The Politics of Being an Archival Donor: Defining the Affective Relationship Between Archival Donors and Archivists

Itza A. Carbajal

ABSTRACT

Traditional archival praxis oftentimes depicts the archival donor as an observer and recipient of services or benefits. One that can either comply with the rules and expectations set forth by the archivist and archival institution when donating their materials or walk away from the process and opportunity. Despite the historic role of donor contributions in the form of archival donations, donors and their needs remain overlooked in much of the archival literature. Instead, current archival paradigms tend to focus more on the archival materials more so than the people behind them. But what if donors and archivists could reimagine their relationship and the ethical obligations associated with this bond?

This article applies Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's archival theory of radical empathy combined with the theoretical framework of political consciousness as set forth by Black feminism. Using these frameworks, the research study uses a mixed method approach that includes a literature review of relationships in the archival field and a qualitative conventional content analysis of collected interview data from the donor case study of living music artist donors. As archivists seek to improve collection development and acquisition practices more attention must be placed on the care, affirmation, and wellbeing of the archival donor. Through collaboration with donors, archivists can strengthen archival practices by centering people and not just the things. By combining an ethics of care which introduces "a web of mutual affective responsibility" alongside the construction of a donor political consciousness, this article shows how donor participation contributes and strengthen archival practices that center people and not

just things. The article and findings offer a distinct pathway to better understand the challenges, limitations, and possibilities of donor relationships and the benefits of donors recognizing the importance of active participation and understanding of their role in the archival process.

INTRODUCTION

For many archivists, practicing and learning about donor relations is a trial by fire. Despite historic and indispensable contributions from people donating their personal possessions to archival institutions, donors as a stakeholder group remain overlooked in archival donation programs, as well as in archival scholarship.[1] Today, most archives expect donors to either comply with the rules and expectations set forth by archival institutions—engaging in often costly or complicated negotiations—or to walk away from it all. Archivists may even typecast a donor, especially those with less economic means or privileges, as an observer, a targeted object, or even as a docile recipient of services like preservation of their donations. Donors, on the other hand, may approach archivists with unrealistic and unyielding demands and expectations with little regard or understanding of archival practice.[2]

In both cases, archivists and archival donors lack mutual respect and concern for each other. In an ideal scenario, archivists and archival donors should be able to develop and maintain a relationship based on clear communication, trust, cooperation, understanding, and compromise, thus alleviating some of the tension and confusion between both parties. Unfortunately, many archivist and donor relationships end right after the transfer of archival materials from owner to repository. As a result, most archival scholarship tends to focus more on the value or resulting impact of the acquisition of archival materials instead of the people involved. In fact, despite the prevalence of donors in the history of archival practice, of the four original archival relationships defined by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor in their influential piece, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," a noticeable relationship type appears to be absent: the relationship between archivist and archival donor.[3]

When considering the neglect of donors in archival scholarship, this article looks to fill an obvious gap. Utilizing Caswell and Cifor's framing of a feminist ethics of care and archival radical empathy, this author defines donors as more than "just a target group of users, but [rather as a] central focal point in all aspects of the archival endeavor, from appraisal to description to permissions and access."[4] Stemming from a broader research

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[1] Aaron D. Purcell, *Donors and Archives: A Guidebook for Successful Programs* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

[2] The term donor in this case refers to the person or group of people transferring their personal or professional belongings to another group or institution. Throughout the article, the term "donor" and "archival donor" will be used interchangeably.

[3] Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 23-43. In this article the four relationship types include: archivist and creator, archivist and subject, archivist and users, and archivist and communities.

[4] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 24.

study, this article will better define archival donors' roles and specific areas of concern in order to improve relationship practices.[5] The author's experience of caring for community cultural art archives also provides a unique perspective based in music archives and artist expectations. By proposing an empathetic archivist and donor relationship, this article provides further clarity on the unique circumstances, significance, and potential of archival donors.

As a first step toward reimagining the complexity of the relationship between both donors and archivists, this article reviews the archival literature on the topic of relationships and relationship-building between different stakeholders in the archival field.[6] In addition, through analyzed interview data and findings from a particular group of archival donors—living music artists—this article also provides insights on how certain donors perceive archival donations, archivists, archival institutions, as well as archival practices.[7] Shifting the role of donors from spectators to active contributors offers an opportunity to change archivists' attitudes toward donors, and for archivists, to revise and redress archival practices and principles related to acquisitions such as policies around privacy, access, and care.[8]

While the author recognizes that donor types and circumstances vary extensively, this article also acknowledges that donors, when considering their careers, life circumstances, or personal identities, often share similar characteristics.[9] Currently there exists little research on how archivists *perceive* donors beyond just a general

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[5] A research study titled "Centering Donor Consent: An Analysis of Archival Donor Forms and Practices" was conducted from November 2017 to December 2018 with the support of the Archival Education and Research Initiative's Emerging Archival Scholars Program (AERI EASP), funded by the US Institute of Museum and Library Services, RE-20-16-0110-16. This study investigated different aspects of the archival donation process, the challenges and limitations of donor relationships forms, as well as perceptions from donors and archivists on both the process and tools.

