

Article

Critical Approaches to Archiving and Recordkeeping in the Continuum

Joanne Evans, Sue McKemmish, and Greg Rolan

ABSTRACT

Records Continuum scholarship is increasingly engaging with critical and participatory approaches to research and practice, “questioning the social constructs, values and power differentials embedded in current recordkeeping infrastructure exploring archival and recordkeeping agency, autonomy and activism, and moving beyond insight and critique with the aim of bringing about transformative outcomes.”¹ In this paper, we identify the key characteristics of these approaches with reference to the suite of research projects that make up the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program. We explore how Records Continuum, theory, models and constructs complement, frame, and support critical archiving and recordkeeping theorizing and practice. We propose an expansive definition of critical archiving and recordkeeping; one that moves beyond academy-centred, normative critiques and goal-setting to embrace transformative, participatory research and practice, which is particularly relevant to the integrated archiving and recordkeeping needs of individuals and communities.

¹ Sue McKemmish, “Recordkeeping in the Continuum: An Australian Tradition,” in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne Gilliland, Sue McKemmish and Andrew Lau (Melbourne, Australia: Monash University Publishing, 2016), 122-160.

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INTRODUCTION

The Archival Education and Research Initiative (AERI) is developing a research agenda to address the archiving and recordkeeping dimensions of societal grand challenges² –complex, multifaceted, and fundamental problems that require extraordinary breakthroughs engaging multiple areas of expertise.³ This involves identifying “wicked”⁴ archiving and recordkeeping problems that hinder global endeavors in areas such as peace and security, health and well-being, organizational transparency and accountability, human rights and social justice, and environmental sustainability.⁵

It is becoming apparent from this process that one of the wickedest problems relates to how archiving and recordkeeping research and practice can engage with, and address the needs of, an archival multiverse. The multiverse conceptualization emerged in a workshop at the first AERI Institute in 2009 to encompass the “pluralism of evidentiary texts (records in multiple forms and cultural contexts), memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs”.⁶ This initiated a process of identifying the manifest disconnect between extant recordkeeping and archival standards, systems, and services on the one hand and contemporary conceptualizations of the archival multiverse on the other. In itself, this may constitute an as yet not widely recognized societal grand challenge.

The structural nature of this disconnect demands critical examination of contemporary research and practice “going beyond the apparent to reveal hidden agendas, concealed inequalities and tacit manipulation” and bring about

² The Building the Future of Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) was established in the US in 2008 and convenes annual research meetings for archival and records educators, researchers and doctoral students from around the world. In the July 2011 and subsequent meetings, it began work on developing a research agenda based on identifying societal grand challenges.

³ National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure Taskforce on Grand Challenges, *Final Report, March 2011*, accessed November 29, 2016, https://www.nsf.gov/cise/aci/taskforces/TaskForceReport_GrandChallenges.pdf

⁴ Horst WJ. Rittel and Melvin M Webber. “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.” *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 155–69.

⁵ Anne Gilliland, and Sue McKemmish, “Recordkeeping Metadata, the Archival Multiverse, and Societal Grand Challenges.” In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications 2012* accessed November 29, 2016, <http://dcpapers.dublincore.org/pubs/article/view/3661>.

⁶ Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group, “Educating for the Archival Multiverse.” *American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 69–101; quote p. 73. The multiverse concept and its relevance to archiving and recordkeeping were introduced to the community by Ally Krebs – see Shannon Faulkhead and Kirsten Thorpe, “Dedication: Archives and Indigenous Communities,” in Gilliland et. al, *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, 2-16.

emancipatory social change.⁷ Not surprisingly, the AERI community also recognizes the need for a critical perspective that aims ultimately to bring about the kind of transformations in scholarship and praxis that are crucial to addressing societal grand challenges.

Australian Records Continuum researchers are part of the AERI community and are increasingly engaging with critical approaches to address the systemic failure of extant archiving and recordkeeping infrastructures to meet individual and community identity, memory and accountability requirements. These infrastructures – the frameworks, processes, systems and technologies that govern and structure archiving and recordkeeping – embed power differentials and information asymmetries that reflect the paradigm in which they have evolved. As with other countries dealing with a colonial legacy the need to decolonize the institutions that perpetuate existing power imbalances and continue to marginalize Indigenous and other communities is paramount. In this context:

Most recently records continuum theory has framed consideration of disruptive and radical recordkeeping and archival processes linked to the possibility of a decolonized Archive in a post-colonial Australia. Decolonization would involve transforming current practices and refiguring archival spaces to be representative of multiple voices and perspectives, thus unsettling the power imbalances embedded in the current records and archives landscape.⁸

Critical theorizing, framed by Records Continuum theory and employing the Records Continuum Model as an instrument of analysis, have highlighted fundamental shortcomings in recordkeeping and archiving designed around the requirements and demands of government, big business and other information elites⁹

⁷ Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic. "Doing Critical IS Research: The Question of Methodology." *Qualitative Research in IS: Issues and Trends* ed. Eileen M. Trauth (IGI Global, 2001), 141–62.

