

Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges¹

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This article will examine the community archive movement, exploring its roots, its variety and present developments. It will identify the possible impact on the national archival heritage, particularly on the many gaps and absences in that contemporary heritage, of community archive materials and examine some of the opportunities and challenges that these initiatives present to the mainstream profession.

This capacity to evacuate any historical dimension to black life remains a fundamental achievement of racist ideologies in this country... This reintroduction of history is not a minimal aim. Racism rests on the ability to contain blacks in the present, to repress and to deny the past. (Paul Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, 1987)²

Part of our problem is that we do not know our histories; part of your problem is that you do not know our histories. So much of the hostility we face is based on ignorance and we must challenge this. (Stephen Small, *The Politics of British Black History*, 1991)³

Personally, I see no reason why, as a white woman, the history of black people in this country is any less part of my history than castles and medieval churches... It is something we all share, just by being here. (Deborah Lamb, Director of Policy and Communications, English Heritage, 2007)⁴

These three quotations explore the implications of exclusion from history and from heritage. They all examine the question from the perspective of Black history, but could easily be applied to a number of different groups or identities who are marginalised or under-represented within our histories. The point that is made is that

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such marginalisations are not only a reflection and instrument of broader social and economic inequalities but also that reversing these marginalisations and absences is in the interest not merely of the particular groups concerned but of us all. Black history, or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) history, or women's history, or Jewish history, or steelworkers' history, or a village history is important not only for those groups but impacts on all our stories, and together they make up an inclusive national heritage, our national histories. The relationship of archives and the archival professional to these concerns is important. We have been told, and more importantly we tell others that archives 'are the very essence of our heritage' and 'the direct, uninterpreted and authentic voice of the past' without which 'there would not be any real sense of history whether of the last ten years or the last thousand years'.⁵ Whilst some of us might wish to question whether archives are always quite so 'direct, uninterpreted and authentic', most would agree that they are 'the foundation on which are built all our histories'. However, there is a problem, although the Archives Task Force (ATF) report suggests that the archives and the histories that are based on them are filled with 'many and varied voices...the voice of the Lord Protector of England and the voice of a Ranter side by side; or the voice of the captain of industry and the worker on the factory floor: the same event from very different points of view', in reality the mainstream or formal archive sector does not contain and represent the voices of the non-elites, the grassroots, the marginalised.⁶ Or at least if it does, the archive rarely allows them to speak with their voice, through their own records. There are logical reasons for this, not least in terms of the key administrative and organisational purposes (and biases) of most archival services; nevertheless it is important that these gaps and absences are addressed. This article will examine one development that might provide a partial solution to some of these gaps and absences, and has been identified as such by the ATF, that is the expansion of interest and participation in community archives. It will explore the roots and present reality of the community archive or community history movement, identify the possible impacts on the national archival heritage and examine some of the opportunities and challenges that these initiatives present for the mainstream profession.

Community Histories, Community Archives?

Defining and establishing a common understanding of the terms employed in this area is important but also quite difficult. Definitions of what a community might be, or what a community archive is and what it might be taken to include are not necessarily clear or fixed. Indeed, these terms might go unused and unrecognised by many working in community projects and in mainstream archive and heritage institutions. Other similar, if not exactly synonymous terms which are also frequently used include local history group, oral history project, community history project and community memory project. Nonetheless acceptance of the term 'community

archives' has grown in recent years as an effective [if sometimes imperfect] means of grouping together these often very disparate and variously named projects and initiatives into one community archives 'movement'.

Definitions of what a 'community' might be are of course particularly complex and fluid and capable of multiple interpretations. Some definitions focus on locality, others on notions of shared beliefs or shared values producing a common purpose. Other discussions examine problems with who it is that seeks to define community and community membership, who determines who is included and who is excluded and whether it should be seen as an inclusive or as an exclusive and divisive concept.⁷ An awareness of these complexities is essential if we are to examine what community archives and memory might contribute to community identity or cohesion. However, it is also necessary to have a working definition of community as generally applied to the community archive movement. Some definitions refer to 'geography, culture, or common interest' but I prefer to be both broader and more explicit by referring to a community as a group who define *themselves* on the basis of locality, culture, faith, background, or other shared identity or interest. Many communities tend to have a local focus, even if they meet virtually but others have another shared focus altogether such as sexuality, occupation, ethnicity, faith, or an interest, or a combination of one or more of the above.

Community histories or community archives are the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential. This activity might or might not happen in association with formal heritage organisations but the impetus and direction should come from within the community itself. Like community interactions themselves, many of these community heritage projects take place on the web with connections to physical locations, occupations or shared identities made by a virtual community in a virtual space. Some of the digital material created by these virtual projects might be artificial or ephemeral, but nonetheless it represents an important further source of material whose long-term preservation requirements need to be explored.⁸

Another source of some debate is the content of community archives but broadly the 'archives' in community archives include collections of material objects, paper and digital records, audio-visual materials and personal testimonies, all created or collected and held within the community. This definition might engender some debate as to whether these 'created' or 'artificial' collections are archives, but the movement has chosen, correctly I believe, to use the broadest and most inclusive definitions possible. In particular photographs, film, oral material and the personal ephemera of individual lives all contribute to bringing to life individuals and communities that otherwise lie rather lifeless or without colour in the paper record.⁹

However, it is important not to get too distracted by definitional exactitude. Often these definitions can confuse as much as they clarify, and exclude as much as they include. For instance, as already noted, many individuals working on community projects will not recognise these as community archives at all but will use many other

names, including community heritage projects, local history societies, and oral history projects. Furthermore, many of these groups might not have any relationship with a local heritage provider at all but many of those that do will have had a relationship with a local museum or library and again the term archive may be of little or no direct relevance to them. Equally, for those working in professional archive and heritage services, the move to designate these initiatives as ‘community archives’ may give the impression of something distinctly new and that perhaps obscures the fact that many local archivists have been working closely with similar groups, particularly local history societies and oral history projects, for many years.

Community Archives: History and More Recent Developments

In 2004 the ATF reported on the recent growth of community archives as an important development, stemming ‘from a desire by individuals and groups to record and share culturally diverse experiences and stories’.¹⁰ This public professional recognition of the significance of community archives was accompanied by a series of initiatives in which the mainstream archive world sought to explore co-operation with the community archive world. These initiatives included the Community Access to Archives Project (CAAP) and the valuable reports and guidance which it published in October 2004. CAAP was succeeded in 2005 by the Community Archive Development Group (CADG) and in its short existence so far it has launched a website (communityarchives.org), commissioned the first research into the impact of community archives and held a successful public conference in the summer of 2007 which brought together practitioners from both community and formal archives as well as other interested parties.¹¹

The reasons for these activities was of course the widespread recognition of the importance of local archives in telling local and community stories as well as the real difficulties of so doing because of the ‘scarcity of available documentation for the *activities of the ordinary citizen*’ (original emphasis) and in particular of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals and communities. It has been suggested that these difficulties stem from a ‘fundamental shortage of such material in the first place’ and there is clearly some truth in this. Without pro-active initiatives in this regard from the archive profession the letters and diaries of ordinary individuals are unlikely to survive and find their way into mainstream repositories.¹² But as one commentator has suggested it is here that real concerns lie—without a real commitment from the sector to actively seek to represent and collect from the *whole* of society, then these materials will often continue to be lost and will certainly remain outside the walls of the formal archives.¹³ The latter point is crucial because what the recent concentration on community archives has demonstrated is that the very sort of material evidently missing from formal archives *is* being collected, created and cared for in local community projects.

