. Today a definition of an archive can be stated as thus: Archives are “those records of any public or private institution which are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference and research purposes and which have been deposited or have been selected for deposit in an archival institution.”¹⁵

Professionalization

By the early twentieth century, archives were also beginning to develop their own standards and professional evaluations, expanding the profession from a subcategory of history and establishing a separate professional identity. Many of the practices that had been implemented in archives were not uniform, and the standardization of the early twentieth century sought to establish a uniform set of rules that would govern all archives and help them to be more efficient and usable. Standards can be seen through both training and evaluation of archivists and archives. The American Historical Association played a large part in the development of a separate archival profession. The Society of American Archivists was established in December 1936. The mission of the organization was “...to promote sound principles of archival economy and to facilitate cooperation among archivists and archival agencies.”¹⁶ The decision to organize the Society of American Archivists created a sense of professional unity among archivists and a set of

¹⁴ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, 35.

¹⁵ T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 16.

¹⁶ Society of American Archivists, “An Introduction to SAA,” <http://www2.archivists.org/about/introduction-to-saa> (accessed December 1, 2011).

standards to work towards. Degrees in library science with archival specialization were offered at universities after the SAA developed guidelines in 1977 that defined appropriate professional training for such programs.¹⁷ Standards were also implemented for archival management in order to be able to create a level to aspire to.

In part, this step toward standardization and professionalization was driven by the move away from archival authority in history. While archives had always seemed to work together with historians using the documents archives contained to substantiate the historical theories historians posed, archives were now beginning to focus on professionalization within their own field. At the turn of the twentieth century, the American Historical Association supported this development of the archival profession, even advocating in Congress for the creation of a National Archives. This development was influenced by the goal to create a national authority on which to base history.

The quest for a National Archives in the United States was thus substantially based on the established authorities of American historical understanding, as well as on a perceived need to spread this understanding broadly. Accessioning records into a centralized National Archives was to be a source of validation for the authentic history of the nation, the ultimate authority over the past.¹⁸

American archivists often looked toward Europe's models which "placed a new emphasis on retaining government records for their possible use by historians, rather than taking the risk of destroying them for short-term practical gain."¹⁹ Another aspect of European archives that Americans looked to integrate early on was "a passive, noninterventionist

¹⁷ O'Toole and Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*, 78.

¹⁸ Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

position when it came to transferring and archiving active bureaucratic records.”²⁰ As Blouin and Rosenberg explain, “The archivists’ role was to assure the records under their care had emerged from an authentic process of creation and to act simply as their custodian, overseeing for the state the needs of accurate records production and retention.”²¹ As part of this process archivists began to focus more on developing their policies and procedures, rather than working solely with historians to help them substantiate their theories. But as Blouin states, at the beginning of twentieth century history was still the main focus of many archives as these were the primary users of the archive:

While these transformations began to distance professional archivists from historical analysis, they still remained focused on the evolution and influence of government institutions and state officials, and hence on the central historical questions of the day. They stemmed not from new understandings of history, but from a recognition that the production of administrative documents was increasing rapidly and the professionalization of their archiving required more sophisticated methods for arrangement, description, and especially retrieval.²²

Archives were not necessarily moving away from the historical aspect but attempting to cope with the amount of material they were facing for organization.

As a result of this influx of new records, records management began to emerge as a way for archivists to handle the increasing amounts of paperwork that archives were being asked to care for. The Society of American Archivists looked for ways to establish this separate identity, as well as to promote the new methods of records management.

During the 1960s’ the SAA’s journal, *American Archivist* addressed the issue of complex

²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹ Ibid., 38.

²² Ibid., 38.

records and the development of professional standards for managing them.²³ As part of this shift from working with historians to working with records, archivists had to establish their own education standards for both current and future archivists. Questions they began to ask were: “What kind of knowledge and skills should archives have, and how should they acquire them? For the early generations of American archivists, the answers to those questions had often been informal and unpredictable. Archivists were most often individuals who had fallen into their profession on the way to or from something else.”²⁴ These questions were answered through the development of archival science and information management degrees which began to be implemented by the 1970s at various universities across the country.²⁵ In conjunction with these degree programs, SAA established a formal procedure for certifying archivists in 1987 under the authority of the Academy of Certified Archivists.²⁶ Like many other professions such as accounting and law, this involved showing proof of the completion of either educational requirements or work experience as well as completion of an exam beginning in 1989.²⁷ Continuing education was also required in order to maintain certification.

Another question that arose was how to create a uniform level of quality across all archives. In order to increase awareness of how archives could improve, institutional evaluation was implemented for many archives. This involved a study of individual archives either by themselves or by an outside evaluator, to determine where they could

²³ Ibid., 43.

²⁴ O’Toole, *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts*, 77.

²⁵ Ibid., 77.

²⁶ Ibid., 79.

²⁷ Ibid., 79- 80.

improve. While this was a good idea, there was no formal accreditation system implemented for archives like there existed for museums through the American Association of Museum's Museum Assessment Program. Also "while SAA published successively more refined models for self-study that archivists could use in their own repositories, few took advantage of them systematically."²⁸ Despite this lack of cohesiveness in archival standards and practices, the attempts helped to make strides in improving archival identity.

Channeling professional energy in this way produced other evidence of the consolidation of archival identity. In particular, for the first time since the 1930s, many archivists devoted sustained attention to studying and writing about archival theory, attempting to reexamine the existing intellectual basis for archives work and to push it in new directions. By the 1980s, what one observer called "the age of archival analysis" brought renewed intellectual vigor to the profession.²⁹

Despite their late start, archives were becoming a strong profession with regulations that helped to maintain the standards they had established.

In addition to regulating their own actions within archives, archivists established policies governing access to archives by researchers. In order to enforce them, these policies should be available to all staff members. As Michael J. Kurtz notes, "An access policy, for example, outlines who may use archival collections, when such collections are open for research, and how researchers can gain access to closed collections. Procedures outline how staff members are to deal with researchers when they visit or communicate with the archives."³⁰ The access policy will differ with each institution but establishing

²⁸ Ibid., 79.

²⁹ Ibid., 80.

³⁰ Michael J. Kurtz, *Managing Archival & Manuscript Repositories*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004): 80.

policies helps to enforce them. For example, an access policy may state that researchers can only view collections in the reading room, which is “a secure space designed for patrons to work with the repository’s holdings.”³¹ By enforcing policies and not allowing patrons to remove materials from the reading room, archives are able to establish stronger security.

Selection/Arrangement/Description

Selecting, arranging, and describing are the three main tasks that archivists accomplish. As T. R. Schellenberg notes, archives have two essential elements. The first element “relates to the reasons why materials were produced or accumulated. To be archives, materials must have been created or accumulated to accomplish some purpose.” The second element “relates to the values for which materials are preserved. To be archives, materials must be preserved for reasons other than those for which they were created or accumulated.”³² In order to begin this process, archivists first should consider how records have been traditionally maintained. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, archives had little need to implement records management principles as the number of papers that archives housed was manageable. But with the change in how documents were produced, the switch from handwritten to typed papers, and later on with the advent of the photocopier and email attachments, managing records became more difficult. The theories of Hilary Jenkinson who advocated being a “keeper” of records

³¹ Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival & Records Terminology*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005): 326.

³² Schellenberg, *Modern Archives*, 13.

were no longer practical. Archivists such as T. R. Schellenberg rose to prominence because of their theories on records management.

It was the archivists at the National Archives of the United States who broke this cycle of unretainable records production and irresponsible decision making regarding archival material by asserting that archivists needed to adopt new responsibilities in addition to those they already accepted. These archivists asserted that it was their responsibility to determine which records entered the archives and which did not.³³

In part this new focus on selection of records was important because not only did it establish the authority of the archivists in deciding what the archives would collect, but also helped with the theories of records management and the understanding that archives could not collect everything.

But this new understanding of archives and records management was difficult to adjust to. For many archivists the concept of having to decide what to keep was a change in the archival paradigm of being a keeper of all records. “Archivists clearly preferred to frame themselves and their profession as a part of a noble endeavor dedicated to preserving the past’s recorded legacy rather than as heirs of a pragmatic approach that would lead toward a slippery relativism and inevitable criticism from those unhappy over decisions regarding what to keep and what to destroy.”³⁴ Selection for archivists involves reviewing the mission statement of the institution as well as the collections policy to determine if the records that are being considered fit with previously defined criteria. Archivists also should review what is currently in the collections in order to have a sense

³³ Frank Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 3-4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

of past selection decisions.³⁵ When choosing new records to add to the collection, questions to consider include if the material fits the mission and collections policy, if it is a priority for the institutions to acquire the material, and if it is already known what will be the appropriate levels of documentation needed.³⁶

After working through the selection process, archivists arrange and describe the records, in a usable and sensible manner for researchers, as well as describe their content. The process of arrangement is often based on the original order of the records if this appears to be sensible. “Archivists hope that when the records arrive at their repositories they will be in the original order of their creation and use by the records creator, thereby preserving important evidence.”³⁷ This original order often offers insight into the deeper meaning of the records as they take on a different message when arranged a certain way.

As James O’Neill elaborates:

the principle of provenance means that the original order and integrity of the records should be retained, since that order provides information about the men and women who created the records and their activities that goes well beyond the informational content of the individual documents. The relationships between the records can, thus, tell us something that the individual records cannot. They can, for example, reflect the decision-making *process* and not just the decisions themselves.³⁸

But often they are not in the original order or not in an order that makes sense. In these cases, archivists must arrange the records to what they believe the creator intended, as well as in a way that researchers can easily follow. For example, separating records into

³⁵ Ibid., 99.

³⁶ Ibid., 111.

³⁷ O’Toole and Cox, *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts*, 101.

³⁸ James E. O’Neill, “Replevin: A Public Archivist’s Perspective,” *College & Research Libraries* 40, no. 1 (January 1979): 28.

categories based on their type and usage will help researchers find the information they are looking for. In other cases, retaining the original order of the documents is more important if it appears that this arrangement influences how they are interpreted.

Description is the third part of this process and involves describing the scope and content of the record series. Describing the records not only helps to put them into context within the record series, but helps researchers to know the full extent of the series

Modernization

By the end of the twentieth century archives had transformed from a passive place where documents were kept because of their historical significance and value, to a thriving place of records management where the active process of selecting collections based on their relation to the mission of the institution, as well as their utility and value to the researchers was an integral part of their operation. With these changes came professionalization as archivists sought to establish their profession as independent of the historians whom they had previously served. The establishment of the Society of American Archivists and the standards that developed in the second half of the twentieth century largely helped to continue this movement.

Other considerations for the modernization of archives came with the changes in technology that developed in the twentieth century. Photocopiers became prevalent making it possible to reproduce documents thus creating a safer environment for records as copies could be given to researchers rather than the original. Also the concept of digitizing documents became feasible in the late twentieth century. This allowed collections to be made accessible to researchers who could not physically visit the institution, as well as provided a backup copy of the records. In regard to security this is

important because it creates a master copy of the document for future reference if its contents were ever to be contested. One of the challenges that archivists encounter regarding digitizing collections is that many archives now have such large collections that digitizing what they currently own would take years.

Academy of Certified Archivists

The Academy of Certified Archivists was established in 1989 at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists.³⁹ It continues the Society of American Archivists' mission of providing professionalization by certifying archivists who meet its qualifications and pass its examination. In order to qualify for certification, archivists must have either a Master's degree with an archival concentration plus one year of archival experience, or a Master's degree without an archival concentration plus two years of archival experience.⁴⁰ By requiring archivists to have a certain level of archival knowledge either through education or experience, the Academy of Certified Archivists helps to establish authority in archives. Not only do archivists have to pass an initial examination, but they are also required to maintain their certification either through continuing education or retesting. This certification maintenance was "based on the recognition that archivists must remain abreast of new developments and maintain their

³⁹Academy of Certified Archivists, "About the ACA/Contact Us," <http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/about-us/about-the-aca.html?228e5bbf660cb545fc854f5c048c7be7c=89a05be9aab148cdb01235aff7be0647> (accessed December 1, 2011).

⁴⁰ Academy of Certified Archivists, "Examination Application for Certified Archivist," <http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/images/forms/application.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2011).

basic skills if they were to continue to be effective.”⁴¹ Through this certification process the Academy of Certified Archivists helps to bring a level of professionalization and authority to archives as it not only establishes standard practices and knowledge but it also requires proficiency in these areas. The authority that archivists hold in archives is based partly on the certification that the Academy of Certified Archivists provides. By requiring archivists to have a certain level of education or equivalent work experience, the Academy is stating that there are certain principles that archivists should know and apply. By applying these principles in the archive, the documents under their authority are believed to be authentic and trustworthy.

⁴¹ Maygene Daniels, “Building on a New Foundation,” Academy of Certified Archivists. <http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/about-us/history/33.html> (accessed December 1, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE

“The question can be resolved intellectually”: The Use of Science to Authenticate Archival Materials

The de la Peña Diary

Much of history has been built around continuing traditions of stories whose truth is taken for granted. Not touted as myths, these “histories” are taken as the truth and in some cases attempting to shed doubt on these facts is paramount to blasphemy. For the majority of Texans, the legends surrounding the battle of the Alamo are an important part of their history; they symbolize their independence and determination. From the side of Texas, the story of the Alamo is one of legend simply because there were few survivors to tell the story, but the story that was told was one of heroism and fighting until death for something they believed in. But what if the stories of how Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Travis died had been exaggerated? What if there was a written, eyewitness account of the battle that described what really happened? And what if the history we have believed for so long is not really the true story? These questions created the controversy that surrounded the Peña diary and necessitated its testing. By bringing scientific testing to the archive, the authenticity of a document is no longer based on how well it is accepted by the historical community, but in the empirical data generated by these scientific tests.