⁸ McKemmish, "Recordkeeping in the Continuum," 125; referencing Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, "Toward the Archival Multiverse: Challenging the Binary Opposition of the Personal and Corporate Archive in Modern Archival Theory and Practice." *Archivaria* 76 (2013): 111-44; Frank Upward, Sue McKemmish, and Barbara Reed, "Archivists and Changing Social and Information Spaces: A Continuum Approach to Recordkeeping and Archiving in Online Cultures." *Archivaria* 72 (Fall 2011): 197–237; Livia Iacovino, "Shaping and Reshaping Cultural Identity and Memory: Maximising Human Rights through a Participatory Archive." *Archives and Manuscripts* 43, no. 1 (2015): 29–41; Joanne Evans, Sue McKemmish, Elizabeth Daniels and Gavan McCarthy, "Self-determination and Archival Autonomy: Advocating Activism." *Archival Science* 15, no. 4 (2015): 337–68.

⁹ Anne Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, "Records and their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined." *Archival Science* 15, no. 1 (2015): 1–23; Evans et al., "Self-determination"; Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "Rights in Records as a Platform for Participative Archiving." In *Studies in Archival Education and Research*:

– particularly in relation to social justice and human rights agendas and in situations of conflict, oppression, colonization and marginalization. For example, Continuum researchers have demonstrated how the bifurcated public recordkeeping and manuscript library traditions in Australia do not necessarily serve the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities.¹⁰ Such research has also shown how archiving and recordkeeping are failing to play their part in corporate accountability and transparency in these contexts.

In this paper, we ask:

- How do Records Continuum theory, models and constructs complement, frame and support critical archiving and recordkeeping theorizing and practice?
- How do critical approaches to recordkeeping and archiving research and practice in the continuum contribute to the emerging field of critical archival studies?
- What are the key characteristics of critical approaches to archiving and recordkeeping in Records Continuum research?

We address these questions firstly by introducing Records Continuum constructs and models of particular relevance to critical archiving and recordkeeping approaches. Secondly, we position these approaches in relation to an emergent critical archival methodology framed by Records Continuum theory, the “archival turn”, and the critical archival studies movement. Finally, we identify, discuss and illustrate the key characteristics of critical recordkeeping and archiving in the continuum by analysing the large-scale *Archives and the Rights of the Child* research program. This program is aimed at tackling the archiving and recordkeeping dimensions of one of society’s grand challenges – how to nurture the health and well-being of children caught up in child welfare and protection systems, who are dealing with family dislocation, disconnection and displacement, and then as adults the legacy of state and other institutional interventions in their childhood.¹¹ With ample

Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference, ed. by Richard Cox, Alison Langmead and Nora Mattern. (Litwin Books, 2015) 355-86; G. Valderhaug, “Memory, Justice and the Public Record.” *Archival Science* 11, nos. 1-2 (2010): 13–23.

¹⁰ Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead and Lynette Russell, “Dis-trust in the Archive: Reconciling Records.” *Archival Science* 11, no. 3 (2011): 211-239; McKemmish and Piggott, “Toward the Archival Multiverse”; Upward, McKemmish and Reed, “Archivists and Changing Social and Information Spaces.”

¹¹ In Australia, the abuse or mistreatment of individuals and families that experienced out-of-home Care have been the subject of numerous formal enquiries over the last 25 years (Kim Eberhard, “Unresolved Issues: Recordkeeping Recommendations Arising from Australian Commissions of Inquiry into the Welfare of Children in Out-of-Home Care, 1997–2012,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 43, no. 1 (2015): 4–17.). A consistent finding throughout these enquiries has been the systemic failures in recordkeeping and access to records that are still an ongoing source of trauma to Care-leavers. As explained by Wilson and Golding

evidence of how contemporary recordkeeping and archiving practice has unequivocally failed this constituency, the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* multi-year program of recordkeeping and archiving research projects takes a critical approach framed by the Records Continuum to lay the groundwork for much needed transformational change in practice.

RECORDS CONTINUUM THEORY AND MODELLING: FRAMING CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ARCHIVING AND RECORDKEEPING IN THE ARCHIVAL MULTIVERSE

Records Continuum theory deals with the increasing complexity and plurality of recorded information in spacetime, particularly in the digital world – the “expanding continuum of recorded information that is the archival multiverse”.¹² Like critical theory, it draws heavily on postmodern theorists, including Foucault, Derrida and Giddens, especially the latter’s spacetime and structuration theory.¹³ Records continuum modelling aims to provide a multidimensional framework for understanding the roles of recordkeeping and archiving in individual and collective lives.

Records Continuum consciousness emerges from a deep understanding of the unity of space and time that enables the patterning and re-patterning of knowledge and structures to manage records and archives in and through spacetimes and across cultures. It is a perduring worldview, where persistence comes through constant re-patterning. In turn, it views the record as both enduring and perduring in that it is fixed in content and structure, but “always in a process of becoming,”¹⁴ with multiple and dynamic documentary and contextual relationships formed in and through spacetimes.¹⁵ A record is figured and constantly re-figured, never wholly present at

(“Latent Scrutiny: Personal Archives as Perpetual Mementos of the Official Gaze.” *Archival Science*, 15, no.1 (2015): 1–17; the capitalized term ‘Care’ is used to denote the ironic connotations of manifestly uncaring treatment, without the typographically heavy-handedness of continually enclosing the word in quotation marks.