[6] Anne J. Gilliland, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives* (Chicago, IL: ALA Editions, 2018): 49.

[7] The term "music artist" in this article refers to any person or group of people working professionally in the music industry. The term also refers to a variety of music making careers including musicians, performer, artist, singer, instrumentalist, recording artist, and any other term that refers to a person pursuing a professional career in music-making. This can include people in the entertainment music industry, as well as industries such as cultural arts, video game design, film, advertisement, and casino gaming, to name a few. For purposes of the study, the term "music artist" does not apply to people involved in making music for recreational purposes.

[8] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 25.

[9] This research study represents only a fragment of the issue at hand, thus prompting a need for further studies on these points of considerations for both donors and archivists, especially those that could aggravate or accelerate harmful outcomes on a donor upon donation of their materials.

understanding of a person transferring their possessions to an archival institution. Establishing general donor profiles based on shared donor traits and characteristics would help archivists better anticipate and adjust policies to meet the various needs of this diverse stakeholder group. By placing responsibility on archivists to understand a donor's role and their ability and agency, archivists can work towards the redistribution of power and authority thereby democratizing the archival community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This article utilizes both a feminist ethics of care and radical empathy as two distinct approaches for improving archival relationships. These frameworks serve as theoretical methods that construct, define, analyze, and situate the role of the archival donor in conjunction with the relationship between donors and archivists. First, by utilizing an ethics of care, which introduces "a web of mutual affective responsibility" between archivists and donors, both donors and archivists can learn how to contribute to practices of transparency, empathy, respect, and awareness into the archival paradigm.[10] In addition, by encouraging the use of radical empathy towards donors, oftentimes viewed as "the other" in archival circles and scholarship, archivists can learn to effectively and respectfully recognize and manage donor needs and concerns.

To begin, not all archival donors represent the creator or subject of the collection(s), at times even existing as both creator and subject of their donated records or are neither.[11] Some donors, like family members, may maintain an intimate relationship to records distinct from being the creator or subject. Other times, records may be donated by someone invested personally or financially in collecting these types of materials. Even though donors may take on different roles from creator to subject or user, this article argues for a distinct relationship type between archivist and donor in order to better represent this body of people that play a very particular part in the archival field.

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[10] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 24.
[11] This article mainly centers on the large portion of archival collections originating from archival donations from an individual donor or group of donors not collections acquired from third parties.

Major Theme	Theme Description	Emergent Categories
Pre-Donation Process	The characteristics and circumstances present prior to the official start of the donation process. These are mostly witnessed by the donor either during their process of creating or when considering whether to donate their possessions.	Materials Created, Type of Donor, Creating Practices, Potential Risks and Benefits, Sharing Ownership, Extent of Career, Awareness of Archival Practices, Experience with Archives, Interests in Archives, Reasons for Donating, Expectations of Transparency
Donation Process	The circumstances and motivations considered by donors during the actual donation process, as well as donor perception on what kind of materials they will donate and where. These can vary from donor to donor.	Expectations on Access, Expectations of Transparency, Expectations on Artistic Modifications, Expectations of Legal Control, Expectations of Privacy, General Expectations, Use of Formal Agreements, and Legal Insights
Post-Donation Process	The perceptions donor has on what occurs after the donation process finishes.	Anticipated Uses for Donated Materials, Expectations of Transparency

POPULATION

This study further explores the nuances among archival donors by focusing on a specific type of donor reflecting two key characteristics: living and working/having worked as a music artist. The participant group was derived from a sampled pool of potential candidates that met all four of the following outlined screening elements.[12]

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[12] Participants were sought from multiple venues through a multi-tiered recruitment approach, including a snowball sampling method using targeted emails and online posts to related community spaces.

Questionnaire Element	Description
Currently or previously engage in producing music professionally	Targeted participants should view their work in producing music as a source of economic prosperity rather than a hobby.
In possession of personal music career artifacts, documents, or other historic materials	Targeted participants should be in possession of materials created as part of their music careers either individually or as a group.
Basic awareness of historic or cultural heritage organizations	Targeted participants should possess a basic awareness of the existence of cultural heritage institutions including archives, museums, or other memory keeping entities.
Basic awareness of information communication technologies (internet, computers, phones, etc.)	In order to communicate the processes of interviewing, participants should be comfortable with proposed communication tools.

Interested participants submitted responses to a questionnaire as an initial screening included in Appendix A of this article.[13] Instead of requesting personal demographic data, the questionnaire focused on pinpointing donor population characteristics, including unique experiences and traits of each participant as a result of pursuing a music-making career. These characteristics ultimately demonstrate the participants' unique perspectives, record-creating practices, potential concerns or vulnerabilities, as well as other donor or user needs. The participant pool also mainly represented independent, small, or medium label signees, owners of production companies, as well as contract and commissioned music-making labor. This was followed by a confirmation call to verify information and review relevant research policies and procedures on the questionnaire and a scheduled follow-up telephone interview. During the telephone interview, the author of the study used semi-structured, open-ended questions (included as Appendix B in this article) focused on predetermined topics designed to explore the circumstances,