One of the ways in which archival authority can be established is by scientifically testing documents to prove their authenticity. These tests show the authenticity of documents by analyzing the paper, ink, and handwriting, as well as comparing them to

other already authenticated documents of the period. By knowing the methods through which a document can be authenticated, archives establish their authority in determining authenticity regardless of content. In recent years, archivists have partnered with conservators to test the authenticity of documents using scientific methods. The testing of documents allows archives to establish authority as a profession and as individual institutions in determining the authority of the documents they preserve and allow access to.

The arguments against the validity of the Peña diary can be seen in the books of Bill Groneman, *Defense of a Legend* and *Death of a Legend*, as well as in other articles by Thomas Ricks Lindley, who critiqued James Crisp's article, "The Little Book That Wasn't There: The Myth and Mystery of the de la Peña Diary". In these books and articles, both Groneman and Lindley defend the well-known history and argue that that diary must in fact be a fake or a forgery. In his article, "'Just as I Have Written It': A Study of the Authenticity of the Manuscript of José Enrique de la Peña's Account of the Texas Campaign" David B. Gracy II states,

During the quarter century since the Peña narrative appeared in English, whether it is genuine or a fraud has been argued on three bases: first and primarily, on the content of the document, concentrating on matters of history (apparent anachronisms and how fully certain matters in the narrative conform to known facts); second, on the quality of the translation (claims to genuineness of the document have been supported in part by employing different meanings from those used in the original translation for certain critically important words); and third, on the nature of the document (whether it is a diary in the strict sense of a narrative produced subsequently from a diary and buttressed with documentation from other sources.)¹

¹ David B Gracy, III. "'Just as I Have Written It': A Study of the Authenticity of the Manuscript of José Enrique de la Peña's Account of the Texas Campaign", *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 105, no. 2 (October 2001): 256-257. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30242103> (accessed May 23, 2011). See also, <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~gracy/biography.html/>.

From these three previously tested bases of content, quality of translation, and the nature of the document, Gracy used the document as an example of scientific testing for his class, “Fakes, Facsimiles, and Forgeries” at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin. Upon the conclusion of the tests, Gracy, who is the Governor Bill Daniel Professor in Archival Enterprise and director of the Center for the Cultural Record, Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a historian, founding member of the Academy of Certified Archivists, and internationally recognized as an authority in the field of archives, explained in his article how the diary was established as authentic despite its controversial content.

In order to prove the document’s authenticity, it was tested on a series of different attributes that should have been true for the document if it were truly authentic. Don E. Carlton, director of the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin invited Gracy and his colleagues and graduate students in the Archival and Records Enterprise and Preservation and Conservation Studies Program in UT’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science to conduct tests on the Peña manuscript. The goal of the study was to “investigate the physical characteristics of the document, such elements as its paper, its ink, the relationship between the two, and signs of age and aging.”² In short the questions that Gracy and his colleagues and students were asked to answer were: “do the physical features of the document conform to the features of similar documents of the period, the authenticity of which is indisputable,” also “are there any physical characteristics of the document that suggest forgery,” and “to comment also on

² Ibid., 257.

whether, as Groneman asserts, one John A. Laflin, a well-known creator of fraudulent documents of the first part of the nineteenth century, including even documents bearing the supposed signature of David Crockett, could have been the forger of the manuscript.”³

Groneman, on the other hand, believed that the documents could not be authenticated by the use of scientific testing (except for one rare and expensive test), but rather could be authenticated by use of intellect and the concept that scientific tests would prove the document’s inaccuracies. He stated in his book, *Death of a Legend*, “I have never advocated the testing of the papers since I feel the question can be resolved intellectually through the examination of the historical evidence.”⁴ He also scornfully noted that “a number of professional historians whose business it is to revolve historical questions by research and evidence are calling upon another discipline, science, to answer this question.”⁵ As more tests and methods for testing have become available, science had become increasingly important in recent years to authentic documents. Physical testing of a document can reveal inconsistencies in the document itself or evidence of forgery in the techniques used to produce the document. In the same way, digitizing documents also provides ways for archivists to examine them for fraud. With digital documents, computer science can be used to track changes that have been made to the document to alter it. Also digital documents can be compared to a master copy to check for alterations and changes.

³ Ibid., 257.

⁴ Bill Groneman, *Death of a Legend: The Myth and Mystery Surrounding the Death of Davy Crockett*, (Plano, TX: Republic of Texas Press, 1999), 155.

⁵ Ibid., 156.

The Hitler diaries are an important example of why documents should be scientifically tested. Had the Hitler diaries been tested early on, evidence would have proved the diaries to be a blatant forgery. Instead, fascination with the personal life of Hitler helped to sell the diaries and quieted skeptics who wanted to further test them before publication. The promise of publication kept them from further testing. As Robert Harris notes in his book, *Selling Hitler*, “[T]he editors did not have the slightest doubt that the books were genuine. They had to be. Over half a million marks had already been spent. It was impossible to conceive of the shrewd, conservative, financially cautious managers of Gruner and Jahr investing in anything unless they were absolutely certain of its value.”⁶ In fact, it seems to be that because there was so much interest in the topic that the publishers continued ahead with the project even when there were obvious flaws. For instance, as Harris explains,

The forger, after all, had failed to take even the most rudimentary precautions. The diaries were written in ordinary school notebooks stained with tea. The initials on the front of at least one volume were made of plastic. The labels, signed by Bormann and Hess, stating that the books were ‘the property of the Fuhrer’ were supposed to span thirteen years but were all typed on the same machine. The diaries’ pages were made of paper manufactured after 1945. The binding glue and thread which held them together all contained chemicals which proved them to be postwar. The entries themselves, dashed off by a man with no academic training, were pitted with inaccuracies. The ink in which they were written was bought from an ordinary artists’ shop. Logically, the Hitler diaries hoax should have collapsed in the spring of 1982, the moment the experts started to work.⁷

The lure of the profit that would come from publishing such a controversial work kept publishers from thoroughly investigating a work that obviously would cause debate. In

⁶ Robert Harris, *Selling Hitler*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 156.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

fact, that was most likely the reason the Hitler diaries were published so quickly: the controversial subject was sure to sell.

The Peña diary was not necessarily considered to be quite as sensational and controversial as the Hitler diaries. But its contents did change the way the Alamo and the War for Texas Independence were viewed, a topic that is still contested and debated to this day. While the manuscript has been tested and authenticated through science, its opponents still maintain that its provenance, the documented history of ownership for a document or object, has a hundred year gap between the writing of the diary and its resurfacing. As Jesús Sánchez Garza, editor of the manuscript which was published in Mexico in 1955 stated in the diary's preamble, the diary was not published immediately following the end of the war due to Peña's poverty, as well as the efforts of senior officers such as Santa Anna to suppress the manuscript because of its unflattering portrayal of their actions during the war.⁸ In the case of the Hitler diaries, the forgers created a provenance for it by using a plane crash that was known to have contained Hitler's personal papers to explain why the diaries did not surface immediately after the end of the war.⁹ Of course, both of these cases demonstrate that provenance cannot always be relied upon to authenticate works because sometimes it is lacking in authentic works and other times it has been created for false works.

Another question that Gracy and his class sought to answer was whether the paper used in the diary was consistent with paper available during the period. Groneman

⁸ James E. Crisp, "The Little Book That Wasn't There: The Myth and Mystery of the de la Peña Diary". *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (October 1994): 269. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30241460>. (accessed June 4, 2011).

⁹ Gracy, "Just as I Have Written It," 265.

argued that the diary appeared to be made of scraps of paper, which he believed was inconsistent with Peña's status as an army officer. In fact, the paper used appeared to be scraps of paper because it was in quarto form, which was created by taking the broadside sheets, folding them in half once, then folding them again. This produced a smaller size paper, which could easily be carried, an additional benefit for Peña during the campaign. Gracy's tests revealed that all of the paper

tested for this purpose is made of linen, cotton, and bast fiber, not wood. It is handmade, which is readily observable by the thicker concentration of fibers on one edge of the paper and by small random clumps of fiber in the paper, both characteristics resulting from the movement of the mould in the hands of the papermaker.¹⁰

Furthermore, fourteen graphic water marks and eleven name watermarks were compared to the similar water marks of the period with the following results, "A total of forty-four broadsides in the holdings of the Center for American History exhibit name and graphic watermarks that match—in some cases exactly, in others almost exactly—those of the Peña document. The vast majority of the forty-four are Mexican Army imprints dated between 1832 and 1837."¹¹ The watermarks were also consistent throughout with the use of the quartos. Gracy states, "Inspection of both the pattern in the paper and the watermarks and counterwatermarks in the quartos of the Peña document reveals that: the size of the quartos, the direction of the laid line pattern, and the alteration of the watermarks and counterwatermarks are amazingly consistent."¹² He further states that "the paper has a consistency indicating that the writer worked with substantial, uniform

¹⁰ Ibid., 260.

¹¹ Ibid., 261.

¹² Ibid., 262.

blocks of paper.”¹³ Testing also revealed that iron gall was used to create the ink written on the document. “To the naked eye, the ink presents no obvious bite, as nowhere has it eaten completely through the paper. But under microscopic examination, throughout the document, one can see that the ink has begun to rust, weakening the fiber of the paper, as would be expected.”¹⁴ Forgers often make mistakes in the paper, watermarks, and ink, but as Gracy and his students concluded, for the Peña document, these elements were authentic for the time period in which the diary was produced.

Following this train of thought, Gracy further refutes Groneman’s claim that the sections regarding David Crockett were added later on. Groneman states, “It is possible that some of the Peña papers are authentic and that someone, later on, enhanced them by adding all of the interesting parts.”¹⁵ In his rebuttal, Gracy states that,

If a forger indeed inserted the Crockett reference, the person was wonderfully adept at meeting the physical demands of the task. On the Crockett leaf, the person would have had to match not only the water stain at the bottom of the page which correlates perfectly with similar stains on several quartos on either side of the leaf with the Crockett reference, but also the pink stain at the top of the page that permeates eight quartos (sixteen leaves on either side). If we assume, on the other hand, that the forger created both of these signs of physical treatment, then he or she had to manufacture thirty-four pages of material simply to insert the brief Crockett passage.¹⁶

But it would not be the first time that a forger had created copious amounts of material just to insert small, but profitable references. “One early and fervent argument in behalf of the genuineness of the hundreds of pages in the sixty-two volumes of the Hitler diaries

¹³ Ibid., 263.

¹⁴ Ibid., 268.

¹⁵ Groneman, *Death of a Legend*, 155.

¹⁶ Gracy, “Just as I Have Written It,” 264.

was that no forger would ever write that much, and not just so much, but so much that was, admittedly, so boring. ‘I couldn’t believe that anyone would have gone to the trouble of forging something so banal,’ one reader admitted.”¹⁷ But the consistencies within the document appeared to make it authentic to the period. The issue that remained open was whether it actually was written by Peña.

Groneman argues that the handwriting throughout the diary does not appear consistent. Could it have been forged? Gracy replies to this by producing a letter which proves that Peña actually did have others help him in transcribing his account of the Texas Campaign.

The Valentín Gómez Farías Collection in the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin contains a copy of a letter from Peña written on June 11, 1838, in which Pena informed the president of Mexico that “so much thinking has affected my nervous system that *estoy malo del cerebro* [he could not think straight] and I must rely on a friend in order to write.”¹⁸

Therefore, this answers the question of why the writing within the diary varies, although no person writes exactly the same for each document, or even each page.¹⁹ An examination of Alejo Perez Garcia’s written statement to General Adrian Woll regarding what Perez Garcia knew about the Texas forces, a document for which Peña served as the secretary, reveals consistencies in his writing that are also reflected in the Peña diary. Features such as the initial upward stroke of the capital *J* and *E*, as well as the closed loop of the capital *P*, and the bold accent over the *e* in José are similar in all the documents.²⁰

The fact that the disputed diary was compared to documents which had impeccable

¹⁷ Ibid., 265.

¹⁸ Ibid., 265-266.

¹⁹ Ibid., 280.

²⁰ Ibid., 282-284.

provenances further authenticated the diary. While Charles Hamilton, a handwriting expert and author of *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, certified the Peña document as a fake, Gracy refutes Hamilton's claim as Gracy compared two forged documents, and he states, "the better strategy for demonstrating falsity is to establish the differences between the suspect document and genuine writing of the purported author of the suspect document."²¹

To further dispute the claims of forgery, one must remember that most forgeries are produced for a profit. The fact that the letter used to authenticate the handwriting was received by the University of Texas in 1921, a full three decades before the Peña diary surfaced makes the claims of forgery slightly unrealistic. According to Gracy, "For a forger to have created and planted that letter, and then have waited more than three decades to come forward with his creation is more unlikely than anything made up in regard to the Hitler diaries."²² The fact that a forger would create a letter to support a forgery and then wait thirty-four years to bring it forward seems improbable as most forgers are seeking to produce a quick profit. While Groneman argues that the Peña diary bears a remarkable resemblance to the Isaac Millsaps letter which had been proved to be a forgery produced by John Laflin, Gracy argues that

if the Peña letter in the Gómez Farías Collection, known to have been in existence and in unbroken custody since 1921, coinciding with the earliest possible opening of Laflin's career in forgery, was written by Laflin, then clearly Laflin had to have been working on the Peña scheme for decades, a remarkable period of patient

²¹ Ibid., 277.