¹² Frank Upward, “The Archival Multiverse and Eddies in the Spacetime Continuum.” In Gilliland et. al., *Research in the Archival Multiverse*.

¹³Jacques Derrida, *Archives Fever* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1995); Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

¹⁴ Sue McKemmish, “Are Records Ever Actual? In *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years* ed. Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (Clayton: Ancora Press, 1994), 202.

¹⁵ Frank Upward, “Modelling the Continuum as Paradigm Shift in Archiving and Recordkeeping Processes, and Beyond: A Personal Reflection.” *Records Management Journal* 10, no. 3 (2000): 119.

any given moment in time, in stark contrast with an artefactual view of records as static end products.

The term archiving and recordkeeping as theorized and practiced in the continuum refers to a broadly defined concept:

It encompasses a range of intertwined recordkeeping and archiving processes and activities ... for current, regulatory and historical recordkeeping purposes. These purposes include the roles that recordkeeping plays in and through space and time in governance and accountability, remembering and forgetting, shaping identity and providing value-added sources of information. In classificatory terms 'recordkeeping' in this usage subsumes records management and archival administration. It also encompasses the personal and corporate recordkeeping activities undertaken by individuals in their everyday lives, in families, work or community groups, and in organizations of all kinds.¹⁶

Continuum definitions of archiving and recordkeeping reference the Archive in the very broadest sense, "encompassing oral and written records, literature, landscape, dance, art, the built environment and artefacts" insofar as they provide traces of social, cultural and organizational activity that evidence and memorialize individual and collective lives.¹⁷ These ideas resonate strongly with the concept of the archival multiverse as defined in the introduction to this paper.

The Records Continuum Model is a tool for identifying, analyzing and critiquing complex and multiple realities, and devising integrated archiving and recordkeeping frameworks, strategies and systems to address them.¹⁸ It maps the creation of records as traces of actions, events and participants, their capture into systems (broadly defined to incorporate formal and informal recordkeeping processes that manage them as evidence, memory and reliable sources of information), their organization into the archive of an organization, group, family or individual, and their pluralization beyond the boundaries of an organization, family or group, or an individual life. Pluralization involves disembedding the record from its originating multiple organizational and/or personal contexts and carrying it through spacetime.¹⁹

The inclusive and pluralist concepts relating to archiving and recordkeeping in the Records Continuum frame the emphasis in continuum theory and practice on designing integrated recordkeeping and archival frameworks in the Organise and

¹⁶ Sue McKemmish, Franklyn Herbert Upward, and Barbara Reed, "The Records Continuum Model." In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd edition, ed. Marcia J. Bates and Mary Niles-Maack (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 4447.

¹⁷ Sue McKemmish, "Traces: Document, Record, Archive, Archives." In *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society* ed. Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed and Frank Upward (Wagga Wagga: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, 2005), 1.

¹⁸ Upward, "Modelling the Continuum", 117-19.

¹⁹ McKemmish et al., "The Records Continuum Model," 4450-4453.

Pluralise dimensions *before* records are created and captured. This is a key point; the need for intervention in framework and system design before recording takes place is a recurring theme throughout this paper.

