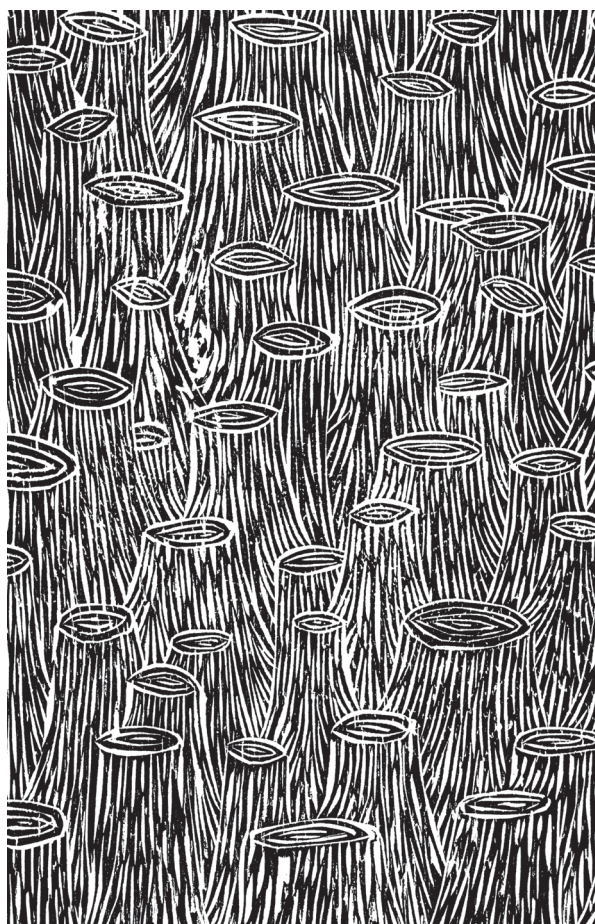


Image: Erik Ruin

ANTHROPOZINE

A Bibliography for Archivists & Activists

Jen Hoyer & Nora Almeida



Interference Archive

Image: Josh MacPhee, 2015

What is the Anthropozine?

In the process of thinking about the relationship between archives and the anthropocene, we've done a lot of reading. This annotated bibliography is our way of sharing some of that reading, and some of our reflections on it, with you.

We've divided bibliographic entries into two sections. First, our reading about the anthropocene led us to reflect on problems with narratives that have come to define the anthropocene as an abstract and purely biophysical phenomenon. We have sought out disparate perspectives and alternative narratives that consider the anthropocene (and solutions to environmental crisis) in relation to complex social, cultural, geopolitical, historical, economic, and technological factors.

Considering how alternative narratives are documented and shared led us to readings about archives. We found that archives have been limited by their framing as: representative of the past, comprehensive, apolitical, static, and fragile. In light of this, we reflected on the affective impact of archives in communities and ways archives can defy cultural expectations, foster dialogue, and provide access to alternative narratives. Finally, we've explored archives as systems that have the capacity to shift power differentials, instigate cultural production, and promote human agency and social interaction.

by challenging descriptive vocabularies and standards for collections; and by recognizing the knowledge and skill that “amateur” community archivists bring to their work alongside “trained” archivists.

While the authors do recognize that archives as a place can create a social space for community, their focus on potential for change within the context of community archives rests on activism of the archivist themselves. While they reference several other authors who speak to the inherent generative possibilities of the archive, they do not speak to the transformative power of archival collections, independent from the work of a trained archivist.

Yaco, S., Jimerson, A., Anderson, L.C., Temple, C. (2015). A web-based community-building archives project: a case study of Kids in Birmingham 1963. *Archival Science*, 15(4): 399-427.

This article explores alternative models for documenting social justice narratives to include peripheral perspectives of community members. The authors advocate for the inclusion of “passive participant” voices in archival accounts in order to contextualize activist struggles and capture a variety of political and cultural viewpoints. Using the example of Kids for Birmingham, a “hybrid heritage” project in Alabama that provided a forum for community members to share their experiences of the 1963 civil rights campaigns and resulting violence, the authors argue that community-archival collaborations are mutually beneficial. They cite benefits such as “providing a platform for unheard voices and giving the “community control of content” that ultimately advance social justice campaigns, enhance archival research collections, and provide catharsis to community members who were negatively impacted by upheaval and violence.

Anthropocene

Baskin, J. (2014) *The ideology of the Anthropocene?*, MSSl
Research Paper No. 3, Melbourne Sustainable Society
Institute, The University of Melbourne.