²² Ibid., 266.

crafting for a greedy forger and an investment of time suggesting that the forger prided himself on the highest quality work.²³

To invest so much into a forgery is not characteristic of a forger. Most appear to create their forgeries for a quick turnover. Groneman supports this argument, stating, “A forger is not striving for historical cohesiveness in all of his works. He is merely trying to unload these things in exchange for money.”²⁴ If this is true, and it does fit the pattern of most forgers, it stands that the Peña diary should not be a forgery, because in order to produce it, Laflin, the supposed forger, would have to have been working on the project for nearly three decades. He also would have had to follow a consistent story within the letter and the diary, which as both Gracy and Groneman point out, is not the mode in which most forgers operate.

Also to be considered in Groneman’s claims that the document could be a forgery is that he is repeating Charles Hamilton’s claims that the document is forged. But in fact, Hamilton’s certification of forgery for the Peña diary was based on his perusal of only photocopies of the document rather than the actual document. Because he did not examine the actual document, Gracy notes Hamilton did not notice that the “paper exhibits characteristics expected of paper available to a man in Peña’s time and place,” the “[s]tains on the paper are characteristic almost exclusively of water” and “[n]one exhibit characteristics of artificial aging,” “[m]ultiple handwritings in the document are explained by a letter the archival custody of which predates the likely beginning of the forgery career of the only individual named as the possible forger, and antedating the

²³ Ibid., 275.

²⁴ Bill Groneman, *Defense of a Legend: Crockett and the de la Peña Diary*. (Plano, TX: Republic of Texas Press, 1994), 104.

appearance of the Peña manuscript by at least thirty years,” and finally that “[t]he ink is of the period—iron gall.”²⁵ Based on this evidence revealed during testing, as well as the fact that Hamilton only examined photocopies of the document, Gracy concluded that “Hamilton’s certification of forgery is worthless.”²⁶

In addition to David Gracy and his colleagues’ scientific examination of the Peña document, James Crisp, a historian at North Carolina State University, strongly supported the authenticity of the Peña document and refuted the arguments of Groneman and Thomas Ricks Lindley. One of his most compelling examples is the fact that mistranslation and misunderstanding of the meaning and context of the situation have led these historians to argue against the validity of the document. Most notably, Crisp uses the example of the execution of the prisoners at the Alamo and Groneman’s assertion that the Peña account must be false because as Groneman interprets it, the prisoners were led outside to Santa Ana’s “tent”, which Groneman argues,

The account indicates that after the prisoners were marched to the tent, they were executed within six feet of Santa Ana. That would have the executions taking place outside the walls of the Alamo. Accounts attributed to three independent witnesses who knew Crockett are all consistent in that they identify Crockett’s body *inside* the Alamo following the battle.²⁷

In response, Crisp argues that the word for tent would most likely have been “pabellón” which not only indicates a large military tent, but also is the same word as a banner or national flag. Crisp states,

²⁵ Gracy, “Just as I Have Written It,” 277.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁷ Groneman, *Defense of a Legend*, 60.

Thus the two completely independent sources agree on all essentials save the number of prisoners (five for Caro, six for Dolson), and yet Groneman wants to “eliminate [the 1836 letter] as a credible source” because it mentions a tent, which may well have been the Texas Sergeant’s forgivable mistranslation of the Spanish *pabellón*.²⁸

While Crisp is also an advocate of scientific testing of the paper and ink [Crisp’s article was written before Gracy and his colleagues tested the document], he has used intellect, the very factor Groneman argues is needed to disprove the document, to, in fact, prove that it is consistent with other contemporary accounts of the events at the Alamo.

Based on the examination of the Peña diary, as well as the archive’s certification of authenticity, the Graduate School of Library and Information Science and the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin used their authority to validate the authenticity of the document. For many years, archivists worked in conjunction with historians and were called upon to preserve documents but not to challenge historians’ claims as to whether or not a document was authentic. With the Peña case, one can see how scientific research has been brought into the archive in order to test documents. With the Peña diary, tests determined the materials used to make the paper, compared the watermarks to determine that they matched those of the period, tested the ink to reveal that it was iron gall, and compared the handwriting to show that it was similar to Peña’s handwriting on other official documents. While Groneman originally believed that these tests would prove that the diary was a forgery, when the tests results revealed it was authentic, he stated that only further testing by scanning auger microscopy would reveal the truth about the document, or as Groneman believes, its falsity. As Gracy notes:

²⁸ Crisp, “The Little Book That Wasn’t There,” 293.

Although in both his books Bill Groneman criticizes those who have called for scientific testing of the document, he nevertheless maintains that, in fact, the application of but one scientific test could end the entire discussion. “There is a test that can determine when the ink was put on the paper plus or minus fifteen years,’ he writes. “However, these tests are prohibitively expensive and are not readily available.’ ‘So until these tests are performed, no one can state conclusively that the de la Pena ‘diary’ is a modern day forgery. Neither can they say that the ‘diary’ is absolutely authentic.”²⁹

While this is true to a certain extent, the authenticity of documents cannot be simply left as unknown until they are tested by the most advanced technology. The testing that Gracy and his colleagues performed on the document is rather conclusive and leaves little room for argument. With the ability of archivists to certify the authenticity of documents, historians do not have the ability any longer to state the authenticity of documents based on their personal and professional research beliefs.

In regards to the authority of archives, this example of using science to authentic documents is important because it shows that archives are not simply asserting power over historians viewpoints, but rather that they are using collaborative knowledge to determine the authenticity of items in their collection. Just as archives have sought to establish their authority in regards to what they collect, they also have shown that they have authority in establishing the authenticity of documents. Scientific testing can prove the age of the physical characteristics of a document and handwriting analysis can establish the author of a document as well. For historians, simply judging the authenticity of the document based on their intellectual analysis is not always a sound means of proving its validity. And even in cases where both science and intellect refute the claims that the Peña document is false Groneman continues to assert that he is correct,

²⁹ Gracy, “Just as I Have Written It,” 268.

refusing to accept its authenticity. Historians are held under the American Historians Association's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, which states that regarding disagreement among historians they are to remember that "[t]hey rely on their own perspectives as they probe the past for meaning, but they also subject those prospective to critical scrutiny by testing them against the views of others."³⁰ But Groneman is not a professional historian despite his Bachelor of Arts degree in history. He was a former member of the New York City Fire Department and began writing history later in life.³¹ Considered an amateur historian, Groneman is not held to the standards of the AHA, therefore his persistent refusal to accept the certification of authenticity given to the Peña document by Gracy and his colleagues does not violate AHA guidelines. This fact should support the authority that the archive has in authenticating the Peña document because academically-trained historians would be obligated to accept the results of the testing of the document and adjust their perspectives regarding the former historical accounts. Just as the SAA has standards for archivists to follow regarding the personal biases about the content or authenticity of documents, AHA members must follow similar standards and respect the opinions of not only their fellow historians but also colleagues in related fields.

³⁰ American Historical Association, *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, (Washington, D. C.: American Historical Association, 2011): 6. www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm (accessed January 26, 2011).

³¹William Groneman III, "Biography", 2008-2009. <http://www.wgroneman.com/biography.htm> (accessed January 28, 2012).

CHAPTER FOUR

“Archives are on the lookout for people taking material out, not for people putting it in”: Additions to the Archival Record

John Drewe and the Tate Archives

While stealing from archives is thought to be the most common way to destroy documents as well as their authority and truth, a surprising case of adding documents to an archive shows how it can be just as destructive. Documents contained in an archive have been placed there for a specific purpose. Often this is to verify the authenticity of certain truths, such as citizenship records in government archives, grade rosters in university archives, and provenance records in art and museum archives. When researchers enter an archive they expect to be able to not only find the documents they are seeking, but also to be assured that those documents are true. If a forger were to enter the archive and insert forged documents, this would be detrimental to both the archive and any future researchers. Because the documents were under the covering of the archive, it is assumed they are true, but in the case of John Drewe they were not. Drewe’s actions are an example of how an archive and an entire industry can be changed by a few simple words and pictures in the wrong place.

Authority in archives can be used to establish the authenticity of documents which reside in an archive, as was the case with the Peña document. But unscrupulous people can take advantage of the authority of the archive; such individuals attempt to insert information of their own choosing (or making) and enhance the illusion of its authenticity simply by placing it in an archive. As the Peña case demonstrated, provenance is an

important aspect of archives, knowing the ownership lineage of documents and objects helps to establish their authenticity. But provenance is not always reliable. In the case of the Peña manuscript, one hundred years were missing from its provenance; yet David B. Gracy II and his colleagues still concluded it was an authentic document. In this case of John Drewe and the Tate archives, Drewe provided provenance for the fake paintings, but that documentation was one he created. Taking advantage of the fallibility of archivists, Drewe was able to insert his false provenances into the archive, but in the end, it was the knowledge of a trained archivist, Jennifer Booth, who discovered that Drewe had only altered part of the record, which focused suspicion upon him. As noted with the Peña document and the Hitler diaries, forgers often have a monetary motive that causes them to miss the minute details that eventually become part of their undoing.

The case of John Drewe and John Myatt demonstrates how damaging forgeries can be to an archive. This astonishing case of fraud began innocently enough when John Drewe contacted John Myatt, commissioning him to paint a couple paintings. Myatt had advertised himself as a painter of genuine fakes and Drewe decided to test his abilities. Drewe was a con man who portrayed himself as a nuclear physicist. He was always looking for the next con scheme to support the elaborate life he had fabricated for himself. Stumbling upon Myatt's advertisement of "genuine fakes" was the first step in his scheme that ultimately fooled museums, collectors, and archivists.

John Myatt's original intention was not to hoodwink the public. "As a boy, Myatt had shown musical and artistic promise, and had been encouraged by his parents to attend art school where his teachers recognized his compositional skills. They were particularly impressed by his knack for copying the masters, a talent he attributed to an innate ability

to ‘stand in someone else’s shoes’.”¹ His first “genuine fakes” were produced out of a need for money and his confidence that he could paint a Raoul Duffy for his boss that would not cost him a few thousand pounds.² After successfully presenting this work, Myatt decided to advertise his “genuine fakes.” “Myatt took out an ad in London’s satirical biweekly *Private Eye*, a magazine with a cynical and well-heeled readership that he guessed would be drawn to his offer of ‘genuine fakes’ facsimiles of ‘19th and 20th century paintings, from £150’.”³ He successfully sold many of these paintings, fulfilling his clients’ wishes to have either exact replicas or works in the manner of a specific artist. When John Drewe contacted him, Myatt assumed it would be a routine request for a painting or two and he would not hear from him again. But after the first few paintings that Myatt completed, Drewe continued to request more, even allowing Myatt to choose the artists he wished to paint.⁴

At first Myatt was unaware that Drewe was attempting sell Myatt’s “genuine fakes” as real works by the artists. He had already been able to sell a couple of Myatt’s paintings but he needed both more inventory and proof for the often questioned authenticity of the paintings. Before this, Drewe had always brushed off buyers’ requests for provenance by stating that previous owners had wished to remain anonymous. Now he began to concoct the false histories of the new paintings that Myatt was producing. Soon, Myatt was aware that Drewe was selling his paintings as authentic. “Drewe said

¹ Laney Salisbury and Aly Sujo, *Provenance: How a Con Man and a Forger Rewrote the History of Modern Art*. (New York: Penguin, 2009) 8.

² *Ibid.*, 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

he had shown the piece [a reproduction of a small elliptical pencil drawing, a 1916 sketch entitled *Portrait of an Army Doctor*, by the cubist Albert Gleizes] to an acquaintance at Christie's, who believed it was genuine and could fetch at least £25,000 at auction."⁵ Myatt recalled, "“You know, you don't have to sell these paintings to me exclusively,” said Drewe, ‘though of course I'm happy to handle them for you. For the Gleizes I can get you £12,500’”⁶ Myatt had been suspicious but he also needed the money. Myatt continued,

‘We don't have to stop there,’ said Drewe. ‘You can make a decent living at this.’ He held out a fat browning envelope full of bills. ‘It's yours if you want it.’ It hit Myatt that Drewe had already sold the piece. He could no longer deny what he had suspected, that Drewe was passing off his works as genuine. He had already painted fifteen to twenty pieces for the good professor and Drewe wanted more.⁷

Myatt's paintings were impressive upon viewing but lacked documentary support. “It hadn't taken Drewe long to realize that Myatt's fakes were sorely lacking in provenance. To overcome that handicap, he would have to learn how to create paperwork so impressive that any doubts about Myatt's work would evaporate.”⁸ For collectors and museums provenance is necessary in determining the value and authenticity of works. As Laney Salisbury explains,

To the general public, museums are synonymous with the art that hangs on the walls. Few are aware that museums also take on the monumental task of assembling a record of an uninterrupted chain of ownership for each important work of art, from the moment of its creation to the sale of the work to its most recent owner. Exhibition catalogs help document the custodial history of the

⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁸ Ibid., 42.

work, and receipts of sale show where and when it passed through private hands. Diaries, correspondence, and early drawings also shed light on the works themselves. Today, it is this documentary record of ownership, as much as any professional evaluation of quality or artistic style, that confirm the authenticity of a work of art. In the art world, the process is known as establishing provenance.⁹

The evidence of this authenticity of artworks was preserved in the museum and gallery archives and carefully guarded. “In the early twentieth century museums began setting up archives to store these records. It was and remains the role of the archivist to make sure that files are updated and, most importantly, that they are never corrupted.”¹⁰ John Drewe’s plan to create a provenance for the forged works for art appeared difficult to the average person, but to a lifelong con man, it was simply another job and another challenge.