Re-imagining the Records Continuum Model

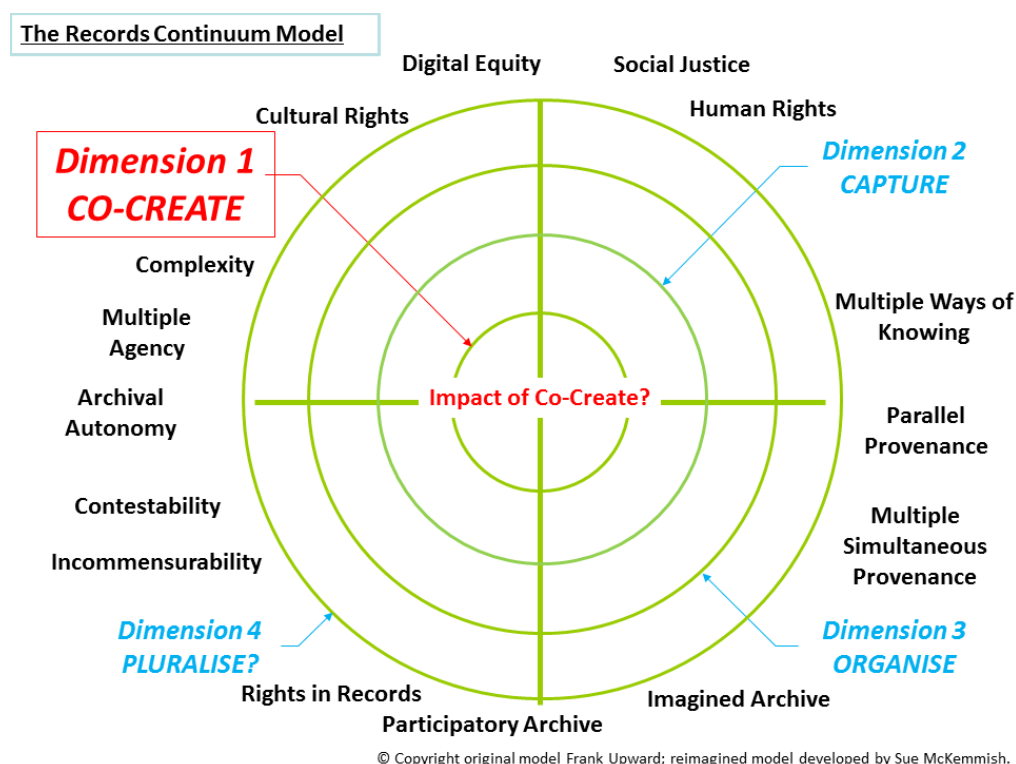


Figure 1. Towards a Re-imagined Records Continuum Model²⁰

²⁰ This representation of the Model was developed for a session at the Always Becoming Symposium, held on September 16, 2015 in celebration of 25 years of records continuum research and education at Monash University and the work of the Records Continuum Research Group (RCRG). The Group has been the focal point for national and international researchers, educators and practitioners wanting to explore and apply continuum conceptualizations of archiving and recordkeeping. During this time RCRG researchers have contributed to ground-breaking collaborative local and international projects that have evolved continuum models and theory, influenced national and international recordkeeping standards, conceptualized pioneering metadata models, developed inclusive research design, explored trusted archival systems, advanced the need for culturally and politically sensitive archival education, and produced 3D living archives. 'Always becoming...' is a phrase drawn from Sue McKemmish's writing about the continuity of recordkeeping processes over time and space. The Always Becoming

Figure 1 presents a recent view of the Records Continuum Model which re-labels the Create dimension as *Co-Create* to better represent key Records Continuum concepts relating to multiple agency in records, including co-creation, parallel provenance and multiple simultaneous provenance.²¹ In terms of current and future practice, such concepts support the co-design of archiving and recordkeeping frameworks, processes and systems that recognize multiple participants in the events or actions documented in records as co-creating agents.

Significantly, the concept of Co-Creation underpins calls by Gilliland and McKemmish for recognition of an extensive suite of rights in records to be accorded to those individuals and communities who have participated voluntarily, or involuntarily in, or are directly impacted by, the events or actions recorded.²² This re-labelling reverberates through all dimensions of the Records Continuum Model and raises questions as to how these rights are represented and enacted in and throughout all the dimensions. This radical reconceptualization of agency in records has far-reaching implications as it challenges many of the principles that inform current archiving and recordkeeping practice. Invoking a comprehensive suite of rights for those currently treated as subjects or users of records places new responsibilities and obligations on institutions and practitioners to design and build the infrastructure to exercise and monitor these rights.

While the Records Continuum Model of the 1990s has been the locus of sense-making for the past two decades it is also being challenged by new understandings. The current cohort of Records Continuum researchers is continually refining and extending continuum theory and models to address the challenges of the archival multiverse. For example: Gibbons' reworked cultural heritage model as a *Mediated Recordkeeping: Culture-as-evidence* model makes explicit the performative characteristics of record curation as distinct from pluralization.²³ And Mihelcic's *Experiential Model of the Person-Centred Record* is an integrative process model for

Symposium aimed to reflect on the legacy of the RCRG and to work with key collaborators on identifying, mapping and planning a research, education and praxis agenda for the next twenty-five years.

²¹ Chris Hurley, "Parallel Provenance: (1) What, If Anything, is Archival Description?" *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 110–45; and "Parallel Provenance: (2) When Something is Not Related to Everything Else." *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 2 (2005): 52–95; Eric Ketelaar, "Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records." *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 44–61 and "Access: The Democratic Imperative," *Archives and Manuscripts* 34, no. 2 (2006): 62–81.

²² Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "The Role of Participatory Archives in Furthering Human Rights, Reconciliation and Recovery. *Atlanti: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice* 24 (2014): 79–88; Anne Gilliland, "Acknowledging, Respecting, Enfranchising, Liberating and Protecting: A Platform for Radical Archival Description" (Paper presented at the Radical Archives Conference, 2014).

²³ Leisa Gibbons, "Culture in the Continuum: YouTube, Small Stories and Memory Making." (PhD diss., Monash University, 2015), accessed August 18, 2016, <http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/1162125>.

describing the human experience of the person-centred record.²⁴ Theoretical work in this area is ongoing; continuum theory itself is evolving, expanding and “always becoming”.

CRITICAL ARCHIVING AND RECORDKEEPING IN THE CONTINUUM: TOWARDS A CRITICAL ARCHIVAL METHODOLOGY

At the heart of social innovation is systems change — trying to challenge and, over time, change the defining routines, resource flows, authority flows or beliefs of a system. Our greatest social problems are systemic — they are entrenched, perpetuated by the status quo of power, institutional culture, social expectations, myth and narrative.

To enhance the wellbeing of communities and support people to thrive — to take on our systemic problems — we need to shift the systems holding a problem in place. We need systemic solutions.