Nevertheless, these projects and initiatives are not new phenomena and official recognition of their existence and their importance has come, perhaps, rather

belatedly. Interest in and awareness of the issues concerning community representation and collecting has been well established amongst local history librarians, social history curators in museums and some local archivists for many years. Books aimed at local studies librarians in the 1980s noted the continued growth of local and community histories and indicated the active collecting of primary and secondary resources needed to enable such studies, acknowledging that where 'communities have felt deprived of such a resource they have established their own local collections'.¹⁴ In museums interest in communities and diversity of collections dates back to the same period and has been described as part of the move from 'being about something to being about somebody', a shift towards "the people" and away from the traditional primacy of museums' collections'; part of a long drive to seek the 'democratisation' of culture which has built 'on decades of development in, for example, social history'.¹⁵

So community archives, though often going under a number of different names, are not a new development. In fact a brief examination of community and local history groups across Britain soon uncovers a rich heritage of different initiatives to document and preserve the traces of various groups and localities otherwise under-represented by mainstream archives and heritage services. Some of these projects worked closely with the formal sector, while others remained firmly independent and community controlled. A comprehensive list would probably be impossible to construct but a few examples will suffice to give a sense of the extent and variety of the movement.¹⁶

Interest in and writing on local history (and the collection of local materials) has a long pedigree, with roots in the antiquarianism of the 17th century, the antiquarian societies of the 19th century and finally in the local history groups of the 20th century. Recent research into local history activity by a student from University College London found one group in the south-west of England that was over 100 years old and a further 20 groups that were at least 25 years old. Most of these groups not only created local history materials but also collected and created community archive material such as original documents, maps, photographs, oral history tapes and local ephemera. Similar student research into community history projects in Cambridgeshire and East Anglia identified a significant number of more recent initiatives but also found projects dating back to the 1980s and before, again often actively involved in collecting and creating community memory materials.¹⁷

In the post-war period, encouraged in part by the Workers' Educational Association and adult education classes, local history became increasingly popular and respectable both as an academic discipline and at a non-professional grassroots level.¹⁸ The latter element, though often combining with academic study, developed into full-blown community history under the influence of the developments in oral history, the History Workshop movement and public history in the 1970s and 1980s, all of which tended to be inspired by 'an allegiance to those whose lives are still excluded from historical practice and a commitment to a praxis which places emphasis on what is being said rather than the status of who is saying it'.¹⁹ Local oral

history and history workshop groups were and continue to be inspired to document local lives, including those of disappearing occupations, of families and of women, that were otherwise often neglected in mainstream histories. Projects in London alone include efforts since 1981 by the Island History Trust on the Isle of Dogs to document using photographs and other archive materials the changing occupational and demographic patterns in docklands, as well as the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop which prides itself on being 'probably the longest-established oral history project in London, 23 years and still going strong!'. HistoryTalk, in North Kensington and Notting Hill, has been doing similar work since the early 1990s, as has the Eastside Community Heritage project in the East End, resulting in large numbers of oral history tapes, photographs and documents from those areas being identified and preserved. A strong element in these projects is the use of community history activities to seek to record the diversity of local cultures as well as trying to bring together individuals and local communities on an interracial and inter-generational basis.²⁰

The History Workshop and oral history movements were also intimately associated with initiatives to identify and preserve the archives of working-class and labour movement communities in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The formation of the Society for the Study of Labour History in 1960 committed to identifying and supporting the preservation of labour archives, further supported by the establishment of a Labour Archives Sub-Committee a few years later, denoted growing academic and political, non-professional interest in working-class and labour history. Much of this interest and activity resulted in labour archive collections being deposited in local record offices or university archives but this was accompanied by the development of a network of often fiercely independent working-class libraries, archives and museums such as the Working Class Movement Library, first in Trafford and then in Salford and the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell, London, the original National Museum of Labour History in Limehouse as well as collaborations between universities and 'proletarian communities' such as the South Wales Miners' Library. All of these acquired substantial archival collections from within the labour movement and did so in reaction to a (real or) perceived 'neglect by the "responsible" collecting agencies' as well as a clearly articulated political desire to gather 'together the history of the working class and its allies in the many struggles which have taken place over the past two hundred years' and retain the authority to tell the stories of those struggles from within the working class.²¹

Political campaigns and concerns over race, ethnic and diasporic identities, gender and sexuality have also resulted in sustained efforts to record and preserve the culture and heritage of these communities. In both Britain and the USA, the Jewish community has been concerned since the end of the 19th century to document Jewish life, history and culture. The formation of Jewish Historical Societies in 1892 (America) and 1893 (Britain), aiming to document both the distinctiveness and unity of the Jewish community (often with the result of ignoring or marginalising difference within that community) as well as a more 'defensive' instinct to

demonstrate their place in and contribution to wider society, particularly when the latter was being questioned by hostile, anti-Semitic movements typified that concern. Although as Tony Kushner has shown, efforts within the community to preserve their history and culture have been by no means continuous in the intervening years, a series of local and national initiatives have resulted in a number of independent community heritage institutions in London, Manchester and Glasgow, some of which hold their own archive collections including oral histories, photographs and documents and some of which have deposited the records of community organisations with record offices such as the London Metropolitan Archives and the Greater Manchester County Record Office.²²

In BME communities, independent cultural heritage initiatives often emerged directly out of a context of marginalisation, racism and struggle. In London, the Black Cultural Archive in Brixton was first established in 1981 'to collect, document and disseminate the culture and history of the peoples of Africa and Caribbean ancestry living in Britain' in order to reverse the marginalisation of Black people in British histories, an absence which was 'contributing to a sense of frustration and alienation from British society and inhibited participation in wider community activity'. The George Padmore Institute and Archive was set up in 1991, seeking to make material available relating to 'the political and cultural history of people of Caribbean, African and Asian descent in Britain and Continental Europe' and to document otherwise marginalised 'moments of intellectual, political and creative ferment which people from Britain's former colonies brought to this country in the post-war period'. The present Northamptonshire Black History Association which aims to 'record and promote the histories and stories of Northamptonshire's Black communities and individuals over at least the past 500 years' had its roots in the work of the Wellingborough (later Northampton) Race Relations Council which in the early 1990s and before organised Black History events and produced a number of publications. Over 20 years it built up a relationship with the local archive service which has eventually resulted in a large number of community archives being transferred into the record office but it remains independent, community-run and active in the preservation of the record of the Black life and presence in Northamptonshire.²³