Baskin introduces the Anthropocene as an ideology that has upended long held ideas about the ontological underpinnings of social and scientific reality. The author interrogates ways that this imposed ideology has shaped socio-political responses to climate change by unpacking four aspects of the anthropocene narrative:

1. gradients of cultural and geographic difference are obscured in the treatment of 'human'
2. solutions are framed in purely scientific terms, man is re-elevated above nature
3. technology is embraced uncritically as both good and inevitable
4. "manufactured uncertainty" legitimizes non-democratic and technocratic interventions

Baskin argues that this framing of the anthropocene is problematic in that it ignores social stratification and "reveals the power of humans, but [...] conceals who and what is powerful and how that power is enacted." The narrative outlined above not only depoliticizes climate change but detemporalizes that change by treating this as an "exceptional time;" this view serves to reinforce existing political and technocratic power structures. Baskin also calls into question the socio-political effects of artificial categorizations like epochs and the efficacy of the Anthropocene as a descriptive construct.

Bonneuil, C., & Fressoz, J. B. (2016). *The shock of the Anthropocene: The earth, history and us*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books.

Bonneuil and Fressoz investigate the anthropocene through the lens of history in order to deconstruct the anthropocene as “an event rather than a thing.” The authors analyze the anthropocene event as part of a historical continuum that is shaped by systems of power and the rise of industrialization, capitalism, and the west. While other scholars have called into question the political effects of naming the anthropocene as epoch, these authors attend that the anthropocene “label” is a “tool for understanding” that enables a deconstruction of dominant narratives and the introduction of new ideas about the causes of environmental change that shape possible responses at the local level. The focus here is on reshaping historical accounts in order to gain critical understanding of the causes of the anthropocene event, but in the process, the authors argue that we are also “opening up the official narrative” to include other voices that have been disempowered and silenced “by the phenomena of dispossession and unequal exchange.”

Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Sciences (2009). Retrieved from www.climatescience.gov.

This educational guide produced by the United States Global Change Research Program offers a snapshot of scientific climate research and outlines ways climate change will inevitably and inequitably impact humans. The guide book is intended to foster citizen engagement but still deemphasizes the agency of individuals, suggests that our current geopolitical reality will remain stable in the face of climate induced crises like drought and displacement, and ultimately promotes top-down scientific, technocratic, and government authored solutions.

Furthermore, such community archives (including the archives in Chile that work to document the stories of those who suffered human rights abuses) serve as places to re-create historic narratives that have been silenced, and to re-insert these into the collective memory. In the context of Chile, it is notable that the Museum of Memory has created travelling exhibitions which make its collection accessible across the country; these travelling exhibitions serve a number of purposes:

1. they not only sharing history but also teaching new generations about the experience of living under repression
2. they reach residents of rural communities, who then realize their right to add to and participate in creation of this archival narrative
3. they participate in making the resolution for a “never again” future in Chile a reality

Wakimoto, D., Bruce, K., & Partridge, C. (2013). Archivist as activist: Lessons from three queer community archives in California. *Archival Science*, 13(4), 293-316.

Through study of three queer archives in California, the authors examine the role of archivist as activist. They first examine of the evolving role of archivist, from designation as a neutral caretaker to acceptance of the roles an archivist can play in challenging dominant narratives through collection of diverse histories and archival formats, and then they describe each of three archives with emphasis on their history and archival practice.

In the context of archival activism, the emphasis of this research is on the individual archivist and the active role they can play -- in rectifying historic silences by collecting material; by advocating for community archives within the larger archives community;

a proper level over time, and...responsibility to do so for future generations”, these future aspects do not consider any generative possibilities for the archive but rather focus on maintaining a repository that is statically available for future audiences. Furthermore, discussion of community engagement within the sustainability rubric interrogates how the community is involved in collection building and programming, but does not consider the way the archive should continue to inspire community and play a role in identity formation for that community. Moving beyond Newman’s sustainability model to devise one which accounts for the dynamic and generative aspects of community archives would be beneficial to a comprehensive understanding of what makes these institutions not only remain in existence, but also what keeps them useful and relevant to their communities.

Strauss, A. (2015). Treading the ground of contested memory: archivists and the human rights movement in Chile. *Archival Science* 15(4):369-397.

In a case study of the role archives can play in social justice movements, Amanda Strauss provides thoughtful comments on the difference between objectivity and neutrality in archives, recognizing the excellent scholarship of archivists including Jimerson and Cook who have reflected on the power held by archives and archivists. In discussing the role of archives within the context of marginalized and/or persecuted communities such as the those oppressed under Pinochet’s regime in Chile, Strauss confirms the reality that archives must not speak on behalf of these groups, but rather create a space for the historical record of these communities to speak for themselves and to receive the same level of care as that of majority/oppressor communities.