- Social Innovation Generation, 2016²⁵

In defining critical archival studies, Caswell and Punzalan take inspiration from Frankfurt School theorist Max Horkheimer who “defined critical theory as theory that is explanatory in the sense that it explains what is wrong with society and identifies the actors enabled to change it, practical in that it proposes attainable goals through which to transform society into a “real democracy,” and normative in that it provides the norms for such criticism.²⁶ They define critical archival studies as “those approaches that (1) explain what is wrong with the current state of archival research and practice, (2) posit practical goals for how such research and practice can and should change, and/or (3) provide the norms for such critique. In this way, critical archival studies, like critical theory, is emancipatory in nature, with the ultimate goal of transforming archival practice and society writ large.”²⁷

Critical archival studies so defined are part of an emergent critical archival methodology, a new epistemological paradigm in which we can explore and engage with the archival multiverse. Critical archival methodology is concerned with ideas about decolonizing and pluralizing the Archive, and is influenced by postmodernism,

²⁴ Joanne Mihelcic, “The Experiential Model of the Person-Centred Record: a social constructionist grounded theory.” (PhD diss., Monash University, 2016), accessed August 18, 2016, <http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/1280852>.

²⁵ Social Innovation Generation. Ecosystems for Systems Change, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.sigeneration.ca/ecosystems-systems-change/>.

²⁶ Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, “Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction,” in “Critical Archival Studies,” eds. Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand. Special issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* no. 2 (2017): 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

postcolonialism, feminism, gender studies, sexuality studies, cultural studies, Indigenous studies and ways of knowing, and the “archival turn” — the positioning of the Archive beyond its traditional administrative and academic constituency. As McKemmish and Gilliland explain:

The “archival turn” was first evident in postmodern and postcolonial discourses in disciplines like anthropology, literature and history with critical theory providing a framework for theorizing about both the role of the Archive in social conditions and forces such as colonialism, oppression, marginalization and abuse of human rights, and the part that it might play in postcolonial, post-trauma and post-conflict societies.²⁸

The meaning and impact of the “archival turn” on the positioning, function and affect of records and recordkeeping in society cannot be underestimated. When viewed through the Records Continuum lens, it demands a fundamental shift in the constitution of records and recordkeeping practices, systems, and services and requires more than incremental change to existing paradigms. Traditional approaches and tools do not equip record holding organizations to meet the manifest challenges presented by the “archival turn”. A Continuum sensibility questions extant archiving and recordkeeping infrastructure and seeks ways to re-design it in order to better represent an archival multiverse and meet its functional requirements.²⁹

For example, extending the collection-oriented, traditional accessioning and appraisal approach to encompass community archives simply replicates the existing archival paradigm (albeit under community control) – in effect, creating more gated islands of information in an otherwise inter-networked world. Similarly, the use of Archive 2.0 technologies³⁰ at the portal interface to embrace the infotainment sector is no more transformative. The “archival turn” cannot be addressed by “bolt-on” approaches. It requires a ground-up re-conceptualization of a new epistemological paradigm.

Continuum approaches to archiving and recordkeeping scholarship and practice call for and are part of this new critical epistemological paradigm. They suggest an expansive definition of *critical archiving and recordkeeping*, framed by key

²⁸ Sue McKemmish and Anne J. Gilliland, "Archival and Recordkeeping Research: Past, Present and Future." In *Research Methods: Information Management, Systems, and Contexts* ed. Kirsty Williamson and Graeme Johanson (Pahran, Victoria: Tilde University Press, 2012), 86. For a discussion of critical theory as a research paradigm in the information systems and knowledge management fields, see D. Cecez-Kecmanovic and M. A. Kennan, “The Methodological Landscape: Information Systems and Knowledge Management” in *Research Methods* ed. Williamson and Johanson, 113–37.

²⁹ Joanne Evans, “Capacities and Complexities: A Reflection on Design Methodologies for Archival and Recordkeeping Research” in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Gilliland, McKemmish, and Lau, 659–85.

³⁰ Alexandra Eveleigh, “Crowding out the Archivist? Implications of online user participation for archival theory and practice” (PhD diss., University College London, 2015).

continuum concepts – broad conceptualizations of the record (inclusive of archival records), archiving and recordkeeping processes, the nature of the Archive, and the role of archiving and recordkeeping in society – combined with critical theory and insights from the radical archives movement. The continuum definition moves beyond academy-centred, normative critiques and goal-setting to embrace transformative, participatory action research and practice, which is particularly relevant to the integrated archiving and recordkeeping needs of communities, and poses a challenge to Records Continuum modellers to design societal critique into the Model itself.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE: THE ARCHIVING AND RECORDKEEPING NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE AND THEIR ADULT SELVES

To illustrate this expanded definition of critical archiving and recordkeeping we introduce the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program. The projects that make up this program are predicated on the view that our life chances are underpinned by a strong sense of identity, social, emotional and physical wellbeing, and connectedness with the world.³¹ Building on an increasing awareness of the role that records, archiving and recordkeeping plays in developing and nurturing this sense of self throughout our lives the projects address the lifelong archival and recordkeeping needs of those whose childhoods are impacted by child welfare and protection systems. While current policies in Australia emphasize that the removal of children from parental homes due to safety concerns is a measure of last resort, the numbers are increasing.³² And it is estimated that there are still around half a million Australians living with the impact of more punishing and punitive child welfare regimes. It is now known as Out-of-Home Care but many who grew up in orphanages, children's Homes and abusive foster families find it very difficult to associate the word 'care' with their experiences. Today, one of civil society's most difficult challenges is ensuring that when children are removed from their families by statutory and/or other authorities, they are not irrevocably damaged by those experiences and have the same opportunities as others to reach their potential.