LGBT archives and queer identities/histories initiatives (for instance the Hall-Carpenter Archives which were set up in the early 1980s to document the gay and lesbian activism and life, Brighton Our Story, established in 1989 for a similar local purpose, and the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre (LAIC) established in London in 1984 and moved to Glasgow in 1995) often demonstrate similar patterns of existence with motivations coming from a 'political' community purpose and initiatives that largely begin and in some cases continue to exist beyond the mainstream sector.²⁴ More recently the formal archival sector has begun to collaborate with different LGBT groups to document these communities and their lives, with the emphasis being on representing the diversity of these lives and on the voice and empowerment of the communities themselves having pre-eminence within the relationship with the professional organisations.²⁵

In a similar fashion women's and feminist archives operate both in partnership with formal archives (mainly in universities) and independent of them. Thus the Women's Library 'a cultural centre housing the most extensive collection of women's history in the UK' (previously the Fawcett Library) was independent until 1977 and is now part of London Metropolitan University. The Feminist Archive began in 1978 as one woman's collection in her attic but grew to include published materials, diaries, personal letters, photographs, postcards, drawings, posters, banners, badges, vinyl records and other audio-visual materials, clothing, and various other ephemera documenting second-wave feminism. The archive was divided in two in 1988 with the Feminist Archive North now located in the University of Leeds and the Feminist Archive South at the time of writing still independent and staffed by volunteers but soon to move into the University of Bristol library.²⁶

Nevertheless, in addition to this varied range of longer established community initiatives, there are clearly many newer community archives which build on some of the motivations behind these older projects and, embracing the possibilities of new technologies, take them in new and different directions. For instance, the WISEArchive in Norwich and Norfolk operates in an online environment to create a 'public archive for older people' which documents and makes available interviews about their working lives. Working in partnership with a number of heritage and media organisations but retaining community involvement and participation at its heart, the archive allows people to record and contribute their own accounts of their working lives in agriculture, printing and other local declining or changing occupations.²⁷ Another example of a project taking full advantage of recent technological developments is the Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network (CCAN), a partnership including the local Libraries, Archives and Information Service, and using an adapted version of the Comma software to link together a network of 50 community archive groups to preserve 'photographs, documents and memories about community life' for future generations.²⁸

The Growth of Community Archives

While community archives or related initiatives are not new phenomena but rather subject to a growing professional awareness of their importance and their potential impacts, there also has been an undoubted substantial growth in the numbers of these initiatives in recent years. This expansion of numbers is the result of a number of often inter-related factors.

First, there has been the impact of new technologies on both the formation of communities and on the processes of community histories or community archives. As previously indicated the development of the World Wide Web and the Internet have meant that formation of communities of shared interest (be it occupation, locality, cultural, diasporic or other) no longer need to have a physical 'meeting place' but often come together online in a virtual environment, frequently bringing together people from very diverse and widely distributed geographic locations. This process

will only be increased in the future by developments in social participation and networking of Web 2.0. Some of these community initiatives have seen the Web as the most appropriate and effective place for the collection, storage and dissemination of community memories and archives, notably of photographs, scanned documents and sometimes oral testimony. This process has been extended and made widely available to a large number of local history and community archive groups by the development of a number of software packages such as Comma, Community Sites and UK Villages Community Heritage Stores which in different ways enable groups to build websites, digitise, upload and store their images, and then share and disseminate their archives via the Web or by CD-Rom. These have proved very popular. Commanet which offers a range of support services to community archive groups was established in 1995 working with its first group in Batley, Yorkshire and now supports over 300 groups in the UK and several other countries.²⁹

The growth of these groups is also undoubtedly related to the continued growth of interest in individual and family history. These explorations of personal history identity are of course intimately related to local history and such studies often lead, almost inevitably, to expanding one's interest into the history of the communities, streets, workplaces, places of worship in which family members lived their lives.³⁰

Another important incentive in stimulating interest in community history comes when communities go through rapid and significant change and feel that they are in the process of losing their identity or having that identity marginalised or ignored. Community histories and archive initiatives can play an important role in re-connecting or rooting communities which have gone through dramatic and perhaps traumatic change, whether due to industrial decline and the end of traditional occupations such as mining, dock working and metal working, or the experience of migration and diasporic living, or other cultural, demographic and generational shifts within an area. Community histories, both in the past and more recently, have flourished under these circumstances by helping individuals and communities to re-connect with their heritage and identity. Community archives help communities not only to remember and document their past but also to understand the present day and its connections to that past.³¹ Recognition of this role and further explanation of the growth of these initiatives is to be found in the continued funding of community archive projects by the Heritage Lottery Fund (most notably, previously, via the Local Heritage Initiative).³²

Why Are Community Archives and Community Histories Important?

It has already been suggested that it is important that archives and heritage should aim to be representative and inclusive of all and not exclude and marginalise some sectors of society, and that community archives can have a role to play in achieving this inclusivity. But before moving on to examine some of other impacts claimed for community archives, it is worth exploring these ideas and professional responses to them in some detail. Over the last 50 years the practice and focus of history, both in

academia and outside, has been transformed to reflect a whole range of what is often described as history from below or social history concerns, and these new concerns, witness the History Workshop movement and the various identity histories, have required the identification of new source materials.

However, as already noted, the archive traces ‘of the ordinary citizen’ and in particular of BME individuals and communities are relatively scarce within the formal archives. If we examine the ‘totality’ of our archival heritage—that is both that which exists within the walls of mainstream archives, and that which lies outside in other spaces—we would surely find that most, though by no means all, of the stories of organisations, of government, of elites (in society, in business, in politics) were to be found in the formal archives, but that the voices of the citizen, the worker, the migrant, the marginal and of the community organisations that they created were generally not.