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[13] For the full participant questionnaire, see Appendix A, reproduced from Itza Carbajal, *Centering Donor Consent Participant Forms*, V1 (November 14, 2019), distributed by the Texas Data Repository Dataverse, https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/AHN8XI.

characteristics, experiences, influences, and expectations donors possess in regard to donating their archival materials.[14]

The focus on living donors, in particular, speaks to the idea proposed by Caswell and Cifor of the archivist "entering into an affective bond" in real time with clear channels for communicating donor needs, expectations, or concerns.[15] For example, a living donor might display particular sensitivity or resistance to the ways that archivists handle, describe, display, or publicize their donated materials for fear of negative portrayal during their lifetimes. Additionally by focusing on music artists as a group of people, this research can better investigate what Kaiser called a unique "closeness...to the materials."[16] Closeness or intimacy between archival donors and their archival materials in particular echoes Cifor's argument for "valuing affect and viewing records as repositories of feeling..."[17] Living music artists as donors exhibit this closeness in many ways, including the deep emotional connection an artist might hold towards their works or the fact that music artists are often also the subjects of their records or in close relation to the subjects of their work.[18] Unlike deceased donors, estate sales, or collectors of materials, living music artists donating records directly related to their career can immediately benefit from clear communication as to how the donated materials will be cared for, accessed, and shared.

Similar to other artist donor types, for music, artists closeness can also refer to the potential impact their earlier records might have on their established music-making careers and personas.[19] While one could argue that being an artist requires the abandonment of privacy, an empathetic archivist would anticipate ways to mitigate

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[14] Interview questions included as Appendix B, reproduced from Itza Carbajal, *Centering Donor Consent Interview Questions* (November 14, 2019), distributed by Texas Data Repository, https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/AHN8XI.

[15] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 33.

[16] Kaiser, "Problems with Donors of Contemporary Collections," 104.

[17] Marika Cifor, "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (February 2015): 9.

[18] For a brief introduction on increased attention on subject needs and considerations, see Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead, and Lynette Russell, "Distrust in the Archive: Reconciling Records," *Archival Science* 11, no. 3-4 (November 2011): 211-239, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-011-9153-2; Hope A. Olson, "How We Construct Subjects: A Feminist Analysis," *Library Trends* 56, no. 2 (2008): 509-541, https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2008.0007; Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 307-322, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6.

[19] For a related case study of understanding the donation practices of literary artists see Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil, "Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers' Archives," *Archivaria* 67 (2009): 25-39, https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13206/14481.

overly abusive, unwelcomed, or exploitative intrusion and invasion of a donor's private matters whether by an institution or a user. Even though music artists can expect a lifetime of being in the public gaze, some may still desire some sort of control over their lives, especially when willingly donating their professional or personal possessions.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON ARCHIVAL RELATIONSHIPS

This article begins with an overview of archival research covering the topic—and perceived value—of human relationships in the archival process. An emphasis on relationships in the archival field ties back to ongoing archival discourse on affect theory, specifically as it relates to what Marika Cifor notes as the two core definitions of affect: 1) as a force that creates a relationship (conscious or otherwise) between a body (individual or collective) and the world, and 2) as crucial to the relationships as well as bodies (our own and those of others) and informs our sense of place in the world.[20] The literature review broadly explores formal studies, writings, or reflections documented in a number of academic journals, each focused on the field of archival science or studies, with attention placed on writings that tackle the application or theorization of the various types of human relationships existing in the field.[21]

A recurring and often-cited relationship pertinent to archival practices is the relationship between researcher and archivist. While recent writings characterize researchers with broader terms such as users, early scholarship defined the researcher based on their professional discipline. Early archival literature in the United States emphasizes the relationship between historians and archivists, but as the archival field matured, writers such as Ricard J. Cox challenged this overemphasis on the historian as the primary or only user group of archives.[22] Around the turn of the twenty-first century, the relationship between researchers and archivists experienced drastic changes given increased attention on new technologies, development or acquisitions of digital collections, and external pressures to engage online users.[23] Elizabeth Yakel

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[20] Marika Cifor and Anne J. Gilliland, "Affect and the Archive, Archives and Their Affects: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2015): 10, https://doi.org/ 10.1007/s10502-015-9263-3.

[21] The following journals with online access were reviewed: *Archival Issues, Archives and Manuscripts, Archival Science, Society of Archivists American Archivist, Journal of Archival Organization, Archivaria,* and the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*.

[22] Richard J. Cox, "Archivists and Historians: A View from the United States," *Archivaria* 19 (1984): 185-190.

[23] Anna Sexton et al., "Understanding Users: A Prerequisite for Developing New Technologies," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 25, no. 1 (2004): 33-49, https://doi.org/10.1080/0037981042000199133; Thomas J. Frusciano, "The Role of Technology in Users' Expectations," *Journal of Archival Organization* 6, no. 4 (2008),

acknowledges these changes as the continued crossover between other fields such as the multidisciplinary information studies field.[24]

Articles such as Eleta Exline's "Working Together: A Literature Review of Campus Information Technology Partnerships" focused on the relationship between archivists from different archival institutions or between archivists and others in non-archival sectors. [25] In 2004, Yakel documented increasing trends of communication or collaboration with those outside archival settings, including museums, libraries, and private sector companies.[26] Recent discussions also argue for an empathetic relationship between archivist and archivists regardless of institutional ties centered on the shared well-being of archivists as people rather than just an extension of labor.[27] Instead of focusing on work productivity, this relationship stresses an empathetic relationship seeking to improve work conditions as a way to increase the overall living conditions and general well-being of archivists.