There is increasing awareness of the role that records, archiving, and recordkeeping play not just in documenting childhood Out-of-Home Care experiences for accountability purposes, but in social, emotional and physical wellbeing. Children who experience Out-of-Home Care need quality recordkeeping and archiving systems for identity and memory purposes; to account for their Care experiences; to prevent, detect, report, investigate, and take action against child neglect and abuse; and to enable perpetrators to be brought to justice. Those involved in providing child

³¹ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009).

³² Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2015). Children in care (CFCA Resource Sheet). Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care>.

protection services and supporting children experiencing family dislocation also need access to efficient, effective and responsive information systems, driven by quality recordkeeping, to ensure the highest standards and continuity of Care. The need for such systems does not stop when a child leaves Care. Many recent inquiries, including the current *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* in Australia, the Ryan Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse in Ireland, and the Munro Review of Child Protection in the UK have highlighted the lifelong importance of these childhood records, and the impacts their absence, presence, quality, and accessibility have on individual lives and families.³³

Archives and the Rights of the Child Research Program

The *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program brings together Records Continuum researchers in partnership with advocates for Care leavers and those currently in statutory care, and researchers in a range of connected disciplines, including social work, history, law, Indigenous studies, IT, art and design, and education. It involves the re-imagining of recordkeeping and archiving systems in support of responsive and accountable child-centred Out-of-Home Care and as enablers of historical justice and reconciliation. It aims to re-position recordkeeping and archiving, not as bureaucratic overheads, but as drivers of high-quality, efficient, and effective person-centered child protection and Out-of-Home Care services.

The program incorporates a range of interconnected and complementary research projects, including an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship, *Connecting the Disconnected: Co-Designing Integrated and Inclusive Recordkeeping and Archival Networks (2015-2018)*, doctoral research on *Transforming Recordkeeping Systems Design for Interoperability (2014-2017)* and *Early Childhood Recordkeeping Literacy (2014-2020)*, the Australian Research Council Discovery Project, *Rights in Records by Design: Transforming Recordkeeping Systems for Children in Out-of-home Care (2017-2019)*, and *The Imagined Archive for Childhood Out-of-Home Care (2017-2018)*. The research agenda embodied in these projects is linked to a 2017 National Summit that will bring together stakeholder communities to develop a ten-year action plan to transform recordkeeping and archiving in the Out-

³³ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. *Inquiries and Reports relevant to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*; (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014). Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Home, 2014 accessed November 29, 2016 <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>; Ryan Report Monitoring Group. *Ryan Report Implementation Plan Fourth Progress Report December 2014* (Ireland: Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014); E. Munro *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred System* (UK Department of Education, 2011).

of-Home Care sector around recognizing, respecting and enacting multiple rights in records.³⁴ These projects are represented in Figure 2.

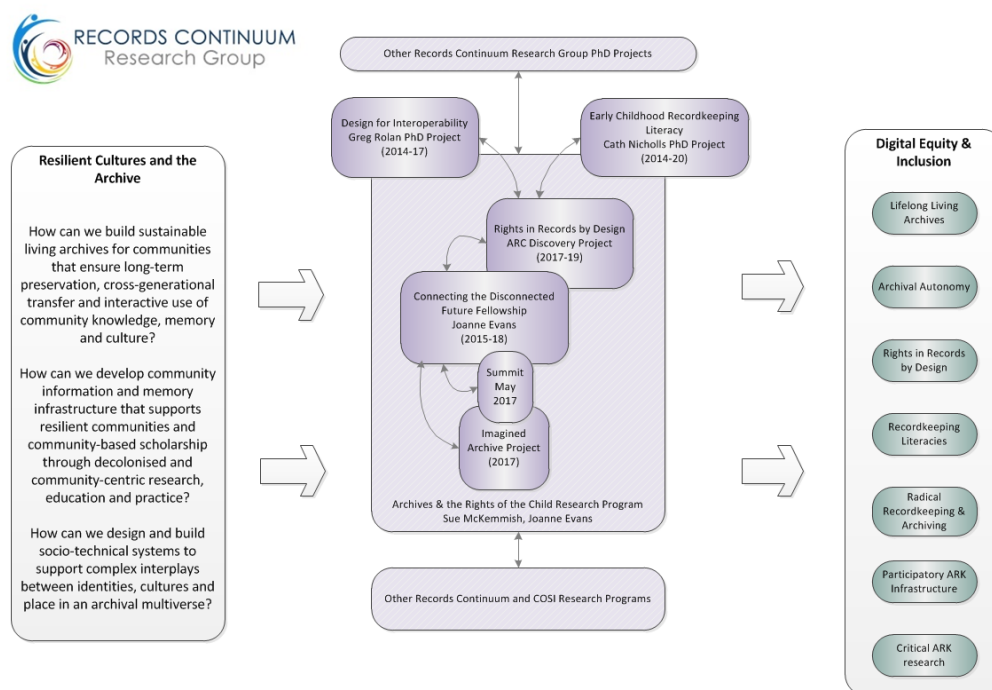


Figure 2. Archives and the Rights of the Child Research Program, November 2016.