Certainly these citizens appear in the formal archive in the context of their interactions with the state, or with businesses or with the justice services, and much valuable information is to be found there reading both with and against the grain. But these traces are generally one-dimensional, often reducing individuals to statistics, appearing as problems, occupations, rigid ethnic or faith-based identities which minimise or ignore complexity and deny them their own voice.³³ Perhaps we could ask ourselves whether we would really wish our own lives to be understood in these terms. Do we really want a social history of society which is empty of its people and which does not reflect real lives and experiences because that is the sort of history the use of formal archives often produces?³⁴

This is not to say that national, high-politics, and economic histories are not important, but to argue that they should not be the only histories possible. Community archives, local history projects, oral history and audio-visual records all give voice to those usually unheard, illuminate what happened in the workplace beyond the statistics of wages and production, shed light on the life and experiences in communities rarely mentioned in the official record, and open up family life in ways impossible to imagine using conventional sources. They offer us ways into writing histories with ‘thick description’ which better reflect the complexity and multiple identities of British society, past, present and future.³⁵

Equally, if not more importantly, these community histories and archive projects offer ways of remembering and communicating these stories directly to the communities from which they came. Here lies, if not immortality:

By recording your story you will have contributed to the history of this corner of London, not just for now but for ever. Your story will be part of tomorrow’s history, and your place in it will be assured,³⁶

at least in the sense that your voice and the voice of your community is being recorded and contributing to a shared community identity that is perhaps otherwise not represented in the official record.

Recognising the importance of community archives is thus part of a project which aims to make our archival heritage more representative of the diversity of our whole society. This might be best described as part of a process of ‘democratising’ the archive, which following Raphael Samuel, Stuart Hall and others is part of a broader mission to democratise and introduce complexity into the national heritage whereby archives, heritage and histories talk of, and speak to, all the people.³⁷

This new version of the national past is not only more democratic than earlier ones but also more feminine and domestic. It privileges the private over the public sphere. . . . Hearth and home, rather than sceptre and sword, become the symbols of national existence; samples and patch-work quilts the tradition-bearers.³⁸

Democratisation would in this sense also be an on-going process, not one that could be completed, but would be a constant task, evolving, changing, always continuing as society itself changes and evolves.

The idea of a democratised and inclusive history reflecting a diverse and multicultural society is a contested arena, with old narratives defended and challenged both in academic and in public histories. ‘History Wars’ have been fought very publicly in the USA and Australia, but have also been evident in the UK where British identity, British history and particularly Britain’s imperial heritage and role in the Slave trade have all been subject to vigorous, often vitriolic debate. Nevertheless, despite the controversies these are not marginal or abstract concerns. They represent an opportunity to ‘make a useful contribution to the development of shared understanding of overlapping histories’.³⁹ The important concept at the heart of this is that these community histories are not separate histories, somehow not part of the mainstream, but that they are integral to a new inclusive history of all of us, of Britain as a ‘community of communities’. As we shall see this does not mean that these collections necessarily belong to everyone—community archives remain firmly the property and in the ownership of the community that created them, at least until that community decides otherwise—but the histories that these collections tell relate to everyone.

At a 2007 Archive Awareness Campaign event entitled ‘Identity Papers? The Role of Archives in Teaching Diversity and Citizenship’, David Lammy, the then Minister for Culture, addressed the history warriors:

I know that some people have argued that we should teach a single identity narrative about how we came to be who we are. . . . But the compelling questions of our age cannot be answered via a single cultural narrative. We have ‘Island Stories’—interweaving, interlocking, constantly being updated. Stories that reflect the make-up and the history of those who live here now. Which concentrate on our shared heritage, not on an illusory image. That helps us to understand not who we were, but who we are and who we want to be.⁴⁰

Community archives and the stories they tell can help us construct an inclusive local and national heritage in which all communities, all relations and interactions are

included. This heritage and the uses to which it can be put (publications, exhibitions, performance, and personal research) help to connect people to places, communities and traditions, bring together and foster understanding between different generations and communities, and thus contribute to a wider social justice agenda.

The Professional Response

In comparison to the professional archival literature of the USA, Australia, Canada or South Africa, for instance, or the literature of other heritage disciplines such as museum studies, very little discussion on any of the changes with regard to developments in social history, community history and identity, or the need for more representative archives has appeared in the UK professional literature. An examination of the contents of the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* since its inception reveals very few references to the implications for the profession of the emergence of the new movements in social and identity history. The only references in the 1970s to concerns over sources documenting history from below come in connection with oral history materials and the work of some record offices in supporting the 'recording the testimony of that large section of the population which does not create or keep written records'. In 1988, again in an article about the complementary work of archivists and oral historians, Graham Eales and Jill Kinnear from Portsmouth City Record Office argued that archives should not be austere and distant institutions but 'local history centres working in and for the community'.⁴¹ The growth of identity history, women's history, Black history, and LGBT history also left the *Journal* if not the profession untouched. Only articles by Serena Kelly on the records of the National Union of Women Workers and Jeremy Goldberg 'Women in Later Medieval English Archives' reflected the increased interest and work in national, local and specialist archives to better reflect the diversity of society.⁴²

Certainly there was nothing to compare to Gerald Ham's 1974 presidential address to the American Society of Archivists in which he called for an 'active' archivist to hold up a mirror to reflect all society or Fredric Miller's essay on the implications of developments in social history for the professional or the special editions of *Archivaria* which focused on Labour and working-class records and on, again, social history.⁴³ More recently the concern over custody and ownership, post-modern perspectives, refiguring the archives, and the records of indigenous peoples evident in the publications of many other English-speaking professions have been barely reflected in the *Journal*. In fact only Ian Johnston's 'Whose History is it Anyway?' published in 2001 and Bricki-Niagassa's 'Social Inclusion and Archives' published by Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies (LUCAS) have dealt with the issues of collection diversity and relations with community groups in any depth up to this point.⁴⁴

Johnston noted that according to a 1999 Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) survey only a few local record offices had made 'meaningful' attempts at collecting archival materials from local black communities and he further asserted

that at an official professional level there appeared to be little public recognition that this state of affairs might be problematic. Johnston's solution to these absences focused on re-orientated collection and acquisition strategies including the records of BME groups as well as other under-represented communities. Although he acknowledged the reluctance of some communities to deal with archive services and the need to address this with imaginative 'outreach' programmes, he did so without really addressing difficult questions about professional and community claims over custody and ownership.⁴⁵

This approach (of giving priority to acquisition and collection) remains wedded to a very top-down custodial view of professional activity. It does not focus on the creators and custodians of these community archives, who often distrust or are at least wary of the intentions of heritage professionals and may wish to prevent the transfer of their papers and social memory to professional, non-community organisations. Though reference is made to examples in the US literature of the need to build relations with communities and to work with representatives of those communities to sometimes overcome their hostility to external organisations, Johnston does so without examining in any detail the case for supporting the creators and custodians of the archives to preserve their archives themselves.⁴⁶