Lastly, as the most pertinent topic, this literature review looked at the archival relationship between donors and archivists. As noted by Aaron Purcell, ongoing neglect of this topic, despite its foundational role, has resulted in little existing literature on donors as a specific area or target population of study.[28] The earliest article written by Barbara Kaiser in 1969 looked at the changes of acquiring archives from contemporary

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https://doi.org/10.1080/15332740802616209; Hea Lim Rhee, "Utilizing User Studies in Archival Appraisal Practice: Feasibility, Value, and Benefits," *Archival Science* 17, no. 2 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-016-9270-z; Edward Mensah Borteye and Martin De Porres Maaseg, "User Studies in Archives: The Case of the Manhyia Archives of the Institute of African Studies, Kumasi, Ghana," *Archival Science* 13, no. 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9185-2; Margaret O'Neill Adams, "Analyzing Archives and Finding Facts: Use and Users of Digital Data Records," *Archival Science* 7, no. 1 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-007-9056-4.

[24] Elizabeth Yakel, "Educating Archival Professionals in the Twenty-First Century," *OCLC Systems & Services: International Digital Library Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1108/10650750410564628.

[25] Eleta Exline, "Working Together: A Literature Review of Campus Information Technology Partnerships," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, no. 1-2 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/15332740902897345.

[26] Elizabeth Yakel, "Educating Archival Professionals in the Twenty-first Century," Ben Primer, "Resources for Archives: Developing Collections, Constituents, Colleagues, and Capital," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7 (May 2009): 152-154, https://doi.org/10.1080/15332740902892833.

[27] Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez and Jasmine Jones, "Applying Radical Empathy Framework in Archival Practice" (webinar from the Society of California Archivists, September 9, 2018), https://youtu.be/NvfMvBLVb1U/.

[28] Purcell, *Donors and Archives*.

donors with a focus on twentieth century scenarios.[29] Overall, the most comprehensive study on donors frames the topic of donor relations by detailing the specific characteristics of a donor type, including 1) those undergoing a particular phase in their life, 2) implications on donors living through particular time periods, and 3) donor agency.[30] Geoff Wexler, Linda Long, and Megan Garbett-Styger in two separate instances analyzed the archival relationship between archivists and grieving and dying donors. In comparison, Dainan M. Skeem explored differences between twenty-first century donors compared to other eras, including the choices of when to donate, how often, and alternating perceptions on whether to focus on donor relations or the donation itself.[31] Finally, Rob Fisher touched on the importance of viewing donors not simply as "passive agents" and calls for archivists to recognize donors that bring forth interests, goals, visions "perhaps with scant regard for the niceties of archival theory or tradition," thus echoing this article's call for donor self-determination and agency.[32]

Relatedly, through the literature review, the author noted an uptick in scholarship that emphasizes outreach strategies that at times subtly mention the importance and needs of the people behind the materials or user base.[33] These initiatives to address collecting inadequacies are what Tonia Sutherland frames as an effort to end the "privileging, preserving, and reproduc[tion of] a history that is predominately white" as well as male, heterosexual, and elite.[34] While efforts at diversifying archival collections undeniably play a crucial part in archival practice, these efforts tend to not focus explicitly on the donor as a person; rather, these efforts often position donors as a means for acquiring more things. Research in this area could easily serve as another opportunity to stress more attention on the role of the donor and multiple ways in which they can participate in donation processes.[35]

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[29] Barbara Kaiser, "Problems with Donors of Contemporary Collections," *The American Archivist* 32, no. 2 (1969): 103-107, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.32.2.tg7m216122163338.

[30] Purcell, *Donors and Archives*.

[31] Dainan M. Skeem, "Donor Relations in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Western Archives* 9, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.26077/09f0-6db6.

[32] Rob Fisher, "Donors and Donor Agency: Implications for Private Archives Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 79 (2015): 92.

[33] Prominent topics include personal archives, visions for community archives or community archiving methods, post-custodial archival approaches, student outreach efforts in academic institutions, web archiving self-deposit practices, attention to personal archival approaches and a growing interest in collecting human rights records ethically.

[34] Tonia Sutherland, "Archival Amnesty: In Search of Black American Transitional and Restorative Justice," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.42.

[35] One example of diversifying the archival participant pool includes efforts to document and introduce students into archival work. See Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, "Moving Toward a Reparative

Unfortunately, the archival field continues to see a "lack of professional literature on the subject…" of archival donors with much of the professional advice being described as contradictory or erroneous.[36] While archival scholarship does touch on topic of the people behind archival donations, they oftentimes fail to do so from the perspective or in the interest of the donor. Instead, the focus tends to be on how archivists themselves interact or perceive the donor, their donations, and donation process.[37] The current study addresses these shortcomings by first proposing that archivists acknowledge an empathetic relationship between archivist and archival donor as a means to recognize the mutual obligation between both parties. Secondly, through an ethics of care approach, archivists can find ways to shift their practices and perceptions of donors-as-a-problem to donors-as-a-partner. Positioning donors as partners affirms a potential new role for donors who choose to play a contributive and reciprocal role throughout the archival process.