Now that he was planning to alter the archival records at the galleries to reflect the paintings Myatt had forged, “Drewe explained his plan: Once inside the archives he would alter the records and seed them with his own alternate history, a ‘reconstructed’ chronicle that would include the names of real and invented collectors and would revolve around the works he had commissioned from Myatt.”¹¹ Drewe was confident in his ability to create new provenances and alter the archives. He was not worried about being caught as he explained to Myatt, “‘Don’t worry, John,’ said Drewe. ‘Archives are on the lookout for people taking material out, not for people putting it in.’”¹² And that was the brilliance behind Drewe’s plan. Many archives have had records removed from them and

⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4-5

¹¹ Ibid., 79.

¹² Ibid., 79.

often fear thieves. But few, if any, have had records added to their archive. It was unheard of and therefore, no measures were taken to observe if Drewe was adding to the archive.

In order to accomplish this task, Drewe first had to assemble a collection of receipts, correspondence, and other ephemera related to the artists that Myatt had forged. Drewe assembled from various sources a collection of documents. One of his main sources was the archives of the Institute of Contemporary Arts [ICA], which Drewe gained access to through his donation of artworks to an auction to raise money for a revamping of their current archives. Using this connection, Drewe requested an opportunity to become familiar with the archive before the project began. Unfortunately, “The archives had been moved to a small, seldom-used room with a separate entrance. [Bill] McAlister [director of the ICA] asked his secretary to find the keys and get them ready for Professor Drewe. ‘He’s free to come and go as he pleases,’ McAlister told her. ‘Make him feel at home.’”¹³ With this approved access, Drewe began removing documents that would become a part of his new provenances at the Tate archives; this array of documents as Myatt recalls,

was an astonishing collection: handwritten letters from Picasso and Giacometti; old invitations to lunch with Buckminster Fuller; some of Ben Nicholson’s lecture notes... “I’m doing the ICA a favor getting all this stuff out of there,” [Drewe] told Myatt, explaining that the documents had been left to rot in boxes in an unventilated room. Now he had saved them.¹⁴

Once Drewe had these pieces he began to create his provenances. For example, to create the provenance for Myatt’s *Footless Woman*, a fake Giacometti, Drew

¹³ Ibid., 63.

¹⁴ Ibid., 73-74.

had taken a photograph of Myatt's Footless Woman and titled it *Standing Nude, 1954*. He kept his titles as generic as possible, as many of the modern masters had done in the forties and fifties. From his stash of documents, he chose an old gallery receipt recording the sale of a genuine Giacometti nude, then fashioned a new one on 1950s-era paper, indicating that the work had been sold to its current owner, a private collector named Peter Harris, in 1957. To reinforce the illusion, he forged additional pieces of provenance and added the names of other collectors and acquaintances, both imaginary and real to the gallery ledger pages. As the coup de grâce, he took original 1950s gallery exhibition catalogs—sparsely illustrated black-and-white booklets, for the most part—scanned them into a computer and inserted photographs of the Footless Woman and other Myatt forgeries.¹⁵

Once these provenances were completed, Drewe then began the task of adding the pages to the catalogs at the Tate archives.¹⁶ Like most archives, the Tate archives was set up as an open room so that staff could observe the researchers while they worked. But Drewe discovered that he was able to sit so that the researcher in front of him blocked the view of the archives staff, allowing him to insert his provenances. Also, the staff would occasionally leave the room unattended in order to retrieve items from the stacks.

Therefore,

At an opportune moment, Drewe flipped through his notepad and pulled out a sheet of heavy black paper, the kind used in old-fashioned photograph albums. He inserted the page, with its two binder holes, into one of the Hanover albums, which now contained a photograph of Giacometti's *Standing Nude, 1954*, an awkward figure with its feet hidden by a table in the foreground.¹⁷

Drewe had successfully inserted his forged provenance into the archival records. Dealers or curators reviewing the records of the Tate archives would believe the painting to be authentic if only by its history.

¹⁵ Ibid., 83-84.

¹⁶ Salisbury uses "Tate archives" throughout *Provenance* to refer to the archives of the Tate Gallery.

¹⁷ Ibid., 84.

The first test of Drewe's forged provenances came with this same painting, *Standing Nude, 1954*, when it was listed in Sotheby's catalog for items scheduled for auction in early December 1991.¹⁸ It came to the attention of Mary Lisa Palmer, who managed the Giacometti Association, which worked to protect the legacy of Alberto Giacometti and remove forgeries from the market. Immediately suspicious, Palmer asked Sotheby's for information on the painting and eventually flew from Paris to London to view the painting at Sotheby's and the provenance at the Tate archives. Here,

Palmer asked [Jennifer] Booth [head of the Tate's archive] for the Hanover daybooks, which tracked the movement of paintings in and out of the gallery. She found a listing for G67/11, but here it was a painting that had been done in 1951. The Sotheby's catalog listed the *Standing Nude* as having been painted in 1954. The forger was off by three years. He probably hadn't bothered to doctor the daybooks, which were hard to decipher, and thus the least likely of records a dealer would consult to verify a work's provenance.¹⁹

While Drewe had altered the records in the main catalogs in the archive, he had not altered all of the records pertaining to the paintings. This small mistake was a clear sign that the painting was a forgery, and also raised the suspicion that the archive had in some way been corrupted to create and add the false provenances.

Jennifer Booth at the Tate archives became suspicious that her archive had in some way been corrupted. At first she thought that documents had been stolen from the archive. But soon it became evident the records had been forged and added to the archive. Particularly, records related to Giacometti were in question as,

[D]ealers in Monaco and New York were sending Booth photocopies of receipts, correspondence, and catalogs bearing the Tate's trademark rectangular research stamp. The documents all related to Giacomettis, and the dealers wanted Booth to

¹⁸ Ibid., 87.

¹⁹ Ibid., 97.

confirm that the originals were in the archives. Booth combed through the Hanover and O'Hana files but could find none of the original documents. She also checked the Hanover index for the names listed on the provenances. They were nowhere to be found. She checked the application forms from researchers who had visited the Tate over the past few years, looking for those who had visited the Tate over the past few years, looking for those who had requested records from the Hanover and O'Hana galleries. There were several requests for the Hanover records, Drewe's among them, but he was the sole researcher given access to the O'Hana files.²⁰

While Drewe had altered the gallery catalogs and forged receipts and correspondence to present to his buyers, there was no way he could insert all of the required documents into the archive. And in most cases this would not be necessary. A simple check of the gallery catalogs where Drewe had inserted the false provenances would have quickly affirmed questions of dealers and buyers. But because of the controversy that surrounded these new Giacometti paintings, a more thorough investigation had been initiated. When the Tate archives looked deeper into its archive it was unable to locate the documents that were cited as part of the provenance of these paintings in question simply because the documentation had never been part of the archive. Drewe, of course, had created a false provenance for the paintings using real and false information and names to create forged documents. Booth was certain now that Drewe had added documents to the archive in order to substantiate his forgeries.

Drewe's forgery scheme eventually collapsed. Not only had Mary Lisa Palmer and Jennifer Booth raised questions about the forged provenances in the Tate archives and the forged painting in Sotheby's catalog, but Drewe's common-law wife, Batsheva Goudsmid, whom Drewe had abandoned and taken custody of their children, presented the police with evidence that would link Drewe to the archives.

²⁰ Ibid., 199-200.

She took [Detective Sergeant Jonathan Searle, an art historian who worked with the Special Branch of the police known as the Art Squad] and Dick Ellis [who ran the Art Squad] out to the parking lot, led them to her black BMW, and opened the trunk to show them two black trash bags filled with documents. In one of the bags Searle found letters from the 1950s, some bearing the Tate Gallery archive stamp, along with ledger pages, gallery stationery, and photographs of paintings purportedly by Giacometti, Dubuffet, and Nicholson.²¹

At first what appeared to be random papers began to make sense as Searle reviewed each document and separated them into groups by painting. What Searle saw was that Drewe had created provenances for what Searle assumed were forged paintings, coming up not only with letters and receipts, but also with shipping, customs, and insurance forms, as well as restoration reports.²² The Art Squad now had proof that John Drewe was connected to the forged provenances at the Tate archives and the discovery of John Myatt's name helped them immensely as he readily confessed the details of the scheme.

The revelation of the extent of Drewe's con also revealed just how much he had possibly corrupted the archives he had infiltrated. While forgery was not unusual in the art world, the efforts of Drewe to establish provenance for the paintings and his subsequent corruption of the archives was unusual. As Salisbury explains, "The professor had gone one step further than the garden variety forger. He had penetrated the libraries and archives and had revised art history, corrupting the prism through which future generations would view, analyze, and learn from the country's cultural past."²³ Because Drewe had entered the archives and added documents to the record, archival records were corrupted and no longer trustworthy. "The value of an archive was

²¹ Ibid., 217.

²² Ibid., 223-225.

²³ Ibid., 242.

measured by its totality: Each document confirmed the veracity of an earlier one and supported the next. If a single item had been doctored, the integrity of the entire collection was in jeopardy.”²⁴ In addition to the Tate archive, other research libraries wondered whether their own collections had been compromised. As Salisbury says,

After the con was exposed, an intense process of reverse screening took place on both sides of the Atlantic. Libraries went through their stacks, archivists scoured databases, curators lined up their collections to examine and cross-reference provenances. Drewe had left his mark on the system, a visible hair-line crack. Skeptics said the damaged archives would never regain their pristine state, and that the records had been forever altered.²⁵

While most libraries and archives of course were not affected by John Drewe’s corruption, questions remained. Were the archives accurate? The Tate archives was further affected by the fact the while John Myatt was willing to identify any artworks the police discovered, he refused to identify works that had already been sold and were not under suspicion. Because of this the papers for such works still remain in the archive, appearing to be accurate. Specifically, archivists for the Tate had to take measures to not only safeguard against this occurring again, but also to alert researchers to the damage that had already been done.

The Tate pulled its socks up and opened a brand-new research room with state-of-the-art technology and tighter restrictions. Staffers were trained to examine everything that went in and out. Librarians kept watch over the researchers as surveillance cameras scanned the room. The Hanover Gallery archives now included a prominent warning from the police department directed at future researchers: “This documentation may have been compromised.”²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 200-201.

²⁵ Ibid., 300.

²⁶ Ibid., 300.

The Tate archives had once been known as an authority on the authenticity of modern art. Now, while it contains the same materials, the integrity of the archive is tainted by the possibility that the information might be forged. While the police were able to recover some of the paintings that Myatt had created, they are certain that many more are still in private and museum collections. Myatt has refused to reveal paintings that are in fact his forgeries when he encounters them. “Whenever he saw his work in a museum or auction catalog, he kept it to himself. Blowing the whistle wouldn’t benefit anyone, he thought. If he were to reveal the true nature of the work, it could cost an innocent collector a lot of money.”²⁷ Because of this the archives at the Tate Gallery are still considered compromised. John Drewe’s scheme challenged the authority of the archives by using the authority of the archives to create forged provenances. Drewe capitalized on archival authority and integrity, adding documents to the archives, thus adding authority to the documents. The value of the documents held within the Tate archives had little to do with the documents themselves. Instead it was the information the documents contained and the placement of the documents within the archives that were valuable. By establishing the value of forged artworks through the information they held, the documents also became valuable. As John Drewe demonstrated, it is possible to collect many pieces of seemingly trivial ephemera, but it is the arrangement and proximity to other documents that establishes value that in turn gives these meaningless pieces of paper their own value. As Drewe used the random receipts, correspondence, and catalogs to create new provenances, he carefully pasted together a collage that seemed

²⁷ Ibid., 303.

meaningless to the casual reader but when placed near similar documents took on a value that was similar to the other documents.

In using the authority of the archives for his own gain, John Drewe has also demonstrated how archival security can be compromised if it is only focused on one aspect of vandalism. In the case of the Tate archives, it was more worried about researchers removing materials from the archive than adding them to it. Because of this, as well as their poorly designed reading room which did not allow for observance of all researchers at all times, the Tate archives has revised its security policies and is an example to other archives who should consider expanding their own security policies. For example, in order to prevent the alteration of archival materials, archives first need to be sure that they have strict control regarding their research policies. As the Tate has now adopted, reading rooms need to be well-secured so that staff can observe the actions of researchers at all times. Also, as the Tate now knows, materials should be checked before and after they are used by a researcher for both subtractions and additions. As seen in other cases of theft, it is not practical or even at time possible to keep document level inventories of the records of an archive. As all archivists know, the abundance of materials in archives makes it nearly impossible to track each document. But staff should be aware of what researchers are requesting and reviewing the content and condition before and after they use it.

The case of John Drewe demonstrates how con men can profit from the authority of the archive to claim certain documents are important because of what they represent. Just as a key to a city is symbolic in nature and does not necessarily open a particular gate, certain papers in archives while not containing any actual monetary value on their

own, are valuable in what they represent. By using the idea of archival authority to create a ruse, Drewe changed the value of the documents housed there. When the con was discovered, the archive was corrupted. Users could no longer rely on the information preserved in the archives.