Despite the lack of published discussions of these issues, Johnston and Bricki-Niagassa excepted, this does not mean that individual professional archivists were not working closely with a range of different local history and community groups. But it has meant that this work has tended to be patchy and rarely sustained over long periods, and has often targeted traditional user communities rather than those often more marginalised communities with a less direct relationship with local heritage services. So, for example, many local archives, museums and libraries have had long and often productive relations with local history groups which have evolved in many cases into relationships with similar community archive groups. In the case of working-class community records there has been a complicated pattern of co-operation between local and national heritage providers, higher education institutions and independent working-class organisations. Perhaps the best example of this was the Manchester Studies Archive Retrieval Programme based in Manchester Polytechnic in the 1970s whose object was to locate local historical documents of all kinds 'whose future [was] not secure' and 'arrange for their safe preservation in archive collections'. Particular emphasis was placed on the records of local working-class communities including 'scrap books, post cards, photographs and lantern slides as well as formal records'. The project team, which included academics and local activists, worked closely with local archive professionals so that future preservation could be ensured but was also independent enough to be 'freed from the encumbrance of received theories and traditional practices relating to archive retrieval'. The aim was not only to identify collections at risk and to ensure their preservation but also to help re-balance the collections of local record offices away from local government and to better represent the lives of ordinary men and women as they were actually lived.⁴⁷

For other community archives a similar pattern can be discerned—there are a mixture of independent community initiatives including, in some cases, well-established institutions (the George Padmore Institute and Archive, the Glasgow Women’s Library, the Manchester Jewish Museum) and also partnerships between community organisations and the heritage sector with some community collections now held in formal archive institutions particularly in higher education (for instance the Women’s Library at London Metropolitan University, LGBT archives at the London School of Economics, and the Bernie Grant papers at the University of Middlesex) or sometimes local or regional offices such as the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA, the archives of Eric and Jessica Hartley) and the Northamptonshire Record Office (and its relationship with the Northamptonshire Black History Project/ Association) but overall the scope of these collections and activity in this area remains inconsistent and incomplete.

Since the publication of Johnston’s article the landscape in terms of professional recognition at the highest level of the importance of community archives and the diversity and representativeness of archive collections generally has been transformed. Many initiatives, such as CASBAH (Caribbean Studies, Black and Asian History), GENESIS and The National Archives’ Introduction to Gay and Lesbian History have built on and continued earlier efforts to identify and recover historic traces of the BME communities and other ‘hidden’ groups within existing archival collections. This is important work and maintains the task of asserting the historic diversity and ‘other voices’ of British society, questioning in Caroline Bressey’s phrase ‘the imagined whiteness of our national archives’.⁴⁸ However, these endeavours need to be accompanied, as this article seeks to demonstrate, by an equal concentration on documenting, recording and preserving the diversity of contemporary society. For this to become a reality, the archive profession needs to explore projects such as Northamptonshire Black History Project and Connecting Histories in Birmingham, the work of the CAAP and the community initiatives of LMA, and move community partnership and outreach work from being optional to being core to the archival mission.

The Impact of Community Histories and Community Archives

Since the publication of the Burns Owen Partnership’s *New Directions in Social Policy: Developing the Evidence Base for Museums, Libraries and Archives* in 2005, attempts have been made to begin to evaluate the social impact of community archives as well as the archive and heritage sector more generally. To move from anecdotal claims to a more evidence-based position, in 2006 CADG commissioned the first piece of research into the social impacts of community archives and the report and the case studies upon which the report was based were published in summer of 2007.⁴⁹ The report estimates that there might be 3000 community archives already in existence in the UK, involving perhaps one million people. On the basis of survey responses from 46 groups and further in-depth case studies of 10, the report discerned a number of

impacts with regard to community archives, mostly flowing from the opportunities for social interaction and participation that these activities provide. The report found that community archive activity resulted in cultural capital gains by bringing together groups that rarely met otherwise, particularly across generations, and thus supporting greater mutual understanding and respect; and by re-balancing history and heritage in favour of otherwise under-voiced communities leading to a greater sense of empowerment, belonging and community cohesion. Other impacts identified by the report were contributions to the creation of more attractive and liveable communities, often by renovating a building or community centre as a physical meeting point for community archive activities; providing opportunities for lifelong learning and acquisition of useful IT skills; and stimulating a range of activities which engage and involve the participation of many different groups in the community.

In terms of the concerns examined in this article, it is the potential impact on cultural capital and community cohesion, by supporting the construction of a democratised and truly culturally diverse heritage which merits further examination here. Archives and museums have a very important role in this work by being able to act to “legitimise” particular (dominant) cultures/heritages, or...help[ing] to express “hidden histories”.⁵⁰ Stuart Hall argues that exclusion from the national heritage is not accidental and is, in fact, deeply damaging by reinforcing and underpinning a social exclusion, a ‘not belonging’. A similar point on the social and intellectual impact of inclusion and exclusion from heritage was made by the Mayor of London’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage:

Heritage lends immediate meaning and physical and spiritual nourishment to individual lives and communities at large. When an individual’s or a community’s heritage is denied adequate recognition within a particular milieu, or is overshadowed by dominant narratives or is simply ignored, the outcome can be debilitating, leading to disaffection and disillusionment, a sense of disenfranchisement and contributing to socio-economic decline.⁵¹

It is clear that community archives, community memory schemes and oral history projects all have the potential, if supported and preserved, to have an impact in diversifying and democratising heritage. Indeed their very existence challenges and subverts the authority of mainstream histories and archives. However, it is important that we do not accept these ideas uncritically, not least when they are translated into public policy. We need to recognise and problematise these ideas and ensure that we research practices and impacts thoroughly. For instance, it is important to remember that many community histories and community identities can be as exclusionary as mainstream histories in that they may marginalise or exclude other groups (on the basis of class, gender, sexual orientation or transgression from community orthodoxies). The same question might be asked of community histories as asked of mainstream histories: on whose authority do they speak? Furthermore, we need to explore the relationship between individual interactions with community archives

and the construction of social or community memories, of how an ‘imagined’ community comes to be widely accepted. Finally, we need to explore the fluidity and multiple natures of individual identities and how these relate and are located within evolving and constant reconstructing of community identity. These questions and further studies of particular types of community archive all need to be the subject of future research and enquiry.⁵²

Nonetheless, the potential benefits that community archives represent are very significant. According to Commanet:

Community Archives promote understanding, tolerance and respect between generations and between diverse social, ethnic and cultural communities. By enabling communities to record and share their heritage, they foster active citizenship within a multicultural democracy.⁵³

Community archives and participation in community archive activity clearly have a social value in themselves but if the movement can truly deliver such aspirations by giving people their own voice and allowing them to control their own representation in the culture then that is a pretty worthwhile prize.