While this guide acknowledges the sociopolitical causes and effects of anthropocene, it oversimplifies the ways that social stratification as well as corporate and geopolitical interests have contributed to current environmental crises. This guide ultimately serves as an example of the typified, generic anthropocene narrative that can function as a geopolitical tool or mechanism for technocratic indoctrination.

Lövbrand, E., Beck, S., Chilvers, J., Forsyth, T., Hedrén, J., Hulme, M., Lidskog, R., Vasileiadou, E. (2015). Who speaks for the future of Earth?: How critical social science can extend the conversation on the Anthropocene. *Global Environmental Change*, 32, 211-218.

Framed as a call to action for social scientists, the authors argue that dominant narratives surrounding environmental politics have not adequately addressed the social and cultural dimensions of the anthropocene and have problematically positioned “nature” as “an object external to society” that can be directed via objective scientific processes. After disputing this ontological framework, the authors go on to advocate for a “socially embedded anthropocene scholarship” that acknowledges the local and temporal situations of different communities who face challenges as a result of climate change. The authors also contend that these challenges are not universal but culturally, politically, and geographically contingent. In light of this, a solution to the problems imposed by the anthropocene necessitates the reintegration of socio-political and local perspectives into environmental narratives. The authors also argue that anthropocene research should address the role dominant political and technocratic actors play in establishing ontologies and shaping conversations about environmental reality in order to limit human agency and quell social unrest.

O'Brien, K., & Barnett, J. (2013). Global Environmental Change and Human Security. *Annual Review Of Environment & Resources*, 38(1), 373-391.
doi:10.1146/annurev-environ-032112-100655

This article discusses the intersection of global environmental change and human security research as it contributes to a more 'pluralistic' and 'political' understanding of these issues in relation to government, power, and human agency. Framed as a literature review, the authors explore the following five key functions of the concept of human security, which the authors interpret as the capacity for individuals and communities to respond to environmental and political threats:

1. refutes conception of security as an idea that only applies to "states" and major security risks as violent conflicts facing states
2. defines environmental change as a "social problem" that cannot be divorced from socio-political situations
3. acknowledges human agency and the power of individuals and communities to disrupt systems
4. elevates environmental change above "ordinary policy problems"
5. considers multi-disciplinary dimensions of environmental inquiry and introduces environmental change as "a boundary object" that can bring together people from different sectors and communities

Using these five functions of human security as an analytical framework, the authors introduce an evolving research agenda and outline what politicized, local responses to environmental change might look like in light of it.

Describing the various aspects that make up a community archive, and reflecting on earlier research findings that community archives often contain more diverse formats of material than mainstream archives, Flinn discusses the ephemeral nature of material found in such collections, noting the emotional affect and historic value of such archival items. While understanding that perhaps not all community archives have transformative potential, he notes that a community archive which is combined with a radical history agenda will absolutely be generative -- a site for discovery, education, and empowerment. These aspects of a community archive's output are discussed in further detail, as are the complexities of community archives collaborating with mainstream institutions.

Moran, J. (2014). "To spread the revolution: anarchist archives and libraries." In M. Morrone (Ed.), *Informed Agitation: Library and Information Skills in Social Justice Movements and Beyond* (pp. 173-184). Sacramento, California: Library Juice Press.

Jessica Moran provides a description of anarchist archives and libraries, including results of a survey of these spaces around the world, and discusses how these projects have historically been operated not only as repositories of information but also as organizing spaces that are party of the anarchist movement.

Newman, J (2012). Sustaining community archives. *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, 25(1), 37-45.

In her investigation into the sustainability of community archives in New Zealand, Joanna Newman considers a list of factors impacting the sustainability of archival records themselves; of the custodial structure of community archives; and of community connections with the archive. While Newman defines sustainability as "maintaining at

archives and more traditional institutions; and to look at the differences between physical and online-only community archives.

Their preliminary findings in this early-stage report from the project identify similarities in the founding stories of many community archives: a tendency to collect materials that fall under a broader range of formats than most mainstream archives; a fine line between personal and institutional within the context of community archives; specific issues around sustainability as well as relationships with mainstream institutions that are common across the archives studied; and finally, innovative approaches to custodianship of collections.