Archives seek to be a source where people go to find accurate and trustworthy information. Because archives hold original, mostly unique materials, made available through strict procedures, archives are perceived to be accurate and uncorrupted. Archivists appraise records, determining which documents have enduring value for users. When researchers corrupt the archival record with forgeries, they corrupt not only the arrangement that archivists have established, but also the facts they present. If any individual could bypass the archivist and add to the archive, the documentation would not hold the same concept of accurate information. Much as the website Wikipedia is not considered an accurate source because it can be added to and altered by anyone, an archive seeks to be accurate through its limitation of the changing and addition of materials.

CHAPTER FIVE

“The story is just that less complete”: Theft in Archives

As John Drewe noted, he was able to add his forged provenances to the Tate archives because archives are looking for people taking documents out, not people who are putting them in. And this is for good reason because theft is one of the most public ways in which the authority of the archive is challenged. Theft in archives and museums can come in a variety of forms. From blatant burglaries such as the one at the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum in Boston to employees removing objects, institutions must have policies in place to handle these situations when they arise. The following three examples demonstrate how archives are vulnerable to theft from researchers and employees alike and the reason behind their thefts. As a result, many archives are forced to question their access policies in order to better care for their collections.

Researcher Theft: Howard Harner

Theft in archives is often the result of researchers who wish to profit from the value of the documents held in the archive. In the case of Howard Harner, a Virginia researcher, his interest in Civil War history and documents led him to take advantage of his access to the documents and remove them from the archive. In total, he stole 118 documents from the Nation Archives between 1996 and 2002, particularly, documents related to the Civil War, including documents from Jefferson Davis, General Philip H.

Sheridan, General Robert E. Lee, Major General George H. Thomas, Ulysses S. Grant, Lewis A. Armistead, and George Armstrong Custer.¹

Harner used his position as a researcher to gain access to the National Archives.

As David Hewett states,

Harner had applied for and received a “researcher identification card” at the archives in 1996. He then used it to systematically select items from boxes of material from military officers involved in the Civil War and the great western expansion of the mid-19th century. He removed those documents from the archives by hiding them under his clothes and later sold them to a collector (known to the authorities, according to the U.S. Attorney’s office, but it did not release the name) or sent them to auction through Bonhams and Butterfields.²

Harner not only stole and sold the documents but he also mutilated many of them,

“slicing off visible signatures with a razor blade.”³ Harner’s thefts were discovered by the National Archives when he tried to sell one of Lewis Armistead’s letters in 2003.⁴

Thankfully, the Gettysburg historian Wayne Motts stumbled upon one of the documents for sale and alerted the authorities.⁵ On May 26, 2005, Harner was sentenced to two years

¹ David Hewett, “An Old Story Revisited: Thefts from the Nation’s Document Storehouses,” *Maine Antique Digest*, June 2005. http://www.maineantiquedigest.com/articles_archive/articles/jun05/archive0605.htm (accessed December 28, 2010).

² Ibid.

³ Faye Fiore, “Guardians of the nation’s attic,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/aug/08/nation/la-na-treasure-hunters-nu-20100809> (accessed December 28, 2010).

⁴ Karlyn Barker, “Va Man Admits to Stealing, Selling Documents From National Archives,” *Washington Post*, March, 8, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A15566-2005Mar7?language=printer> (accessed December 28, 2010).

⁵ Deborah Fitts, “Dean and Jim Thomas Find Archival Theft on eBay,” *Civil War News*, February/March 2007, <http://www.civilwarnews.com/archive/articles/07/archivesebay.htm> (accessed December 28, 2010).

in prison, with two years of probation, and fined ten thousand dollars.⁶ Unfortunately only about forty documents were ultimately recovered.⁷ Without the help of other researchers, archives often would not know that documents are missing. While well-known items such as the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address are carefully monitored, the National Archives contains millions of individual documents and cannot inventory each box to the item or document level. It is often when a stolen document resurfaces for sale that the theft is discovered.

Author Theft: Barry Landau

Just as researchers pose a threat to collection, authors of more popular history can also enter the archive with an ulterior motive. Most archival thefts stem from greed: either a desire to own documents produced or signed by a famous person, or a desire to sell those documents at a profit to other collectors. In the case of Barry H. Landau, the theft of documents from historical archives across the country resulted also from his attempt to provide proof of the life he claimed to have. Recently, the Maryland Historical Society had Landau arrested on charges of stealing documents from the society, including one signed by Abraham Lincoln.⁸ Claiming the title of “America’s

⁶ National Archives, “Statement by the Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein on the Sentencing of Howard Harner,” by Allen Weinstein. *National Archives Press Release*. May 26, 2005. <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2005/nr05-71.html> (accessed December 28, 2010).

⁷ American Library Association, “Researcher Admits Theft from National Archive,” March 11, 2005. <http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=news&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=89239> (accessed December 28, 2010).

⁸ Sabrina Tavernise, “Held in Document Theft, ‘America’s Presidential Historian’ Faces New Scrutiny,” *New York Times*. July 15, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/16/us/16historian.html?_r=2&scp=1&sq=landau&st=cse (accessed July 29, 2011).

Presidential Historian” Landau had visited the historical society with his assistant, Jason Savedoff, and requested numerous documents.⁹ Savedoff was later seen concealing a document in a portfolio while leaving the library. When he was confronted, he claimed to have misplaced a locker key which the officers claim he had shown them moments earlier. Once staff retrieved the key, documents were found concealed in a black laptop case in the locker.¹⁰ Later investigators also “found what they think were ‘little pieces’ of documents floating in a historical society toilet” in the same bathroom that Savedoff had been found locked in at the time of the questioning.¹¹

Landau’s document thefts were not limited to the Maryland Historical Society; he had visited numerous other archives as well. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania also became suspicious of Landau after discovering that the address he had given was not correct.¹² The sheer volume of materials requested at each archive, along with the vagueness of what he was requested caused frustration as well as suspicion for the archivists working there. In order to be more efficient in the documents they present to the researcher, as well as to enable the researcher to be more productive in time at the archive, many archivists will attempt to determine exactly what the researcher is looking for or help him to narrow his topic of research. As Les Arnold, the senior director of the

⁹ Justin Jouvenal, “Barry Landau: As Document-Theft Probe of Historian Grows, so do question on who he is,” *Washington Post*, July 26, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/as-document-theft-probe-of-historian-landau-grows-so-do-questions-on-who-he-is/2011/07/18/gIQAc70kbl_story_2.html (accessed July 29, 2011).

¹⁰ Justin Fenton, “Pair Tried to Steal Historical Documents Worth Mission, Police Say,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 12, 2011. www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs/md-ci-historical-artifact-theft-20110711,0,7602985.story (accessed July 29, 2011).

¹¹ Jouveneau, “Barry Landau: As document-theft probe of historian Landau grows.”

¹² Tavernise, “Held in Document Theft.”

library and collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania remembers “the two men exasperated the staff with the sheer volume of material they requested, which he estimated to be hundreds of boxes, and with their vagueness.”¹³ The *New York Times* quotes him recalling his statement to Landau, “What are you looking for? Just tell us. You’re driving us nuts here.”¹⁴ The historical society is now investigating whether or not a George Washington letter which is currently missing could be related to the visits of the pair.¹⁵ After his arrest, documents from the National Archives, the Connecticut Historical Society, and Vassar College were discovered in a locker associated with Landau and his assistant.

Further investigation into Landau’s background revealed that the credentials he provided to the archive were mostly false.

In various media interviews, the former press agent said his collection came from items obtained directly from politicians and their staff but also by watching for items at flea markets and auctions. [Landau’s] collection includes more than a million presidential items and artifacts – including 26,000 presidential menus and invitations and the original key to the White House, which he said he spotted at a flea market in Long Island, N.Y.¹⁶

But despite his claims to having close, personal connections with many presidents, the evidence does not exist. “In 2009, Landau told the Associated Press that he had been an assistant chief of protocol for Ford. Stacy Davis, an archivist with Ford’s presidential

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Nathan Gorenstein, “Historical Society of Pennsylvania probing possible theft after Baltimore arrest.” *Philly.com*. July 23, 2011. http://articles.philly.com/2011-07-23/news/29806729_1_barry-h-landau-kim-sajet-historical-societies (accessed July 29, 2011).

¹⁶ Fenton, “Pair Tried to Steal Historical Documents Worth Millions.”

library, said there was no record of Landau having served in that capacity. The library does have record of Landau attending a Ford presidential dinner in 1976.”¹⁷

The implications of Landau’s case have not been resolved. Obviously this case has reminded archivists and their institutions that they remain vulnerable to thefts from researchers. First, archives must be wary of researchers who do not present their requests for materials in a concise, coherent manner. Looking at items randomly is often an indication of thieves looking for materials that they think they can steal. Furthermore, while most research libraries and archives have security measures in place, precautions such as careful observance and reviewing the contents of archives boxes before and after researchers use them should always be taken when researchers request materials.

Employee Theft: Denning McTague

As with other professions, archives are also vulnerable to employee theft. While they have security measures to prevent document theft from researchers such as implementing reading room policies this often does not address issues of employee theft. In 2006, brothers Dean and Jim Thomas discovered letters from the National Archives offered for sale on eBay that Dean Thomas had used in his Civil War book, *Round Ball to Rimfire*. While bidding on Civil War letters written from Frankford Arsenal, an ammunition plant that supplied the Union Army during the Civil War, Jim Thomas consulted his brother Dean, the intended recipient of the letters as to whether or not he already had them. Dean Thomas did not own the letters, but he had also not seen them during his research. “How had he missed these? Thomas wondered. Hadn’t he combed

¹⁷ Jouvenau, “As document-theft probe of historian Landau grows.”

the records of that very arsenal in that very conflict? ‘Boy am I a dummy,’ he thought.’¹⁸

Taking a closer look at the letters offered for sale by this specific seller, Dean Thomas noticed a letter that looked familiar. Steve Twomey states,

Dean had devoted eight pages of his *Round Ball* opus to guncotton, specifically citing the diplomat’s letter [this refers to a letter sent to Frankford Arsenal by an American diplomat]. He rose, went to his files and found a photocopy of it. He had made the copy more than 25 years earlier in Washington, D.C. because he could neither buy nor borrow the original. No one could. It belonged to the citizens of the United States.¹⁹

Thomas contacted the National Archives the next day and they began to search for the thief. It was not difficult as his name was linked to the eBay account. That led officials to contact the Philadelphia branch of the National Archives, where the documents had been transferred in 1980.²⁰

Until then officials knew nothing of a theft. But they knew the name [National Archives Special Agent Kelly] Maltagliati gave them: Denning McTague had just finished a two-month, unpaid internship at the Archives branch in Philadelphia. The conclusion was painfully clear. ‘I recall being really mad,’ says Leslie Simon, the director of archival operations at the branch.²¹

Knowing that the theft was an inside job helped to locate the suspect, but it did not help to identify exactly what documents were missing.

In Philadelphia, the Archives knew that among the boxes in its 11 basement rooms were Frankford Arsenal documents, but it did not know the contents of each box. There was no easy way to find out what was no longer inside. Agents could raid McTague’s house to recover what he had not yet sold. But if he wasn’t keeping the documents there, and if he refused to cooperate after being arrested, the Archives might never know the total number he took or where he cached the

¹⁸ Steve Twomey, “To Catch a Thief,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2008: 1.
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/to-catch-a-thief.html> (accessed December 28, 2010).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

remainder. So instead of going after the suspect immediately, investigators went after the documents. They would buy them on the open market, find the hiding place, or both.²²

The sting operation resulted in a search of McTague's Philadelphia townhouse after a search warrant had been obtained to retrieve any documents they would find there. A neighbor, noticing the group of people entering the townhouse, was able to supply a telephone number for McTague, who confessed over the telephone. In total, investigators found eighty-eight Arsenal documents in McTague's apartment, in addition to the seventy-three recovered from buyers on eBay, with three remaining documents permanently missing.²³

At his sentencing on July 12, 2007, McTague was given fifteen months in prison.

In its court filing, the government portrayed the crime not as a lapse but as a calculated, money-making undertaking. In a statement to the court, Allen Weinstein, the Archivist of the United States, wrote that the theft had undercut 'the fundamental integrity' of the Archives, because researchers would never know whether McTague took documents still unknown.²⁴

This echoes New York Public Library President Paul Le Clerc's statement regarding the implications of the theft of any rare or historical materials: "Who knows what prize-winning book will not be written, or what historical or scientific discovery will not be made?"²⁵ The theft of materials not only robs the archive of the documents, but robs researchers and scholars of the knowledge they contain. As Douglas Waller explains,

While greed motivates most documents thieves, it's not the only reason key materials go missing. Archives investigators also suspect some federal

²² Ibid., 3.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 2.

documents never make it to their facilities because government officials weed them out to try to sanitize history. Whatever the motive, missing documents can be maddening for historians. “Any document that is not available to historians means that the story is just that less complete,” says Lee Formwalt, executive director of the Organization of American Historians.²⁶

As a result of these thefts, many archives have worked to reduce the trafficking of stolen items. Michael McCormick, director of reference services for the Maryland State Archives notes that, there is a larger market for historical items due to the prominence of television shows such as *Antiques Roadshow* and the rise of internet auction sites such as eBay.²⁷ In response to the problem of theft, the National Archives has created a website that lists items stolen from historical institutions in order to alert other institutions and collectors, and dealers.²⁸ McCormick also suggests the use of copies for researchers who need access to the documents. “In most cases, the researcher really does not need access to the artifact. What they need is access to the intellectual content. That can be done using copies. The researcher really needs to make a convincing case to the archivist for their need to handle the original item.”²⁹ Some Presidential libraries have already implemented such procedures in order to protect items that have presidential signatures on them. For example, the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library separates every document with President Bush’s handwriting into a separate, identical file. A copy is made of the original document, and the copy is placed back into the original file. The

²⁶ Douglas Waller, “On the Trail of Pilfered History,” *Time*. December 21, 2006. <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1572378,00.html>. (accessed December 28, 2010).