Community Archives and the Archive Profession: Opportunities and Challenges

Growing awareness of the potential contribution of community archives to democratising the national heritage and other social impacts indicates the need for these collections to be taken seriously as important cultural and heritage resources and for the relationship of professional archivists (and other heritage professionals) with community archives to be re-evaluated. The potential benefits for the formal archive sector of building close and fruitful relations with community archives are significant. Establishing and sustaining successful working relationships and ultimately equitable partnerships with community archives will help to increase the profile of archives in those communities, perhaps unlocking knowledge and skills within those communities which are otherwise unavailable to the mainstream sector. Such knowledge might be used, for instance, in terms of a better use and understanding of language and terminologies in description, or in identifying important and perhaps endangered or fragile historical resources within the community. If these communities are not among the traditional users of the formal heritage and archives sector, this can also have positive long-term benefits in terms of services engaging with the whole local community rather than just sections of it.⁵⁴

Again in the long term these relationships, if perceived as being genuine, based on mutual benefit and trust and not part of a tick-box exercise linked to funding priorities, may ultimately lead to some community collections being deposited within the archive (perhaps on a community participation model such as the one adopted in the case of the LMA’s care for the Huntley collection). This will in turn support efforts by archive services to ensure that their contemporary collecting initiatives are

more representative of the whole diversity of society. Even if those collections remain outside the walls of the formal archive and in community hands, then the relationship between the community archive and formal services, perhaps in the provision of advice, guidance, training, and resources, will still be contributing to the preservation and sustainability of a more diverse and democratic heritage.

Nevertheless we also need to be clear that the community archives movement, as it always has done, poses significant challenges for archive services, in particular in terms of professional practice. The nature of the many of collections ('created' and 'artificial' collections including oral history materials, diaries, postcards, family photographs, ephemera, material objects as well as more traditional individual and organisational archives and individual documents) does not fit well with narrow, and perhaps overly restrictive, professional definitions of records and archives and this can invite difficult questions if and when professionals become involved in decisions about what to select for preservation and on what basis, and later on how to properly describe collections.

More fundamental, however, is the sense in which the very existence of community archives, by documenting and recording the lives of those hidden or marginal to formal archives, challenge the legitimacy of the mainstream sector. In effect, their existence is testament to the absences within the official record and the national story. They act as a reproach to the formal heritage sector for not reflecting the story of all and link a questioning of "Who has the authority to represent the cultures of others" with the growing assertion of the right to control the 'writing of one's own story'.⁵⁵

This challenge to the authority of the formal sector is embodied most obviously in the ambivalent or even antagonistic attitudes of some community groups towards formal archive and heritage institutions and extreme reluctance to relinquish not only legal ownership but also physical custody of their collections. This mistrust of professionals and the state, and anxieties over the loss of control and ownership is not uncommon—it can be seen in the deliberations of working-class activists 30–40 years ago, through to contemporary concerns of women, Black and other cultural/community archives. So Francis writes of the cynicism of the working-class movement in South Wales towards a mainstream archival profession whose complacency with regard to working-class records might be construed as being deliberate, 'it was as if the written and spoken word of the common miner should not be saved, even for posterity'. Bookey notes 'the distrust of "mainstream" or public archival institutions held by many within the [LGBT] community' and Martin refers to a 'long-standing and genuine cultural resistance and mistrust between most Black people in Britain and the heritage sector'. In the Jewish community, although there has generally been a good relationship with local archives, 'the desire to keep control of records is particularly strong', a desire Kushner in part ascribes to the 'legacy of anti-Semitism and the abuse of records in the Nazi era'.⁵⁶ Even if the community archive groups are not distrustful of the mainstream sector, many groups are often worried that the deposit of their collections with a formal record office may result in

reduced access for themselves, their families and their communities, especially if the record office is a considerable distance from the community. This ambivalence and reluctance provides a challenge to conceptions of professional archival practice and understanding that hold that the preservation and ‘authenticity’ of all important archival materials can only be ensured by being kept ‘continuously’ within a formal archive, and cared for there by professionals.

For the mainstream profession, the solution to this dilemma lies in a fundamental review of archival practice. A re-evaluation which leaves behind the idea of the archivist as a neutral, passive, reactive figure and instead embraces a much more active or proactive role, one which acknowledges the power and influence which the archivist has over framing our archival heritage and social memory. Under the terms of this shift, the profession should become more flexible and outward facing, working in partnership with, and supporting the creators and custodians of community archives and heritage materials, considering postcustodial models and relationships for these and perhaps other collections.

Care in the Community

‘Postcustodial’ means that the custody and care of collections does not occur in the formal archive itself but happens distributed within the creating organisation where the records remain. This is not a ‘non-custodial’ approach, as instead of caring for the collections within the archive, archivists seek to support the creators and custodians in the stewardship and preservation of the collections. The concept has been around for nearly 30 years, gaining a particular foothold amongst Australian record-keepers and others who argued that the difficulties posed by digital records could be best addressed and supported by their remaining within the creating environment with oversight and guidance but not direct custody from the archive service. In addition to these essentially digital arguments, some of those considering disputed and displaced archives, the records of indigenous peoples, and the community archives of marginalised or excluded groups have advocated postcustodial models for collections returned to or remaining within particular communities. The care of these archives is shared between the community and formal professionals, but their custody is located in ‘archives without walls’.⁵⁷

A postcustodial model is appropriate for community archives for a number of reasons—most important it addresses the ambivalence that many communities feel towards depositing their archives in formal heritage institutions, but it also avoids the need for professional archivists to make difficult and often upsetting decisions about what is worth depositing and preserving, and finally given the digital nature of many of these community archives it is possible that a distributed approach to custody and preservation is more effective anyway. In any event, working within a postcustodial framework means that the eventual destination of the community archive is not pre-determined. One result of a close relationship between a community group and a formal archive or museum might be that a build up of trust results eventually in

direct, permanent responsibility for the archive passing into hands of the formal body, but in other cases the groups will wish to retain direct custody over their archive for the foreseeable future. In this view of professional duties, custody does not determine care and guidance for community collections, but rather such guidance is seen as a part of the community partnership and outreach priorities of the archive service.

The key to making such a strategy a success is building a partnership between the community group and the formal archive, which is equal and conceived of as being mutually beneficial. Mainstream archivists should work closely with different community archives, either directly as part of their own institution's outreach activities or through cross-domain regional structures, or perhaps by working in shared community archive/formal archive spaces such as CADG, to exchange skills and best practice, offering training and building community capacity especially in terms of preservation and supporting access and use. In the past a number of different groups including Jewish, labour and business records groups have offered limited advice on preserving records within an organisation but this information is becoming more widely available and supported by mainstream archive services.⁵⁸ The benefits of this partnership and outreach should flow both ways, with advice, experience and knowledge benefiting both partners. The aim of such partnerships will be to raise awareness of the value of archives and ultimately to ensure the preservation and sustainability of important community heritage collections.

The ATF report argued that as 'archives in the community are as important to society as those in public collections', it was committed 'to the principle that the resources in community archival collections should be accessible to everyone'. But even if we agree that these materials tell the story of not just one community but tell the stories of everyone, it does not follow that we should presume access to those materials as a right. With collections that belong to a community, deposit and public access are not a right but of matter for negotiation, partnership and encouragement. Postcustodial solutions are of course not without their difficulties, not least in the potential and unexpected threats to collections held outside archival walls and questions of what guarantees of access can be asked for in return for such support, but nevertheless, the building of long-term partnerships and support networks in this model seems to be the most appropriate, flexible response to an otherwise difficult dilemma.