The authors conclude by discussing the transformative aspect of archives, unpacking the ways that archives connect with individual identities and the foundation they play in diversifying local and national historic narratives. They note that most community archives come out of social movements with specific agendas for change, and many “archival activists” use the community archives as a tool for social empowerment and transformation.

Flinn, A. (2011). Archival activism: independent and community-led archives, radical public history and the heritage professions. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 7(2).

Recognizing the political power of archival practice, this article examines the concept of archival activism, which the author also terms as “heritage activism”. Through the lens of four UK-based community archives projects, and seen within the larger context of the power that radical history-making has to unify communities and mobilize social movements, Flinn looks specifically at the ways community archives can act as a tool for these social transformations.

Archives

Allard, D., & Ferris, S. (2015). Antiviolence and Marginalized Communities: Knowledge Creation, Community Mobilization, and Social Justice through a Participatory Archiving Approach. *Library Trends*, 64(2), 360-383.

This article explores how community-based archives can use a participatory archiving approach to preserve heritage and identity, and to construct histories that challenge dominant narratives. The authors examine research that points to archives as a tool for decolonization and anti-violence initiatives, and as a means for re-imagining personal history, identity, culture, and justice. Through discussion of their work on the Digital Archives and Marginalized Communities Project (DAMC), which includes the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Database (MMIWD), the Sex Work Database (SWD), and the Post-Apology Residential School Database (PARSD), the authors recognize the importance of building partnerships with community organizations for archiving these histories, as well as the ways that this accumulated archival record can support grassroots organizing.

Barsalou, J (2012). Post-mubarak Egypt: History, Collective Memory and Memorialization. *Middle East Policy* (19)2: 134-147.

Reflecting on the role of archives in post-Revolution/post-Mubarak Egypt, the author examines first how archives are used and abused by government in reframing historic narrative to support new regimes, as well as the way the very knowledge of archives' existence is suppressed, in addition to access being restricted, in order to discourage any interaction with historic narratives that do not fit those promoted by the current regime. By contrast, Barsalou then presents the creation of physical and online archives in the aftermath of the January 25, 2011 Revolution, supporting various mediums of

information, which have been created by activists to preserve the history of their struggle and to inspire more action in the present moment.

Buchanan, A, Bastian, M (2015). Activating the archive: rethinking the role of traditional archives for local activist projects. *Archival Science* 15: 429-451.

This article describes a project based in Liverpool, England, which invited participants to learn about and engage with local food history in their city. The authors explain their use of archival material for this project and provide feedback from participants on their engagement with archives. Notable distinctions are made between views of traditional archives as information repositories, in contrast to a focus within activist and community archives on the affective impact of the content in their collections. Buchanan and Bastian note that, although their project engaged largely with traditional archives, their participants experienced the affective impact of this archival material. The authors encourage a view of archival use as beyond information repositories, exploring affective use in order to acknowledge diverse historic narratives as well as to shape new perspectives on the present and future.

Caswell, M., Cifor, M., Ramirez, M (2016). "To suddenly discover yourself existing: uncovering the impact of community archives." *The American Archivist* 79 (1) 56-81.

Calling for further research into the impact of symbolic annihilation in archives as well as the affective impact of documentation and silences in archival collections, the authors examine existing tools for measuring impacts of archives including social, financial, and informational outcomes, before setting forward methods for measuring the internal effect of archives on individuals. This research study

Evans, J., McKemmish, S., Daniels, E., & McCarthy, G. (2015). Self-determination and archival autonomy: Advocating activism. *Archival Science*, 15(4), 337-368.

Through a case study examining archival records of children kept in out-of-home care in Australia, and the major failings of that record-keeping system, this article presents the need for archival frameworks and infrastructure which recognize the way archives construct identity and memory. The authors argue for archival autonomy to support community and individual self-determination and to respect and protect human rights. They describe a variety of projects that re-think archival infrastructure and community participation in the creation of archival records, and that also produce new resources that can be used in the future beyond the context of each individual record which has become part of the larger constructed archival narrative. They encourage further activism to re-create archives which are more clearly integrated into the social fabric of communities.

Flinn, A., Stevens, M., & Shepherd, E. (2009). Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream. *Archival Science*, 9(1), 71-86.

Near the commencement of a two-year research project on community archives in the UK, the authors set out their research starting point in this paper, providing us with a concise and oft-reference definition of community archives. Working from the understanding that archives play a significant role in the construction of memory, they outline their research questions as follows: to understand the impact of community archives in challenging mainstream narratives; to gauge the impact of community archives on academic history and collective memory; to examine the relationships between community

The anthropocene archive is the place of authority from which anthropocene interventions will be executed. Thus the questions archivists need to ask are:

Which anthropocene archive is the anthropocene archive that will determine political action?