²⁷ Fenton, “Pair tried to steal historical documents worth millions.”

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

document with the original signature is then filed in a shadow file of the original and placed in a vault that has restricted access to both researchers and employees.

Considerations have to be taken when one discovers a suspicious document as it could be stolen or it could have been purchased as a deaccessioned item. Also, because a document may change owners several times before suspicion is raised, the current owner of the document may not be aware that it had been stolen as it was bought through legitimate channels. Because the sale of documents is lucrative, archivists need not only to be vigilant about researchers' actions within the archive, but also be suspicious about documents that appear for sale. As Bruce Stark states, "Any manuscript that has an official-looking character should raise a red flag, and the seller should be asked the provenance of the item."³⁰ He also notes that "it is vital for archival repositories to have and retain good records on its holdings, including accessioning and de-accessioning documentation."³¹ In these cases, the archive may use replevin to regain their document. Replevin is the legal action of recovering property that has been taken. For replevin the proof rests with the archive to produce title to the document; despite how weak the title of the person in possession may be the proof still rests with the archive to prove that they are the rightful owners.³² Therefore it is essential that archive keep careful records of their collections so that if they need to use replevin they will have the evidence to prove that they are the rightful owners of documents. On the other hand, if the seller of the

³⁰ Bruce P. Stark, "The Archivist as Detective: Or, the Case of Ledyard V. William Morgan," *The American Archivist* 67, no. 2 (Fall-Winter, 2004): 291. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40294279>. (accessed January 21, 2012).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

³² Gary M. Peterson and Trudy Huskamp Peterson, *Archives & Manuscripts: Law*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1985): 91.

document is claiming that it was found in a dumpster, a wise buyer will check with archives to determine if it might have been stolen. Archives not only preserve records of history, but create records regarding how they are preserving these records. The interest in historical documents has led to a plethora of them being offered for sale on websites such as eBay. But in some cases these items have been stolen from archives and any individual who purchases them is obligated to return them to the archive if the archive can prove that they own them.

In order to better care for and protect its documents archives must ensure that researchers are allowed to view documents in secure settings. While it may be impossible to keep a document-level inventory of the items contained in its collections, archives should be aware of the materials that researchers are viewing as well as the materials that employees are handling. Background checks, while helpful on a certain level, cannot completely screen the motives of people entering the archives. Being aware of possible conflicts of interest for researchers and employees is important though, as most employees and researchers have an interest in history, making these documents tempting if they also have a personal collection of similar documents. Also, considering the damage and loss that archival crimes cause, punishment should be stricter. In both the Howard Harner case and the Denning McTague case, they were sentenced to two years of prison or less, which appears to be a light sentence considering that not only did they commit theft, but the archivists are then responsible to use their time and effort to document the incident and repair the damages to their collections. While the crimes appear to involve only pieces of paper, they rob future scholars of perspectives and citizens of a cultural legacy. Because the sentences have been lenient for archival theft,

future thieves may not be deterred by the possible consequences and consider the potential gains worth the risk of punishment.

As all three of these cases illustrate, the desire to profit from the authority of the archive can be a strong draw for researchers and employees. Whether it is through the sale of the documents or the allure of owning the items that these historians study, theft is a problem for archives. The fact that documents in an archive are placed there by a certain authority establishes both historical and monetary value. Historians are eager to save all documents because they believe that it will never be known at the time of the establishment of archival collections which documents may prove the most useful to later historians. Thus, an archive often holds many documents that are seemingly trivial in their content, but valuable because of their placement into the archive. The archive holds an authority that values certain documents despite their trivial content simply for the fact that they are singled out among millions of other documents for preservation. Because of this singling out, the documents contained in an archive take on a level of value that other similar documents do not have. By stealing these documents, thieves are challenging the authority that archives have established in separating the documents. By destroying the arrangements that have been established, they are challenging the ability of the archive to protect the items under its care. Furthermore, personal collectors of documents should be aware of archival theft and wary of any document that appears to have been owned by an archive. An archive will have kept records of the items they owned and if they deaccessioned any of them. By checking with archives as to the possibility of a stolen document before purchasing, buyers can help to stop the cycle of archival theft and collectors' purchasing stolen documents.

CHAPTER SIX

“Neither lost or stolen”: Alteration of Documents

While removing documents from an archive destroys the opportunity for researchers to access the materials in the future, there is another problem that archives face that is worse: the alteration of documents that remain in archives. Some researchers have attempted, and even succeeded in altering archival documents to better suit their research topics. Recently, it was discovered that Thomas Lowry had altered a letter written by Abraham Lincoln to fit the thesis of his book. In other cases historians have altered the facts that documents in archives present in order to align with their own theories and agendas. Altering documents in the archive is a threat to archival authority because it capitalizes on the archive’s authority to declare items housed under its protection accurate. By altering the document, but leaving it under the protection of the archive, the authority of archivists is challenged, because just as John Drewe added his forged provenances to the archive, these alterations challenge archival authority by utilizing the assumed accuracy of documents in the archive.

Thomas Lowry and the Lincoln Letter

In January 2011, the National Archives discovered that one of the documents under its care had been tampered with; rather than removing it the researcher left the document in altered form. Because of the number of documents that an archive can contain, archivists may not necessarily know if a document has been altered in any way. In this instance, archivist Trevor Plante realized that the date on a letter of pardon written

by Abraham Lincoln was changed from 1864 to 1865 in order to support Thomas Lowry's research theory that Lincoln was granting the right to live on the day that he was killed. When the alteration was discovered, archivists were amazed to learn how long it had been in the archives in its altered state, as well as the fact that Lowry had published his "finding" as accurate.

Thomas Lowry, an Abraham Lincoln historian, was allowed access to the National Archives in order to do research, but during his time there, he chose to alter the document to fit his purposes rather than write about the reality that was presented in the existing ones. Like John Drewe, who added documents to the archive to support the forged paintings that he was attempting to authentic, Thomas Lowry used the authority of the archive to allow his alteration to be perceived as part of the accurate historical record. In this case, Lowry took a letter pardoning Patrick Murphy, a Union soldier, who had been court-martialed for desertion, and altered the "4" in 1864 to a "5" so that it read 1865 and the date would be April 14, 1865 which was the day Lincoln was assassinated. "Having changed the year from 1864 to 1865, Lowry was then able to claim that this pardon was of significant historical relevance because it could be considered one of, if not the final official act by President Lincoln before his assassination."¹ Because of the supposed significance of the document, Lowry was able to use it as the central theme of his subsequent book, *Don't Shoot That Boy: Abraham Lincoln and Military Justice*.² In addition, because the discovered document was then considered to be significant, it was

¹ National Archives, "National Archives Discovers Date Change on Lincoln Letter" National Archives Press Release, January 24, 2011. <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2011/nr11-57.html> (accessed December 28, 2011).

² See Thomas P. Lowry, *Don't Shoot That Boy: Abraham Lincoln and Military Justice*. (Mason city, IA: Salvas Publishing Co., 1999).

featured in an exhibit at the National Archives in the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom.

But over a decade after Lowry made his alteration, a member of the archives staff noticed the date on the letter looked suspiciously like it had been altered and flags were raised.

National Archives archivist Trevor Plante reported to the National Archives Office of Inspector General that he believed the date on the Murphy pardon had been altered: the “5” looked like a darker shade of ink than the rest of the date and it appeared that there might have been another number under the “5”. Investigative Archivist Mitchell Yockelson of the Inspector General’s Archival Recovery Team (ART) confirmed Plante’s suspicions.³

The archives contacted Lowry since he was an expert on Lincoln history, but when Lowry realized which particular document they were investigating, he stopped cooperating. When Lowry finally agreed to an interview on January 12, 2011, he admitted to changing the date on the letter. “Against National Archives regulations, Lowry brought a fountain pen into a National Archives research room where, using fadeproof, pigment based ink, he altered the date on the Murphy pardon in order to change its historical significance.”⁴ Changing the date on the letter allowed Lowry to use it as a central point in his research, thus “proving” his thesis.

For the National Archives this was a definite challenge to the authority they held in not only protecting their documents but also in enforcing their researcher expectations.

Inspector General Paul Brachfeld expressed his tremendous appreciation for the work of Plante and the Inspector General’s Archival Recovery Team in resolving this matter. Brachfeld added that “the stated mission of ART is ‘archival recovery,’ and while the Murphy pardon was neither lost or stolen, in a very real

³ National Archives, “National Archives Discovers Date Change on Lincoln Letter.”

⁴ Ibid.

way our work has helped to ‘recover’ the true record of a significant period in our collective history.⁵

The incident of Thomas Lowry and his alteration of the Lincoln letter has not been completely resolved. Archivists and paper conservators have yet to attempt to undo the damage that Lowry inflicted on this document. Lowry, of course, has had his reputation as a historian destroyed by his actions. While he may have studied and written about important historical issues, scholars will not be able to trust him as he falsified his research and violated the sanctity of the archive in this one instance. The incident has led the National Archives to reconsider its regulations regarding researchers. While it was stated that ink pens, or any devices that could be used to alter documents, were not allowed in the archives, Lowry ignored this rule and brought a fountain pen in anyway. As with cases in which researchers have added or removed documents, archives such as the National Archives might have to resort to measures such as checking archival boxes for content before and after researchers access them. However, such measures must go beyond an inventory of documents in the box, as this will not protect the archive or the documents when researchers alter the contents of the document itself. In these cases, digital technology can be a useful tool as it allows archives to digitize their documents, thus allowing researchers to access the information of the document without risking harm to the physical document itself. Digitizing documents also give archives an opportunity to compare a physical document with a copy that was “created” at an earlier time. With the right technology and security archives can ensure that digital copies cannot be altered, thus ensuring a master copy to compare documents to at any point in the future.

⁵ Ibid.

Michael Bellesiles and Gun Ownership

Similarly, researchers can also take information that they have collected at archives and misconstrue and misinterpret it in order to reflect their research interests. While this does not alter the physical content of the documents, it leads researchers to believe that this is what the documents are saying. Also, if that research is used in another work, it is false. For some historians, personal agendas and beliefs can be more important than accurately interpreting the data that they gather. But in failing to accurately relate the information they have collected, they risk accusation of falsification and alteration of facts. For Michael Bellesiles, a historian at Emory University, the appearance of falsity led to questioning of the accuracy of his research and ultimately the ruination of his career.

Bellesiles' research topic, gun ownership in early America, was controversial to begin with as a simple question of statistics quickly developed into a challenge of the interpretation of the Second Amendment. For his book *Arming America*, Bellesiles sought to show that gun ownership was not as prevalent as it has been portrayed.⁶ During his research trips to archives located in the areas of early American settlements, "Bellesiles counted guns in probate inventories by dividing pages of yellow legal pads vertically, tallying the inventories he looked at with a tick mark on the left of the page and then noting which of these inventories had a gun in it with a tick mark on the corresponding right side of the page."⁷ Bellesiles method of research appears to be unsystematic using only tick marks to note which inventories had a gun listed instead of

⁶ See, Michael A. Bellesiles, *Arming America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

⁷ Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004): 144-145.

creating a more detailed record documenting which inventories listed guns. After the publication of his research, his data was called into question. When he reported on his research methods, “The committee report noted with some asperity his lapses of memory and his disorderly manner of keeping records of his research. Ordinarily, historical researchers keep account of their travels, including the archives they have visited and the records they have viewed.”⁸ Bellesiles’ lack of sufficient records of his travels and research methods led to further investigation as his work was published, first in the form of a journal article and then as a book.

When Bellesiles first published his findings in a preface-style article in the *Journal of American History* his research was questioned because he did not list the total number of probate inventories he reviewed. Peter Hoffer, author of *Past Imperfect*, states,

It does not matter whether one is simply summing probate records that mention guns (counting 1, 2, 3, and so on and adding up the result), or computing percentages of ownership by dividing the number of inventories listing guns by the total number of inventories consulted, or entering the numbers in some highly sophisticated computer program—one always tells the reader the raw number of cases. They are the raw numbers from which the percentages are calculated in the first place. Bellesiles only had to add up the tick marks on his yellow pads. Indeed, he must have already done this to calculate the percentages in each column.⁹

While it is assumed that historians have thoroughly and accurately researched their projects, this is not always the case. For Bellesiles, whether or not his research was accurate, the methods through which he presented them called into question not only his topic and facts, but also his methods. Although Bellesiles’ research methods appear to be

⁸ Ibid., 145.

⁹ Ibid., 147.

lax, possibly the result of the supposed flood of his office, as a historian Bellesiles is obligated to present the facts in the clearest manner possible. Historians are expected to document thoroughly and accurately all sources consulted. As Hoffer states,

Bellesiles was neither a quantitative expert nor a trained legal historian, but he knew better than to omit the size of his data sample and he knew how to give correct references to court records. In his Pelzer Prize-winning article on violence in Vermont in an earlier issue of the *Journal of American History*, published in 1987, he had been meticulously correct in both respects. He knew how to report actual numbers and how to cite country court records.¹⁰

Because it was known that Bellesiles knew how to accurately report his research, it was surprising that his tables and data appeared so sparse.