Conclusions

Not everyone in the archival profession is happy with the focus on community archives and on democratising the archive. One recent posting on the Archive-NRA mailing list argued that:

We exist to serve our employers, to assist them in compliance with their statutory responsibilities for record keeping...Our role, in a continuum sense, relates to selection, preservation and access. Access is a consequence of the other two. It may

be permitted or not permitted, but it definitely comes in third. Losing sight of the first two elements is perhaps a consequence of our pre-occupation with the third: community archives and genealogical tourism are not the main purpose of our existence, and perhaps our employers and the sector need to be reminded.⁵⁹

Though beginning from a very different starting point some academics have very similar reservations about recent changes. David Lowenthal, in an important recent article which displayed tremendous depth of knowledge of the changes and pressures facing the archive profession, regrets the passing of some traditional Jenkinsonian archival certainties. He worries that the traditions of archival and historical scholarship will be endangered now that 'the keeping of records has spread from government and academe to bakeries and beauticians, from heraldry experts to root-seeking hoi-polloi' and he warns that professional engagement with 'once excluded groups' and deferring to 'minority sensibilities' will 'backfire, curtailing rather than widening access'.⁶⁰

These are valid views and concerns which go to the heart of the archive and record-keeping mission and need to be engaged with. There is clearly a question of priorities and resources and any refocusing of them towards new professional areas will have effects on other areas of professional engagement, including our employers or academic historians. Nevertheless, I would argue that a commitment to addressing the democratisation and diversity of our archives by engaging with local community groups is something that will surely also meet the priorities of some, if not all, employers and academic users.

What is abundantly clear is that the community archives movement is thriving at the moment, witness the success of the recent CADG 'Sharing Community Memories' conference, and it is not going to go away. Community histories, as part of the People's Record, are going to one of the planks of 2012 Cultural Olympiad and like family historians, communities are going to continue to be concerned with recording and preserving their stories. If as a profession we do not commit to engagement with community archives, we risk losing an opportunity to connect with a wide range of people who rarely use our services and more importantly we pass up on the opportunity to work to ensure that the national archival heritage (inside and outside the archive walls) reflects the whole of society. Serious and genuine efforts at engagement with these community groups by professional archivists are often enthusiastically welcomed. In the Birmingham Connecting Histories project, they originally proposed to try to engage with five community groups over the lifetime of the project. In the event, such was the thirst for advice, guidance and support in establishing and running community archive and heritage projects that they actually worked with over 100 groups.⁶¹

Finally, to emphasise the importance of the concern with diversity within our national histories and archives one more time, and to further demonstrate that this is no recent insight, I will conclude with a quotation from the author of so much traditional British archival theory and practice, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, who in

his address as President of the Jewish Historical Society in 1953 reminded his audience ‘that the history of the Jewish People in England, though it is a part of Jewish history as a whole, is also part of English history’. He then went on to suggest that:

for those interested in Jewish History in this country... the most urgent work at present is themselves to turn archivist for the location, and if necessary conservation, of material which is essential for an orderly and systematic scheme of research and which may be, if that operation is not undertaken, not only neglected but lost.⁶²

Whilst we cannot claim any absolute right to access materials held by any community, like Jenkinson we do need to recognise that these materials tell all our stories and that we all, professional and non-professionals, need to find a way of ensuring that these community archives are preserved and not lost through our neglect.

Notes

- [1] Versions of different parts of this article have been presented to different audiences over the last year, most notably at the Community Archive Development Group (CADG) ‘Sharing Community Memories’ conference held at UCL, 27 June 2007.
- [2] Gilroy, *Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, 11–12.
- [3] Small, *The Politics of British Black History*, 5.
- [4] Lamb, ‘Towards a More Open Heritage,’ 39.
- [5] Viscount St Davids, quoted in Kitching, *Archives*, 9; Museums, Libraries and Archive Council, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 12.
- [6] Museums, Libraries and Archive Council, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 12. This point is also made in Hopkins, ‘Reticence and Resistance,’ 25.
- [7] For a useful introduction and initial bibliography on community, see Smith, ‘Community.’ Some discussion of what community might be taken to mean in the context of ‘community history’ can be found in Dennis and Daniels, ‘“Community” and the Social Geography of Victorian Cities,’ 202–3 and Mills, ‘Community and the Nation in the Past,’ 281–84.
- [8] Different but broadly complementary definitions can be found at <http://www.commanet.org/English/Default.htm>, http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/page_id__32_path__0p1p.aspx (both accessed July 2007) and in the CADG report, *The Impact of Community Archives (2007)*.
- [9] For instance, see Caroline Bressey’s discussion of use of photographs in her research for the Black presence in British archives (Bressey, ‘Invisible Presence’).
- [10] Museums, Libraries and Archive Council, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 43.
- [11] More information on CAAP and its publications is available from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/partnerprojects/caap/default.htm>; information on CADG is available from http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/community_archives/terms_of_reference/ (both accessed July 2007). More information on the CADG website and impacts report is given later in this article.
- [12] Kitching, *Archives*, ‘The History of Our Communities,’ 11; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Archives at the Millennium*, 16–17. East Sussex Record Office’s participation in the collaborative ‘Letter in the Attic’ project is a contemporary example of just such a pro-active approach, details available from http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/category_id__1543_path__0p1364p1542p.aspx (accessed July 2007).