DONOR & ARCHIVIST

As a crucial component in the development of archival collections and the continuation of the archival field, there exists a dire need to bring this topic to the forefront, but in a way that no longer erases or overlooks the donor as a person. Even if existing literature discusses the act of donating, few published materials exist that identify potential benefits for the donor or provide opportunities for them to participate beyond actions

Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 5 (2018), https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol5/iss1/6; and Jessica Wagner and Debbi Smith, "Students as Donors to University Archives: A Study of Student Perceptions with Recommendations," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 2 (2012): 538-566, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.75.2.u916q7p35x315062. Worth mentioning here are also the decades-long efforts to document and archive the lives of women to diversify the population of archival stakeholders and ensure the voices of women are represented. See Rachel Miller, Danelle Moon, and Anke Voss, "Seventy-Five Years of International Women's Collecting: Legacies, Successes, Obstacles, and New Directions," *The American Archivist* 74, supplement 1 (2011): 1-21, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.74.suppl-1.q41305764l513022.

[36] Purcell, *Donors and Archives: A Guidebook for Successful Programs*, 10.

[37] Barbara Kaiser's framing of donors as "problems" in the article, "Problems with Donors of Contemporary Collections," demonstrates the lack of regard for donors as important stakeholders in the archival field. This is also noted through the various literature on how to overcome "challenges" in the digital age such as securing permissions or copyright from creator that also exist as donors that maintain creator privileges and can be viewed as obstacles in the pursuit of "free information."

that only appear to benefit the archival institution.[38] This overemphasis on the act of donating and the acquisition of things rather than the person and the relationship, impairs the archival field and enables the field's inability or disinterest in one of the most important relationships in the archival practice. This article argues that through the recognition of an explicit bond between archivist and donor, one which is centered on mutual understanding and empathy, this topic can be handled with the attention and care it deserves. An ethics of care approach, which positions "archivists as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities," provides a helpful outline on why this new relationship type matters, with radical empathy demonstrating insights on how to best approach this newly recognized responsibility towards donors.[39]

　　While sharing some characteristics with the four original relationships in Caswell and Cifor's article, a relationship between archivist and archival donor requires distinction given the significantly unique characteristics of being an archival donor compared to a records creator, record subject, archival user, or as members of a community. People may participate in a variety of ways in the archival process, but when acting as donors, they play a unique role as the person donating and at times deciding why, how, and if to donate. Donors also exhibit unique characteristics that can range from what they donate, how often they might want to refer back to their donated materials, or whether they agree to established archival practices. Acknowledging an obligation between donors and archivists is the first step towards a shift in *what* we focus on to on *whom* we focus.

DATA ANALYSIS: ARCHIVAL DONATION PROCESS

In the case of music artists as donors, a few key characteristics emerging from the interview data point to the circumstances or perceptions archival donors experience before, during, and after an archival donation, hereby referred to as the "archival donation process."[40] For example, interview text data coded into the theme of the *Pre-Donation Process* touched on two categories: experiences with archival institutions and archivists, as well as general awareness of archives as a place, concept, or practice. Overall, awareness and general interests in archives as both a place and concept appear to serve as motivators to donate. Participants mentioned a couple of factors that contributed to their sense of awareness and interests, such as the deteriorating nature of

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[38] A few examples that oscillate between caring for the donor and alleviating stress on the archivist includes "A Guide to Deeds of Gift," What Are Archives? Society of American Archivists, last modified 2013, https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/deeds-of-gift.

[39] Michelle Caswell & Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 34.

[40] The archival donation process defines the various stages and activities occurring before, during, and after the transfer of materials into an archival repository.

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technology or inquiries from others as to the status of their archival collections. One participant mentioned that a previous experience with archives and archivists directly influenced their actions and assumptions prior to donating. Specifically, they met, by chance, the archivist that would coordinate their archival donation, and this provided the incentive to move forward with a partial archival donation.

On the other hand, for research participants that lacked a concrete relationship with archivists or archival institutions, the thought of donating their own possessions had never occurred to them, was a relatively new or foreign idea, or lacked urgency given the competing priorities of working as a music artist. These two findings in particular represent a key factor in how, when, why, or if a person chooses to pursue donating their records and materials to an archives.[41] While noting the importance of identifying donor motivations, Purcell in his studies mostly highlights self-interest—such as a desire for publicity, legal obligations, a tax deduction, or in an effort to establish a legacy—as the reason a donor would donate their materials.[42] Participants in the current study did not confirm Purcell's statement. Rather, they emphasized their appreciation and need for broader and more diverse historical materials that could be used for activities, such as research for music performances; exhibitions on less known topics such as video game history; or at minimum the acknowledgement that records represent the multifarious nature of humanity and history.