The *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program is very deliberately positioned within a critical recordkeeping and archiving frame, utilizing participatory research methodologies, drawing heavily on Records Continuum theory, models and constructs, and building on the findings of past Records Continuum research projects. It is in turn critiquing and extending Records Continuum theory, models and constructs.

In the following sections, we explore how five key characteristics of such research play out in the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program and its major research projects:

- Identifying and challenging the social constructs, values, and morals embodied in the traditional archiving and recordkeeping ethos;
- Critiquing recordkeeping and archiving research and practice;

³⁴ For more information on the 2017 National Summit and the related Initiative, *Setting the Record Straight: For the Rights of the Child*, see <http://rights-records.it.monash.edu>.

- Taking action which addresses the critiques and aims at achieving transformative outcomes;
- Embracing participatory, reflexive models and methods; and
- Employing transdisciplinary epistemologies, expertise and perspectives to solve “wicked” problems.

We also reference key Records Continuum concepts which support critical approaches by providing a radical alternative to traditional concepts.

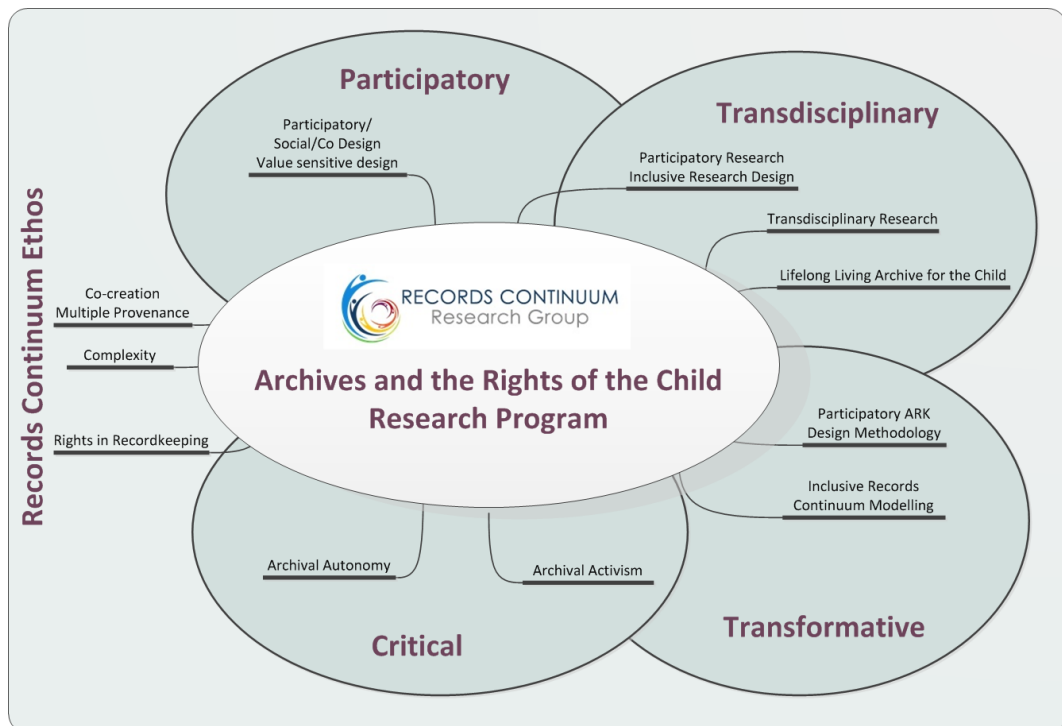


Figure 3. Critical Continuum Characteristics of the Archives and the Rights of the Child Research Program

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CRITICAL APPROACHES IN THE CONTINUUM

Ethos

Critical approaches in the continuum identify and challenge the myriad layers of social constructs, embedded values and ethics implicitly and explicitly impinging on archiving and recordkeeping. They acknowledge that critical archiving and recordkeeping research and practice in the continuum has embedded within its

approaches its own ethos, informed by a continuum worldview and consciousness. They also draw inspiration from scholars such as Anne Gilliland who urge a move beyond perpetuating systems that enrich the enfranchised to:

... act[ing] on behalf of all citizens of the world, especially those who have been displaced and dispossessed, historically and today, whose needs we have so often failed and whose lives and experiences have so often only endured as archival dust.³⁵

The *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program views archiving and recordkeeping infrastructure – frameworks, processes, systems, technologies – as:

...social constructions, man-made and artificial, products of countless contextual contingencies. They have been designed and shaped by a multitude of indivisible social and technical practices, which they then, in turn, reflect and structure ... Our study points to the need for far reaching and fundamental reform in archival and recordkeeping law, policy and practice to facilitate the transformation of evidence and memory management frameworks and infrastructure into a new dynamic, distributed, participatory paradigm, capable of supporting multiple archival perspectives, more able to heal rather than harm.³⁶

The animating force of the critical archiving and recordkeeping ethos in the continuum is the notion of archival autonomy, tentatively defined as:

...the ability for individuals and communities to participate in societal memory, with their own voice, and to become participatory agents in recordkeeping and archiving for identity, memory and accountability purposes.³⁷

This construct of archival autonomy is deeply rooted in continuum consciousness through the pioneering work of Chris Hurley on simultaneous, multiple and parallel provenance in recordkeeping and co-creation,³⁸ draws on insights from

³⁵ Anne Gilliland, "Permeable Binaries, Societal Grand Challenges, and the Roles of the Twenty-First Century Archival and Recordkeeping Profession" (Paper presented at ARANZ 2015, Auckland, New Zealand).