- [13] Johnston, 'Whose History is it Anyway?', 215–16.
- [14] Bott, 'The World of Local History,' 10; Dewe, 'Resource Providers for Local Studies,' 59–63; Dewe, *Local Studies Collection Management*, 4, 14–15.
- [15] Bott, 'Collecting Methods: Community Involvement,' 179–80; Selwood, 'What Difference do Museums Make?,' 67; Burns Owen Partnership, *New Directions in Social Policy*, 15.
- [16] The website <http://communityarchives.org.uk> was established by CADG in 2006 as a directory of community archive groups and to provide resources and a network for those groups. Volunteers enter details of groups on to the site but groups are also encouraged to register themselves. At the time of writing (July 2007) the site has over 300 entries.
- [17] Davies, 'The Development of Local History Writing'; Ingrams, 'Fanfare for the Common Man (and Woman!); Goodwin, 'Community History Groups and Local Heritage.'
- [18] Bott, 'The World of Local History,' 7–25.
- [19] Kean, Martin, and Morgan, *Seeing History*, 16–17; Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 197–98.
- [20] See <http://www.islandhistory.org.uk/>; <http://www.wforallhistory.org.uk/>; <http://www.hidden-histories.org/index.html>; <http://www.historytalk.org/> (all accessed July 2007).
- [21] Frow, Edmund, and Ruth Frow, 'Travels with a Caravan,' 178; Francis, "'Workers' Libraries,'" 183; Trustram, 'The Labour History Approach,' 73–76.
- [22] Kushner, 'A History of Jewish Archives in the United Kingdom'; Kaplan, 'We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are.' See, for instance, Manchester Jewish Museum (<http://www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com/>), the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre (<http://www.sjac.org.uk/>), The Jewish Museum (<http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/>), and the Weiner Library (<http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/>) (all accessed August 2007).
- [23] See <http://www.bcaheritage.org.uk/>; 'Key Facts About the Black Cultural Archives' (memorandum in author's possession); <http://www.georgepadmoreinstitute.org/>; Naidoo, *Exploring Archives*, 7–8; <http://www.northants-black-history.org.uk/aboutHistory.asp>; Abel, 'Black History is Not Just for October,' 24–27. Hopkins, 'Reticence and Resistance' provides a detailed analysis of the motivations and impacts of some of these BME community archive initiatives.
- [24] See <http://www.brightonourstory.co.uk/>; http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/archive/gutoho/hall_carpenter_archives.htm; <http://www.womenslibrary.org.uk/laic/laic.html> (all accessed July 2007).
- [25] For instance, see '1967 & All That' (<http://hallcarpenter.tripod.com/lagna/theproject.htm>) and 'queerupnorth' (<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries/arlslgb.htm>) (all accessed July 2007); Benson, 'Culture, Clubbing and Community'; Bookey, "'1967 and All That" & the LGBT Community.'
- [26] See <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/>; <http://www.femarch.freemove.co.uk/>; <http://www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/> (both accessed July 2007).
- [27] See <http://www.wisearchive.co.uk> (accessed July 2007).
- [28] See www.ccan.co.uk (accessed July 2007).
- [29] See <http://www.communitysites.co.uk>; <http://www.commanet.org/>; <http://www.localchs.co.uk> (all accessed July 2007).
- [30] Drake, *Time, Family and Community*, 1–2.
- [31] See for instance Francis, "'Workers' Libraries,'" 183; <http://www.islandhistory.org.uk/>; Cullen, 'Place-making Through Community Archives,' 8; <http://www.cypriotdiaspora.com/> (both accessed July 2007).
- [32] See <http://www.lhi.org.uk/> (accessed July 2007).
- [33] Lean and Burnard, 'Hearing Slave Voices' outlines the arguments about the difficulty of 'recovering the lives of the inarticulate and downtrodden' before examining in detail a rare

- occurrence of an official record which 'offer us a means of hearing, if only in whispered tones, the murmurings of the masses beneath the pall of elite and official control'.
- [34] Samuel wrote 'The reason why history has so often a bureaucratic bias is not I think because of a particular bias of individual historians, but very largely because bureaucratic documents are the ones most often preserved. The reason why so much of the history of the English land is the history of property, is because in county record offices so many documents are deeds. Historians have very often simply followed the lines suggested by the documents' (Samuel, 'Headington Quarry,' 119–20).
- [35] Blackburn, 'Raphael Samuel'; for an early exposition of this argument see Samuel, 'Local History and Oral History' in first issue of *History Workshop*.
- [36] Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop, 'Your Story' (available from <http://www.wforalhistory.org.uk/>, accessed July 2007).
- [37] Hall, 'Whose Heritage?,' 27.
- [38] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 161.
- [39] McIntyre and Clark, *History Wars*; Luke, *Museum Politics*; McGuigan, 'A Community of Communities,' 183–95; Young, 'The Truth in Chains.'
- [40] Available from <http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/da/54012> (accessed July 2007).
- [41] Pamplin, 'Oral Archives,' 33–34; Dyer, 'Oral Archives,' 157–58; Eales and Kinnear, 'Archivists and Oral Historians,' 188–89.
- [42] Kelly, 'A Sisterhood of Service'; Goldberg, 'Women in Later Medieval English Archives.'
- [43] Ham, 'The Archival Edge,' 13; Miller, 'Social History and Archival Practice'; 'Labor History Supplement'; 'Archives and Social History.'
- [44] Johnston, 'Whose History is it Anyway?'; Bricki-Niagassa, 'Social Inclusion and Archives,' 39–75.
- [45] Johnston, 'Whose History is it Anyway,' 215–16, 219–23.
- [46] *Ibid.*, 220–21.
- [47] Notice, 'Archives, Museums, Collections, Things,' 212; Linkman, 'The Manchester Studies Archive Retrieval Project.'
- [48] See <http://www.casbah.ac.uk/>; <http://jsp.genesis.ac.uk/index.html>; <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/RdLeaflet.asp?sLeafletID=357>; Bressey, 'Invisible Presence,' 48–49, 61.
- [49] Burns Owen Partnership, *New Directions in Social Policy*; CADG, *The Impact of Community Archives*.
- [50] Burns Owen Partnership, *New Directions in Social Policy*.
- [51] Hall, 'Whose Heritage?; Mayor of London's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH), *Delivering Shared Heritage*, 10. These ideas are explored in greater detail in Ieuan Hopkins' excellent MA dissertation, 'Reticence and Resistance.'
- [52] The author of this article is the Principal Investigator on an AHRC-funded project entitled 'Community Archives and Identities: Documenting and Sustaining Community Heritage' which will examine the impacts of community archives and community heritage projects within BME communities and investigating the relationship between such initiatives and the formal archival and heritage sectors, 2007–2009. Further details available from <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slais/research/icarus/community-archives/> (accessed July 2007).
- [53] Available from <http://www.commanet.org/English/Default.htm> (accessed July 2007).
- [54] Willis-Brown, 'A Voyage of Discovery,' 6–7.
- [55] Hall, 'Whose Heritage?,' 28; Hopkins, 'Reticence and Resistance,' 23–26.
- [56] Francis "'Workers' Libraries,'" 183–84; Bookey, "'1967 and All That,'" 22; Martin, 'Inheriting Diversity,' 197; Kushner, 'A History of Jewish Archives in the United Kingdom,' 12.
- [57] Bastian, 'Taking Custody, Giving Access: A Postcustodial Role for a New Century'; Cunningham, 'Archival Institutions,' 47.

- [58] See Bookey, '1967 and All That,' 21–22; the 'Advice on Archival Issues' and 'Collections Care' sections on the Community Archives website, available from http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/category_idtxt_resources.aspx; and the 'How to Create an Archive' section on the Connecting Histories website, available from <http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/guidance.asp> (both accessed July 2007).
- [59] Robert Chell, 'Re: The Vision Thing,' Archives-NRA mailing list, 8 June 2007.
- [60] Lowenthal, 'Archival Perils: An Historian's Pliant.'
- [61] Ranahan and Fisher, 'Archives and Communities,' 30–31.
- [62] Jenkinson, 'Jewish History and Archives,' 54, 62.

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