How can counternarratives be instituted through alternative archives?

How can archival structures be changed in order to accommodate content that has until now been excluded?

How can the archive make sure marginal voices aren't silenced or erased?

Emmer, P (2012). Talkin' 'Bout Meta-Generation: ACT UP History and Queer Futurity. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (98)1: 89-96.

This article presents the concept of "meta-generation", or cross-generational collaboration and conversation, specifically regarding the history of activist movement histories. Emmers reflects on how the past can help us make decisions for acting in the present as well as shape our intentions and desires for the future, and emphasizes that future potential is greater for communities when they recognize their own history -- which may comprise of many varied voices and narratives -- as a political resource. The author encourages critical conversation about movement history without enshrining or mythologizing it.

focuses on individuals who have interacted with the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA). The findings affirm that this specific community's history was not adequately represented and accessible through mainstream archives, leading to an absence of historic narrative about this community. This paper also confirms the positive impact that accessing material in a community archive had on participants, leading to new understandings of South Asian American history and stronger ties to community. The authors present the concept of representational belonging, embodied in epistemological, ontological, and social impacts, to describe the impact of community archives, in contrast to the symbolic annihilation previously experienced by individuals.

Caswell, M., Migoni, A., Geraci, N., Cifor, M. (2016). "'To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise': community archives and the importance of representation", *Archives and Records*, DOI: 10.1080/23257962.2016.1260445

This article discusses the reality of symbolic annihilation in archives. Through interviews with individuals in communities of color and LGBTQ communities, the authors present findings to confirm that symbolic annihilation extends beyond mainstream media to mainstream libraries and archives. Following this, respondents explain how their involvement in community archives is part of a process of preserving the history of individuals and communities that would not otherwise be recorded. The authors focused their research on how representation in community archives impacts individuals, through their way of being in the world reinforced by feelings of solidarity and hope; through the impact of holding proof of a community's historic existence; and through a new sense of social belonging. The authors suggest that a framework which examines the ontological, epistemological, and social impacts of community archives can,

as evidenced by their research findings, be applied broadly to community archives, and they suggest that traditional frameworks for understanding the impact of archives do not account for these feelings.

Cvetkovich, A. (2003). AIDS Activism and the Oral History Archive. The Scholar and Feminist Online (2)1. Retrieved from <http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/ps/cvetkovi.htm>

Cvetkovich describes various projects which record both loss and activism within the AIDS community, noting a tendency to quickly forget the trauma faced by gay and lesbian communities fighting AIDS, and recognizing a need for various forms of documentation. Cvetkovich describes her own oral history project as part of this documentation effort, and also mentions the very act of this documentation as activism. Additionally, she calls for an archival record that acknowledges the emotional complexity of traumas such as the AIDS crisis.



Frits Ahlefeldt

Image Credit: Frits Ahlefeldt CC-BY-ND 2.0

Derrida, J., & Prenowitz, E. (1995). Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. *Diacritics*, 25(2), 9-63. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/465144> doi:1

In this expansive examination of the archive in relation to Freudian theory, Derrida begins by unpacking the “ark” (Arkhe) at the root of archive. Arkhe is a term that simultaneously involves commandment (law) and commencement, which Derrida describes as the place of authority from which commandments are issued, upheld, and executed -- traditionally by the archons, “those who commanded.” Using this frame, Derrida illustrates the ways that archives are tied up with systems (implicit and explicit) of power. Derrida describes the strange temporal space that archives occupy as simultaneously a space of memory (archives “recall the law” and shelter history) and the site from which political actions are executed (archives “impose the law” on the future). In this way, the process of archiving is the process of instituting or institutionalizing a certain version history and of limiting the terms of the future in relation to that history. Derrida uses this theory of archive and the relationship between the archive and history (ie. the dominant narratives about social and political reality that shapes the future and dictates its limits) to ultimately examine the relationship between Freud and the project of psychoanalysis (ie. the dominant narrative about what constitutes the discipline and its institutionalization).

If we were to interrogate Derrida’s theory of archive in relation to anthropocene, we might argue that the way the archive itself is designed, conceived, and instituted “determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future.” In this conception, the archive “produces as much as records the event” and thus, plays a significant role in authoring the anthropocene narrative by dictating how (and what parts of it) it will be remembered and instituted.