In order to answer some of the questions that were raised about his book, Bellesiles added more data figures to the paperback edition. “The paperback edition of the book, published in 2001, finally revealed the total of probate inventories Bellesiles allegedly examined: 11,170. This was less than half the number one would expect with any appropriate sampling design. Still it was a solid number.”¹¹ But even this was questionable. Bellesiles had testified to a committee at Emory University about his research sources and claimed that a flood in his office had destroyed all of the research notebooks for his book. But if that was the case it was surprising that he was able to revise the paperback edition in the meantime, as Hoffer notes,

Bellesiles had told the committee of inquiry and various other inquirers that a flood in his office at Emory University had covered his yellow pads with water and ceiling plaster and destroyed the original data tallies. That flood occurred in April 2000, after his book went to press, so it should not have prevented him from including the 11,170 figure in it. On the other hand, if he simply did not total up the tick marks for the first edition, he could not have gone back to the water-

¹⁰ Ibid., 149.

¹¹ Ibid, 152.

soaked pads and totaled the tick marks for the second edition because by his own account the flood had destroyed all but a few loose papers of his data. It was a mystery how supposedly lost original data could reappear to enable him to add the number of cases to the 2001 paperback edition, then disappear once again when the committee of inquiry sought the date from him.¹²

Based on the appearance and disappearance of data, the committees of inquiry and many scholars began to question whether Bellesiles' book was based on factual data.

Bellesiles not only faced controversy over his controversial topic of interpretation of the Second Amendment and gun ownership but also over his actual research findings and the method in which he presented them.

Scholars know that presenting research in the form of a book means that they are required to not only truthfully represent the topic they are writing about, but also to portray the information in a manner that allows subsequent researchers to use the historian's citations and to locate and examine the same information. Any researcher who has attempted to follow another researcher's sources in order to understand how they came to their conclusions understands the importance of properly citing information and acknowledging all of one's sources. As Hoffer correctly states,

Falsification of data is about the most serious offense a historian can commit, but poor methods and worse memory may lead to inadvertent errors that do not amount to intentional falsification. The fact is that scholars attempting to follow Bellesiles's footsteps when he admitted that he could not recall where he went would either fail to find his tracks or discover that the sources he said he used and the counties he said he visited (or the microfilms of country records he said he used) did not provide evidence to support his claims.¹³

Whether Bellesiles actually falsely represented the data he had studied, or if his research methods and presentation were merely lacking in clarity, the primary problem with

¹² Ibid., 153.

¹³ Ibid., 154.

Bellesiles's book was that to researchers, the data appeared to have been altered. In the case of Lowry who physically altered the Lincoln letter within the archive, then based his research on the altered document, researchers will use Lowry's arguments in their subsequent books as the basis for their own research and as a support of the viewpoint that Lincoln actually wrote the letter in 1865 instead of 1864. In Bellesiles' case, researchers will base their own works off of his book, assuming that he was being truthful in his portrayal of the probate inventories. Unless they directly go back to the archives that he stated he visited, they have no way of knowing if the information is accurate. Also because he does not state which archives he visited, but rather groups the institutions together into one large group, researchers have little means of being able to follow up on Bellesiles' research. In both of these cases, unless this is noticed early after the publication of the research, there is a great possibility that other researchers will use the information in their own research, thus contaminating more research, which could in turn have future research based on it.

Because of situations such as these, the American Historical Association has taken measures to insure that historians produce research that is factual. Their *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* states,

All historians believe in honoring the *integrity of the historical record*. They do not fabricate evidence. Forgery and fraud violate the most basic foundations on which historians construct their interpretations of the past. An undetected counterfeit undermines not just the historical arguments of the forger, but all subsequent scholarship that relies on the forger's work.¹⁴

Similar standards applied when Bellesiles published his research, but it continues to emphasize the importance of integrity and accurate representation of research materials.

¹⁴ American Historical Association, *Statement on Standards for Professional Conduct*, 3.

In Lowry's case, he has altered the documents, thus violating the historical and archival record. In Bellesiles' case, his evidence is not presented in a way that leaves it untainted by the possibility of misinterpretation.

In these two cases, the authority in archives is threatened because the researcher is seeking to alter the intellectual content of the documents either by physically altering a document or by altering the representation of that data within one's research. For archives this puts researchers in a position that allows them to interpret the documents and their content in ways that the archive did not intend. Part of an archivist's duties in arranging and describing the collections in archives is the opportunity to organize the documents in a way which researchers can see the importance of the documents and the story which they convey. By altering the facts that the documents in the archives state, researchers are, in essence, saying that they know better what the documents should be conveying, even if it is not actually what the author of the documents intended for them to say. Interpreting documents within an archive in a different way can often lead to a better understanding of past cultures and lives. For example, women are not often mentioned in older documents, but by reading the documents in a certain way, researchers have been able to see evidence of the type of lives they might have lived and how society would have regarded them. This is simply a different reading of the same documents that clearly tells the story of the men of that same time. If a researcher were to go into an archive and deliberately alter the documents to refer to women instead of men as a way of proving a research thesis, this would be a violation of not only archival policies but also of the documents themselves. In the same way, researchers would be expected to document which archives they visited and what documents or collections

they viewed so that future researchers can not only view the same documents, but also know that the information is true and is not simply a figment of the researcher's imagination. Because of this, archives have a certain authority in being able to designate how items are interpreted. Preventing cases such as Thomas Lowry altering a document physically involves measures that are often already in place. Most archives do not allow ink pens into the research and reading rooms, a fact that Lowry knew. While archives could simply inform researchers that they can provide them with a pencil in which to take notes, it is often up to the researcher to be ethical and not attempt to violate the rules of the archive. In the case of Michael Bellesiles, there is little an archive can do until the research has been published. Even then, few archives know the exact contents of each document and are certainly not able to establish the conclusions that researchers do after visiting multiple archives. Instead, researchers must be vigilant in not only correctly documenting their own works, but also reviewing the works of their fellow scholars. Many publishers employ fact-checkers and these should be used to verify the information that researchers present. The AHA states in its current *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* that, "Historians celebrate intellectual communities governed by *mutual respect and constructive criticism*. The preeminent value of such communities is reasoned discourse—the continuous colloquy among historians holding diverse points of view who learn from each other as they pursue topics of mutual interest."¹⁵ Through this there is a system of checks and balances in which professional colleagues are able to review their peers' work for accuracy. Research should also be presented with understandable citations so that future researchers are able to trace not only the

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

conclusions of the author, but also establish their own research based on the same information.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Nevertheless, they kept the papers”: Creating a More Thorough Archive

Archives often find their collections under the direction of the organization that founded or supports the archive. Politics and research interests are just a few of the key factors that regulate the collections that are included in archives. Until the past few decades there was very little effort devoted to documenting underrepresented groups such as minorities, women, or political dissidents. This is a reflection of that way the archives are controlled by their parent institution, whether that is a government or a university. The Soweto Uprising as part of the history of apartheid in South Africa affected the collection policies of archives. Many documents were discarded because they failed to support prevailing political views. From this archival authority was challenged through the view that archives should be open for public research, as well as through advocacy for the inclusion of controversial primary sources. Similarly, archives can simply fail to document certain groups as illustrated by the case of working women of Las Vegas. In that example, archival authority was challenged as researchers sought records that documented an underrepresented but important group in the historical development of Las Vegas.

The Soweto Archives and Student Testimonies

In the past few decades, South Africa has been ridden with civil strife and violence as the policies of apartheid were challenged and ultimately abolished. During this time the Afrikaner government desired to purge history of the opposing political

opinions and actions and through this many of the archives there were left lacking in the actual history of the country. Helena Pohlandt-McCormick notes in her article, “In Good Hands”, “The institution called upon to safe-keep the records of the South African state was the State Archives Services (SAS). Responsibility for the proper management of state records was governed by national archival legislation and included the authorization for their destruction.”¹ In fact the destruction was so deliberate that “ There are many brown manila files in the archives that, while retaining the shape of the documents they must once have held, are now filled only with a small slip of paper upon which are written the ominous words: ‘*Vernietig/Destroyed*’.”² In addition to this destruction, few documents entered the archives during this time because some institutions hid their documents while others destroyed them rather than have them be discovered by the police. The problem with this is as Pohlandt-McCormick states, “In the repressive, authoritarian context of apartheid South Africa, official or publically sanctioned memories and histories were shaped around silences and lies.”³ As a result, archives were often incomplete, which was a disservice not only to researchers, but also to the people whose accounts of history were not preserved.

In addition to the strict control over what the South African archives contained, there was a reluctance to share accounts of the violence that characterized this period. While many documents pertaining to the incidents were destroyed, some were never

¹ Helena Pohlandt-McCormick. “In Good Hands: Researching the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the State Archives of South Africa,” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton. (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2005), 299.

² Ibid., 299.

³ Ibid., 300.

created. Many of the participants in the uprising were afraid that their stories would incriminate them with the government and police.

Pervasive violence shaped memories over time and the way in which people remembered and spoke. It also led to the destruction of historical records, and the disappearance of people and, with them, their stories. The authoritarian and repressive nature of apartheid produced individual memories formed by the personal experience of violence, and disrupted or destroyed the ability of the individual to think historically.⁴

Because of this lack of accurate first-hand accounts, Pohlandt-McCormick became interested in the concept of collective memory to reconstruct the history of this period, a concept that was believed to more accurately connect memory and historical facts.

Within this era of secrecy and the destruction of records, the incidents surrounding the Soweto Uprising are unclear. The uprising began as students in the Soweto schools opposed the teaching of non-language classes in Afrikaans and finally organized a protest. While exactly what happened on June 16, 1976 is contested between the police documents and the student accounts, the resulting violence led to the deaths of two students.⁵ After the movement spread to several other areas in South Africa, the Cillié Commission was organized to investigate the movement and the subsequent violence:

As a government commission, the officers of the Cillié Commission charged with the investigation of the events of Soweto had the power to command information from any and all government institutions as well as from most nongovernmental organizations, many of which no doubt pursued their own political and social agendas when they submitted their reports and memoranda to the commission. Where simple requests or subpoenas failed, material was simply seized by the South African Police officers who raided the offices of such organizations as the South African Students' Organization (SASO, a student movement based in

⁴ Ibid., 301.

⁵ Ibid., 303-304.

universities and tertiary institutions) and others. As a result, the evidence and the testimony of the commission represented—from an official or government point of view—as complete a set of documents as were generated by the multiplicity of organizations and institutions that had anything to say or contribute to a report and opinion of the uprising.⁶

While the variety of sources included in the commission’s collection appears to create a complete account, users must remember that these documents were also subjected to destruction if they did not conform to the proper political opinion.

But this archival collection, while seemingly comprehensive, did not contain the viewpoint of the students who were involved in it. As Pohlandt-McCormick notes, “Of the 563 witnesses the Commission heard, only 15 [3 percent] were persons under the age of 18.”⁷ In the same vein, while the hearings of the commission were recorded they were not available for public study. She says, “In the same way that the voices of the participants had been rendered almost completely indistinct, or had been silenced or ignored, the documented sources too had become inaudible and hidden.”⁸ In fact, because the students were not asked to give testimony to the commission they proceeded to produce their own account of the incident. “The students were well aware of the need to communicate their stories and their political agendas and to show a strong leadership if they wanted the community to continue to support them. They produced many documents that attested to this among them notes for speeches, pamphlets, press releases, flyers, and newsletters.”⁹ These documents were not included in the official collection of

⁶ Ibid., 306.

⁷ Ibid., 307.

⁸ Ibid., 307.

⁹ Ibid., 309.

the Cillie Commission's report, but they were preserved and would prove valuable for Pohlandt-McCormick's research and subsequent assistance in establishing a comprehensive archival collection of the Soweto Uprising.

For Pohlandt-McCormick, her research into the Soweto Uprising led her to question archival policies and content regarding information about the incident. When she first began her research in the early 1990s, many sources were closed but with the institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] between 1996 and 1998 much work was done to investigate violations of human rights. She explains,

The TRC signaled a profound shift away from the secrecy and lies of the apartheid years to a new and deliberately revelatory encounter with the past. The TRC created a new space of individual and collective memory, and perhaps even a new respect for the past or history. It also partially wrested the past out of the exclusivist hands of academic historians and put it into the hands of those who had suffered this history.¹⁰

For many involved in the uprising, evidence of their opposition and subsequent punishment was covered up by the government in an effort to eradicate the history of the strife. But the goal of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to expose the history of South Africa, even when it was controversial. In the case of the TRC it was necessary to find and preserve the records pertaining to this era, an ambition that should be the mission of any archive. As Pohlandt-McCormick states,

This is the purview of the archives. In the course of its work, the TRC inquired into the ongoing destruction of records because it needed to access documents relevant to the human rights violations it was investigating, documents which were important to the research and investigative work of the TRC and which would have a significant impact on its findings. The work of the TRC made clear that institutions such as archives play an important role in preserving the documentary record of historical memory. Its focus on the culpability of archives and other government institutions in the destruction of records highlighted the

¹⁰ Ibid., 313-314.

importance of such institutions in relation to public memory and history, and brought into focus that individual experience interacts with the discursive and political power of institutions in the process of articulating, preserving, inventing, silencing, and destroying memory.¹¹

The importance of archives is to collect the documents that record and preserve the history and actions of an organization. To actively participate in the destruction of such documents is the antithesis of the mission of an archive. Hence, the TRC seeking to restore documents, while falling within the domain of what an archive's purpose should be, was also contradictory to what the archive had established as its authority.