In fact, many participants recognized that their records embody countless underrepresented stories, such as the role of women in game design or the participation of musicians in political art. By donating their materials and the stories found within them, donors saw an opportunity to broaden society's understanding of history. On the other hand, if a donor does decide to donate their materials, a question arises: what kinds of records would a donor consider donating? From the interview data, the author coded "types of materials to be donated" as part of the theme of *Pre-Donation Process,* as a way to understand what considerations donors might think about in regard to their archival donation. Identified materials for the donor group of living music artists included compact discs, vinyl records, digital audio files, chord charts, music production equipment, video recordings, set designs, promotional materials, licensing, management, or production contract documents, as well as electronic or digital records, such as promotional graphic design files, websites, digital photography files, and online news articles. These record types are bound up in myriad challenges, such as preserving the original medium of materials, questions of ownership and copyright regulation, avenues or obstacles for the donor to access originals after the donation, and concerns around privacy or misuse of donated materials and content.

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[41] Itza Carbajal, *Centering Donor Consent Coded Data Report*, (November 14, 2019), distributed by Texas Data Repository, https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/APEISC.

[42] Purcell, *Donors and Archives*, 17.

Fortunately, concern around ownership and copyright garners a significant amount of attention from archivists given the number of trainings, publications, and formal presentation focused on the impact of copyright laws and enforcement on cultural heritage work and institutions. Yet, Dharma Akmon writes "copyright represents a significant and sometimes insurmountable obstacle" for cultural heritage institutions, resulting in a vast majority of literature framing copyright as a deterrent rather than a means of ensuring donors can maintain an appropriate level of control over their content.[43] In thinking about the types of records created by music artists, a majority of the questionnaire respondents included materials that fall in the category identified by Akmon as those items "intended for sale or created by those who [make] a living by their [work]."[44] Undoubtedly, this complex scenario of dealing with copyright may frustrate archival access efforts resulting in archival repositories taking a defensive stance for fear of litigation, as documented in the Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Board's 2010 report.[45] Influenced heavily by their archival repository policies, archivists tend to focus on what Akmon defines as "perceived risk and their impression on their institution's tolerance for risk."[46] This fear of litigation in particular can be found in the structure and stipulations expressed in many donor forms, where donors are expected to relinquish ownership in an effort to relieve archival repositories from responsibility and possibly liability.

Surprisingly, interests in archives as a concept, as expressed by participants in the research study, did not always depend on concrete or memorable experiences with archival institutions and collections. Instead, data coded into the *Post-Donation Process* showed participants as having a strong interests in the power, pitfalls, and potential of archiving and archives. These included ramifications of limited access to certain archival materials and perspectives, perceived limitations (e.g., gaps, voids) in existing collections, fear of the commodification of personal stories and information, and untapped learning opportunities through the use of archives for remembering, cultivating communities, and for self-edification. Most participants recognized the significance of using archives to educate themselves or others as well as the ability to contribute to the making of history and knowledge. For some participants, that meant seeing stories of musicians from different socioeconomic classes, rather than just high-profile wealthy artists or high-brow music genres. For, others it meant introducing new aspects of music history from fields

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[43] Dharma Akmon, "Only with Your Permission: How Rights Holders Respond (or Don't Respond) to Requests to Display Archival Materials Online," *Archival Science* 10, no. 1 (2010): 46, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-010-9116-z.

[44] Akmon, "Only with Your Permission," 48.

[45] Rob Bamberger and Sam Brylawski, *The State of Recorded Sound Preservation in the United States: A National Legacy at Risk in the Digital Age* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2010), https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub148/.

[46] Akmon, "Only with Your Permission," 48.

such as video game design. Contrary to Purcell's argument, these research findings instead calls into question why archival practice and theory places such little attention on donors who may want to claim a place in the production of history and society's shared memory.

Participants also highlighted many considerations unique to living donors especially regarding privacy and conditions around archival use and reuse. For example, given that music artists are active professional artists that may still depend on making a living from their created work, how would the decision to grant exclusive rights jeopardize their financial well-being? Or, if a music artist carries a certain fan base, how would nonrestrictive public access impact their personal lives and that of their family members or loved ones?[47] Even if a music artist happily agrees to donate materials for purposes of research and learning, there may be conflicting understandings between living donors and archivists regarding the extent of use of materials in house compared to use online.[48] Online access and in-house access each carry different specifications and limitations on how a donor's materials may be accessed and available with different capabilities for others to reuse and remix original works. Donors with the ability to communicate and define how, when, why, and what will be included in the archival record bring forth complex scenarios and difficult decisions for archivists, but these are necessary if radical empathy and care are to be centered in the donor relationship.

Lastly, while certainly a thorny, arduous, and complex area of work, findings from the *Donation Process* theme points to the need for more clear and transparent communication between donor and archivists. A stakeholder consultation method should be used instead of the risk assessment approach, the latter of which places the archivist on the defense against the donor and their wishes. Centering risk, while seemingly benign, continues the harmful tendency of decentering and disempowering the donor and their role in the archival process. For participants in the research study, copyright represents a common concern for music artists given the likelihood that many may share ownership of their audio files or promotional materials with record labels, producers, photographers, or other music artists, and may view loss of control as equivalent to loss of wages. These fears likely originate from what participants framed as "horror stories" from signing exploitative contracts early in their career, essentially leaving them product-

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[47] For more on the impact of increasing or restricting access on records of celebrities, see Sara Hodson, "In Secret Kept, In Silence Sealed: Privacy in the Papers of Authors and Celebrities," *The American Archivist* 67, no. 2 (2004): https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.67.2.b53338437 x161076.