Within the TRC's mission to restore the history of the Soweto Uprising, it was important to them to preserve the movement as a whole not necessarily just a few individual memories for they believed that the "collective memory" was important as well. As stated previously, many were afraid to come forward with their stories, and individual memory was often not accurate. "The TRC also articulated the idea that memory is not just carried by individuals but that institutional memory too is contained in countless documentary records."¹² Grasping the view of the situation from many different perspectives was necessary because it gave a more authentic account of the history and events of the uprising. Collective memory, which Susan Geiger defines as "the consequence of the relationship between a widely shared social sense of an authentic past and the individual's process of remembering and storytelling" was important in this process because it combined the many facets of the incident and helped to create a picture

¹¹ Ibid., 314-315.

¹² Ibid., 314.

of it as a whole.¹³ To accomplish this goal, individuals were asked to share their testimony with the committee, making their experiences public and in the same act, allowing them to be recorded and included in the archive. But as noted previously, the problem was that very few, if any, of the students were interviewed, and the interviews were not open for public research.

Within the context of reconstructing this story, the commission retained the photographs, images, and documents such as letters and posters that were collected and documented them into a database, which secured them a more useful place in research.

These documents—the placards, posters, and handwritten letters, as well as historical police documents and black-and-white police photographs produced at the time of the uprising—provide a unique and rarely seen record both of the violence of the uprising and of its brutal suppression, and give a strong sense of “Soweto” as a place in time and geography.¹⁴

For researchers this proves invaluable as it combines written testimonies from oral histories and police documents, as well, as visual images of the conflict. “These documents reveal something of the efficiency with which their fierce biases combined with their claim to authoritativeness to produce powerful official statements. To ignore such sources would be, amongst other things, to ignore the main axiom of historical research, to use all sources possible, but to treat none uncritically.”¹⁵ By including documents that pertain to both sides of the conflict within the one archival collection, researchers will be able to better grasp the situation. Also the addition of images is invaluable because they capture the uprising in a way that words cannot.

¹³ Ibid., 315.

¹⁴ Ibid., 316.

¹⁵ Ibid., 316-317.

The Secret Archives of the Guatemalan Police

Pohlandt-McCormick shows how political parties can support the destruction of archival documents that do not portray the images they wish to be seen. She also demonstrates the necessity for archival advocacy for underrepresented and oppressed groups. While archival authorities may determine what should initially be included in archives, historians can provide logical reasons for including expanded collections to present the rest of the story. The same conclusion was reached after a secret police archive was discovered in Guatemala. After thirty-six years of civil war, tens of thousands of people had been killed, tortured, and/or kidnapped, but there was little or no evidence to clarify what happened to survivors' family members and friends. In Guatemala City, a secret archive was discovered, and here, "Rooms brim with head-high heaps of papers, some bundled with plastic string, others mixed with books, photographs, videotapes and computer disks—all told, nearly five linear miles of documents."¹⁶ In the process of discovering what exactly the archive holds, researchers insist that their job is to "clarify history" and "not to dictate policy". There have been multiple threats to the archive as

Not everyone is eager to dig up the recent past, especially police—some still serving on active duty—who could be implicated in crimes. But at the very least, the researchers hope to give closure to victims' relative and survivors. 'If you have an official document that proves that you've been saying is true,' [Carla] Villagran ["former advisor to the Project to Recover the Historic Archives of the National Police"] says, 'it's more difficult for anyone to say that you're lying about what happened to you, your family and the ones you loved.'¹⁷

¹⁶ Julian Smith. "A Human Rights Breakthrough in Guatemala". *Smithsonian Magazine*, (October 2009). <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Digs-Paper-Trail.html>. (accessed January 11, 2011).

¹⁷ Ibid.

Just as with the Soweto Uprising archives, the archivists and researchers in Guatemala discover the true story of what happened during those thirty-six years of silence. While each archive establishes its own authority of what information they will release to the public, secret archives and incomplete archives that represent a controversial period in a country's history are important for understanding exactly what happened.

In the United States, presidential libraries house the papers of each president and are released to researchers upon request, but even then this information can be classified. When researchers request to view materials they often have to file a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request as items are not processed until they are requested. Archivists then take the files related to the topic, process the documents, and remove any documents that are sensitive, whether they relate the national security or individual personal privacy. These regulations were enacted under the Presidential Records Act of 1978 (PRA) which changed the ownership of presidential records from public to private and left them under the control of the Archivist of the United States and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) at the end of a presidential administration.¹⁸ Because there is sensitive information housed there, documents are not open for any researcher to request. If a researcher feels that certain information should be released to them, they can fill out a mandatory request form, which is sent the agency or person who requests the information be withheld; these agencies retain the right to allow or restrict access to the records. In addition, before records are opened for researchers' access, notice must be provided to

¹⁸ Nancy Kegan Smith and Gary M. Stern, "A Historical Review of Access to Records in Presidential Libraries." *The Public Historian*, 28, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 97.

both former and incumbent presidents, who have the option to “assert a constitutionally based privilege” after reviewing the records.¹⁹

Revealing the Roles of Women in Las Vegas

The interest in including women’s histories in the archive at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas began in 1994 based on a similar project at the University of Nevada, Reno which “acquire[d] additional materials from individuals and organizations whose collections enhanced the archive.”²⁰ For many, the history of Las Vegas women revolves around the image of showgirls, but the goal of this archive was to highlight the many industries that Las Vegas women were involved in. In Las Vegas,

Rather than manufacturing, the service and tourism industries drove the development and expansion of the area since 1945. Tourism, with its embedded gaming and entertainment sectors, provided a wealth of job opportunities for women and men with a basic education. That industry comprises services jobs that continue to attract workers decades later. The city’s expansion coincided with larger national trends, like the postwar migration west, an expanding consumer economy, and the transition in the national economy from manufacturing to service jobs. Observers have not only overlooked Las Vegas’s place in these national trends, but have also been particularly ignorant of women’s participation in them.²¹

Women in Las Vegas were involved in almost every industry. Within the casinos they were wives of the owners and occasionally the actual owner; they also worked as beverage servers, dancers, housekeepers, and dealers. Within the rest of the city they worked as school teachers, businesswomen, journalists, and mothers. They were

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Joanne L. Goodwin. “Revealing New Narratives of Women in Las Vegas,” in *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 181-182. See also, <http://library.nevada.edu/women/index.html>.

²¹ Ibid., 180.

involved in organizations such as the League of Women Voters, worked for the Equal Rights Amendment, and organized the agency, Community Action Against Rape, as well as serving in other civic organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Association.

In order to capture these vital sources of information documenting the lives of the women who played such an important part in Las Vegas' history, Joanne Goodwin followed the example of Jean Ford, who began the Nevada Women's Archives at the University of Nevada, Reno, and sought to work with Ford to extend that collection to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her mission for the archive is stated as,

We wanted to avoid marginalizing a women's collection. In fact, our goal was quite the opposite—to build into an existing repository additional collections that focused on women's lives. We wanted to counteract the charge that women were not included in Las Vegas history because there was a lack of evidence about their lives or about their contributions. At the same time, we wanted to identify the holdings as a unique collection. In this way, we could avoid the invisibility of women's lives that can occur when sources are lost in the papers of a husband or family. We also wanted to avoid the tendency to collect only from the economic and political elite by designing a deliberate acquisition plan that was conscious of many forms of diversity.²²

Goodwin's intent was to collect the papers and narratives of a variety of women who were involved in Las Vegas' growth. At this time, “[t]he existing collections at the state archives and university departments of special collections contained a miscellany of manuscripts with an emphasis on business and political leaders as well as pioneers.”²³ But this was not enough to give researchers a thorough picture of how involved women were in Las Vegas' industries. As Goodwin states,

This weak base of historical sources led to a corresponding dearth of interpretations of women's lives and a scarcity of publication. Yet when asked,

²² Ibid., 182.

²³ Ibid., 181.

longtime residents stressed that women helped build every part of Las Vegas, from the small town's ranches, businesses, churches, and schools to the wartime industries and the resorts that defined the city as a tourist destination since the 1950s.²⁴

Like many archives, very little space is given to the history of women who were important in shaping the area.

When Goodwin and the Nevada Women's Archives began to build its collections in Las Vegas, the response from women's organizations was overwhelming.

The records of Las Vegas's women's organizations came out of storage areas on outdoor patios, in garages, and in offices. In a city where attics are rare and basements almost nonexistent, space for organizational papers was difficult to come by. Nevertheless, they kept the papers, which speaks to their pride in carrying forward the history of their institutions.²⁵

But despite this response from organizations, there were still subgroups within the women's archive which were underrepresented. Goodwin explains, "the histories of wage earners, women of color, and women in gaming remained poorly represented in the Nevada Women's Archives. Despite our well-laid plans regarding diversity, a few areas—civic life, professionals, and education—became overrepresented in the acquired collections."²⁶ To remedy this, Goodwin proposed a collection of oral histories that would be collected from a variety of women in the gaming and entertainment industries. The response, she writes, was overwhelming,

People flooded us with the names of elite women to interview, as they assumed we wanted only those with the greatest wealth and stature. However, we organized the project to include not only the owners and wives of owners, but also the beverage servers, dancers, housekeepers, and dealers who worked in gaming.

²⁴ Ibid., 181.

²⁵ Ibid., 183.

²⁶ Ibid., 184.

The occupational segregation of the period allowed us to capture the ethnic, racial, and economic diversity of women workers.²⁷

These oral histories allowed people to see the diversity of jobs that women held, even within the narrow confines of the gaming and entertainment industry. They revealed that these women did not fit the stereotypical image of the showgirls that Las Vegas publicists promoted. In fact,

In an era of increasing tensions between conventional morals and newfound expressions of sexuality, the showgirl image came to overwhelm and obscure the experiences of women as workers and community builders. Going beyond local history, the narratives fill out the story of women's experiences with survival, migration, work, and agency.²⁸

As a result of the collection of these oral histories in addition to the Nevada Women's Archives, there is a better understanding of the role that women played in settling the state and forming its industries. As Goodwin states,

Historians initially described the postwar era as one in which the ideals of domesticity limited women to the home, where they cared for their families. Subsequent revision of that thesis placed greater emphasis on women as agents of change in publications that documented women's efforts in labor unions, social movements, and politics. The Las Vegas oral histories convey a third pattern. Rather than choose between being a homemaker or an activist, many women blended work with family life.²⁹

For Goodwin as a result of advocating for this expansion of the Nevada Women's Archive into the Las Vegas area, it showed the diversity of positions that women held throughout the state and the roles they played in local organizations. Without this there was little documentation of women's contributions, and the history that was reflected in

²⁷ Ibid., 184-185.

²⁸ Ibid., 179.

²⁹ Ibid., 188.

the archives was one of the educated, white males who promoted the stereotypical showgirl image, restricting views of women's roles in this city.

All of these instances show researchers advocating for a more complete collection of documents in the archives. By having the complete story, researchers understand exactly what happened at critical moments in history. While the authority for the archive is established by the mission and the governing officials, archives do not always contain a complete record of an area's history. By collecting unorthodox documents such as posters and banners, sorting through secret archives, and conducting oral history interviews, historians have worked to compile a more nuanced view of history. For archivists and the archives they represent this is a positive challenge that directs the scope of their collections. Like museums, archives should have a mission statement and a collections policy so that they collect items that are pertinent to the reason they were formed. An archive focusing on the history of political upheaval most likely would not want a cookbook collection from the local Junior League. But there are archives that focus more on the activities of women in the local community that would be ecstatic to receive such donations. Because of these policies archives often find their contents questioned by groups that feel they are underrepresented in the portrayal of history or events. By challenging the current contents of an archive, these advocates can help to promote a more thorough view of history. In the three cases presented here, it is often historians who advocate for a wider variety of viewpoints to be presented in archives. Instead of attempting to add these documents on their own as John Drewe did, or alter the documents already there as Thomas Lowry did, these historians requested that the collections be expanded and worked with the archive to help them do this. While

challenges to authority are often seen as negative, these cases demonstrate how challenges can be made in a positive and constructive manner.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Archives and archivists have developed from simply historians' assistants to a profession that seeks to care for documents and develop its mission and members through both certification and activism. The challenges that have been presented to archivists have shown the weaknesses that they needed to correct and given them the opportunities to refine their policies. While many of the challenges were negative in nature, archivists were able to use situations such as the questioning of the authenticity of the Peña diary to demonstrate how science and technology can be used in archives to establish the authenticity of questioned documents. Other situations such as the thefts and alterations of the documents and the archival record allowed archivists to review their policies for security, researcher access, and ways in which they can know exactly what their archive contains despite the multitude of documents contained there. Finally, archivists are able to use challenges such as the ones in the South African archives and the Las Vegas archives to expand their collections and better represent the members of the community who contributed to the development of its history.

Challenges are always part of the growth of any organization as they test the policies that have been implemented. These tests allow for the policies and procedures to be refined and for the staff to know how to handle these situations in the future. At the same time, challenges also demonstrate how some policies are effective and prevent further damage. For archivists the situations that have been examined in this thesis show the variety of challenges that archives face from thieves, researchers, and advocates.

Since archives represent and serve the public, archivists must use these challenges to further develop as a profession and to better serve their audience.

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