[48] The following articles provide more information on the increasing and gradually changing expectations regarding the use of online materials: Kristin R. Eschenfelder and Michelle Caswell, "Digital Cultural Collections in an Age of Reuse and Remixes," *First Monday* 15, no. 11 (2010), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v15i11.3060.

less, to highly restrictive non-compete clauses for commissioned or contracted work.[49] For many music artists, these stories reflect the daily realities that artists constantly face around retaining and enforcing control over their art and content in the short and long-term and their ability to make a living off their work.

RADICAL EMPATHY TOWARDS DONORS

In order to define an affective and empathetic relationship between archivists and donors focused on centering and improving the well-being of donors, archivists must recognize that donors need mechanisms and opportunities to engage directly and indirectly in archival decision-making. This recognition should focus on how the archivist can use empathy to imagine how living music artist donors or other professional artist donors might be affected by current archival practices and policies. First, applying radical empathy when working with professional living music artists requires attentiveness and sensitivity towards a number of considerations and circumstances around archival donations. The act of imagining oneself, the archivist, in the place of the other, the music artist, can effectively counteract the power imbalance inherently present in the relationship between archivist and donor. By calling attention to, revising, or compromising on issues arising from the donation process, archivists can better advocate for donors and not just their institutions. For example, archivists can facilitate transparent conversations regarding how forfeiture of ownership rights could infringe on the ability of a donor to continue receiving income from sales or royalties. An archivist must be able to mitigate against harm of losing the ability to continue profiting from their work, especially when donating certain possessions under agreements that would only benefit one party. This shift from prioritizing the gains of an institution to protecting a donor's financial well-being gestures toward an understanding of the perils of centering fear rather than people.

Secondly, an approach based on an ethics of care can also better prepare archivists to anticipate, evaluate, and address the concerns a donor might bring forth or how best to accommodate the needs of various stakeholders without dismissing the needs of the donor. For example, in regard to concerns around copyright infringement or misuse, archivists can provide guidance on various types of legal agreements typically incorporated into informal and formal donation agreements, such as those written into

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[49] For a general overview of artist contracts with record labels through an economic analysis lens, see Theo Papadopoulos, "Are Music Recording Contracts Equitable? An Economic Analysis of the Practice of Recoupment," *Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association Journal* 1, no. 4 (2004): 83-104, http://www.meiea.org/resources/Journal/html_ver/Vol04_No01/ Vol_4_No_1_A5.html.

donor forms.[50] For artists, agreements that solely benefit the archival institution can result in unfavorable conditions and outcomes for the donor and can be viewed as poor planning or malice on the part of the archival institution. While some donors may have the financial privilege to hire legal representation, and have social standing to challenge archival institutional stances, this is not a given for many donors, especially those not traditionally involved with archival donations or lacking certain class privileges.

Lastly, alongside the recognition of applying preventative and donor-centered approaches during the *Donation Process*, archivists can also begin practicing ethics of care through the implementation of more transparency around their practices and decisions. In attending to and caring for a donor's well-being, archivists can alleviate concerns over perceived risks, such as losing access to materials after a donation, potential loss of control on usage or rights, misunderstandings on how donated materials will be handled or used, fear of materials being misrepresented, or risks of exposing intimate and personal aspects of a donor's life. Archivists can begin by critically evaluating current practices around formal donation agreements commonly found on donor forms like deeds of gift. Another area of improvement includes digitization of and online access to acquired materials, and their implications for enhanced donor forms and the donation process. These two areas in particular require attentiveness on decisions and mechanisms that may prevent or mitigate harm such as appropriation, misrepresentation, or inappropriate commercialization of the works and content of the living music artist donor. Unfortunately, as Akmon notes "archival literature offers little information on what effort is actually required to seek permission from rights holders…"[51]

Even with this gap in the current literature, archivists can still take initial steps to communicate the expectations around digitization or digital access more clearly and effectively with donors. Archivists employing radical empathy as an approach can help redefine strategies around tackling permissions and copyright, from one focused almost exclusively on avoiding litigation to one that also addresses transparency and guidance on future decisions for access with the donor.[52] Donation agreements, in particular,

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[50] This can include suggestions on licenses use that clearly designate how a donor would like their collection materials used. For example, research has been conducted on the use of rights statements in digital collections. See Linda Ballinger, Brandy Karl, and Anastasia Chiu, "Providing Quality Rights Metadata for Digital Collections Through RightsStatements.org," *Pennsylvania Libraries: Research & Practice* 5, no. 2 (2017): 144-158, https://doi.org/10.5195/palrap.2017.157, as well as the use of Creative Commons such as April M. Hathcock, "From Dusty Boxes to Data Bytes Acquiring Rights to Special Collections in the Digital Age," *The Reading Room* 1, no. 2 (2016): 20-34, https://readingroom.lib.buffalo.edu/PDF/vol1-issue2/From-Dusty-Boxes-to-Data-Bytes.pdf.

[51] Akmon, "Only with Your Permission," 46.

[52] One potential research area to explore includes investigations on how living music artist donors might benefit from the use of Creative Commons licenses or rights statements. One

function as concrete opportunities for open dialogue and deep listening from both the donor and archivist on how best to balance the needs of all stakeholders including archival institutions, constituents, subjects, as well as the donor.

DONORS AND THE POLITICS OF ARCHIVES

Ultimately, in order for a power shift to occur and succeed, archivists must completely abandon notions of neutrality or objectivity in the archival profession and acknowledge that structures of archival power exist. This is necessary if the field truly wishes to improve and nourish their values of accountability, social responsibility, diversity, and responsible stewardship.[53] In writing about the lack of attention to affect theory in archival literature, Cifor warns that "the still prevalent modernist construction of the study and practice of archiving as a 'science' has led to particular practices of knowledge production aimed at objectivity [while also] dismiss[ing] their inherent power relations."[54] Others, such as Stacy Wood, et al. in their article on archives as documentation of past atrocities, recognize that it is "impossible to separate the record from the politics of its origins, as well as from its consequences, affects, or most importantly, the human life to which it is related." [55] There exists a need to deviate from "the veneer of detached professionalism…" to one of critical accountability.[56]

      Archivists, by accepting their politically charged realities and implicit and explicit power, can better participate in their relationships with donors, and thus together establish a paradigm that does not detract, belittle, or reduce the diverse and myriad ways people engage with archives and the archival process. In addition, a mutually empowering and beneficial relationship between donors and archivists depends on donors reaching a consciousness of their own desires, power, and needs in order to

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case study on how cultural heritage institutions like the Digital Public Library of America and Europeana manage the use of these licenses and stipulations can be found in the white paper: International Rights Statements Working Group, *Recommendations for Standardized International Rights Statements* (October 2015, last modified May 2018), https://rightsstatements.org/files/180531recommendations_for_standardized_international_rights_statements_v1.2.2.pdf.

[53] Derived from the core values statement of the Society of American Archivists: "SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics," Society of American Archivists, May 2011. https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics.

[54] Marika Cifor and Anne J. Gilliland, "Affect and the Archive, Archives and Their Affects: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2015): 11-12.

[55] Stacy Wood, Kathy Carbone, Marika Cifor, Anne Gilliland, and Ricardo Punzalan, "Mobilizing Records: Re-Framing Archival Description to Support Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 398.

[56] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 25.

balance those against the needs of society. An archival donor consciousness would also in turn counteract Caswell and Cifor's warning of archivists succumbing to "the paternalism of 'rescuer and victim.'"[57] In guarding against such a framing of the archival donor relationship, archivists and donors can not only create and strengthen the emotional connection between them, but also pave the way for each to affirm their own needs and mechanisms for well-being.

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[57] Caswell and Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics," 32.

APPENDIX A. CENTERING DONOR CONSENT – ARCHIVAL DONOR SURVEY - MUSICIANS

1. Questionnaire Consent Form
2. What is your age range?
3. What state in the United States of America do you live in?
4. Of the following which do you most strongly identify with?
5. Have you ever visited an archival repository? If yes, about how many times?
6. How familiar are you with the work of archival institutions?
7. Do you keep personal items related to your line of work for either of the professions above?
8. Please select from the following all the types of items that you retain as part of your personal collection.
9. Have you ever donated personal items to an archival repository (such as documents, photographs, letters, costumes, instruments, sketches, etc.)?
10. What were or are the reasons behind your archival donation or current lack of donations?
11. If you have donated or in the process of donating, do you communicate with any of the following people as part of the donation process?
12. Do you know what a donor form or deed of gift is?
13. If you have donated or in the process of donating, have you been presented with a donor form, gift agreement, or deed of gift?
14. Do you expect the option to draft your own terms and restrictions when donating materials?
15. Could you elaborate on your response to the previous question? (OPTIONAL)
16. If you do not agree with the stipulations in a donor form, how comfortable are you with asking for revisions?
17. If an archive is not able or willing to adjust archival donation stipulations, would you withdraw your offer to donate your materials?
18. How important is the ability to retain intellectual control of your materials?
19. How important is privacy to you?
20. Will the items you donate or would potentially donate contain sensitive or personally identifiable information?
21. Do you consider public online access to archival materials different from in person physical access?
22. Have you heard of fair use?
23. Have you heard of creative commons licenses?
24. How important is the concept of consent to you?
25. Would you like to share your definition or understanding of the concept of consent? (OPTIONAL)
26. Would you like to share any additional thoughts?

APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever donated your historic records to a repository? How was that experience?
2. Do you see a crucial difference or react strongly to a particular consent form (deed of gift) terms of agreement?
3. What were the reasons behind your donation or current lack of donations?
4. How would you identify risks associated with donating your records? Are there records you would not donate?
5. Do you require or expect the ability to draft your own terms and restrictions when donating materials?

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