³⁶ Evans et al., "Self-determination", 347; referencing Frank Upward, "Structuring the Records Continuum: Part One," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24, no. 2 (Nov 1996): 268-85; Frank Upward, "Structuring the Records Continuum: Part Two Structuration Theory and Recordkeeping," *Archives and Manuscripts* 25, no. 1 (1997): 10-35; and Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science*, 13, nos. 2-3 (2013): 95–120.

³⁷ Evans et al., "Self-determination", 337.

³⁸ Hurley, "Problems with Provenance (1)" and "Problems with Provenance (2)."

Ketelaar,³⁹ and is inspired by the vision of Australian Indigenous Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda.⁴⁰ They support:

...a broader spectrum of rights, responsibilities and obligations relating to appraisal, description, management, accessibility, and use of records in and through spacetime. And it brings the multiple contexts and perspectives of the repositioned subjects and those directly impacted by the records into play in decision making – about what records to create and keep; what records are of continuing value; what metadata needs to be captured to document their multiple contexts; whose rights need to be taken into account in determining disclosure, access, and use policies; and what perspectives need to be addressed in access pathways.⁴¹

Significantly, the Continuum constructs of multiple agency in records underpin Gilliland and McKemmish's evolving suite of rights in records.⁴² The proposed rights and their guiding principles are based on acknowledgement of, and respect for, all those who are involved or implicated in records, archiving and recordkeeping processes:

We argue that these rights could inform ethical and pluralized recordkeeping and archiving in the institutionalized and often transnational recordkeeping settings with which victims and survivors inevitably have to engage to access "official" records, as well as in other kinds of records and memory environments, particularly if driven by a 21st century professional ethos. We focus in particular on approaches to appraisal, description and access as defined in the records continuum, and how they might better support the central role that archives need to play in human rights, social justice and post-conflict contexts.⁴³

The overall aims of the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program are framed by continuum consciousness and pluralist Records Continuum concepts which support co-designing integrated recordkeeping and archival frameworks in the third

³⁹ Ketelaar, "Sharing" and "Access."

⁴⁰ Mick Gooda, "The Practical Power of Human Rights: How International Human Rights Standards Can Inform Archival and Recordkeeping Practices." *Archival Science* 12, no. 2 (2012): 141-150.

⁴¹ McKemmish, "Recordkeeping in the Continuum", np.

⁴² Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "The Role of Participatory Archives in Furthering Human Rights, Reconciliation and Recovery. *Atlanti: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice* 24 (2014): 79–88; Anne Gilliland, "Acknowledging, Respecting, Enfranchising, Liberating and Protecting: A Platform for Radical Archival Description" (Paper presented at the Radical Archives Conference, 2014).

⁴³ Gilliland and McKemmish, "Rights in Records," 359.

and fourth dimensions before records are co-created and captured in the first and second dimensions. Such approaches are based on the premise that if archiving and recordkeeping infrastructure is to enable social justice and facilitate social inclusion, health and well-being for those who experience childhood Out-of-Home Care, then they need to support archival autonomy, multiple agency in the formation of records and archives, and an associated suite of rights in records for children in Care and their adult selves. Coupled with this is the aim to explore agency now and into the future in historical representations, narratives and dialogues, particularly in support of historical justice and reconciliation at individual, community and societal levels.

For example, the specific aims of the *Connecting the Disconnected Future* Fellowship and the *Rights in Records by Design* project are driven by a recognition of the moral and ethical imperative for archiving and recordkeeping infrastructure to support human rights, social justice and redress. This means investigating frameworks, processes and systems that work in the interests of those who have been shown to be damaged by systemic failures in archiving and recordkeeping in Out-of-Home Care regimes.

Critique

Critical approaches to archiving and recordkeeping involve theoretical, professional, moral and ethical critiques of the design, development, implementation and impacts of research and practice. The aim of such robust and rigorous challenging of archiving and recordkeeping status quos is to reveal if and how they support what Orlikowski and Baroudi call “deep-seated, structural contradictions within social systems” and/or hamper social and political reform.⁴⁴

The projects in the *Archives and Rights of the Child* program are based on a critical analysis of the systemic failings of archiving and recordkeeping systems. These have been repeatedly documented in testimonies and reports from a range of inquiries in local, national and international contexts. This includes state Ombudsman and Auditor’s reports, Australian state and federal Parliamentary Inquiries, Royal Commissions, similar inquiries in places like Ireland and the UK, research findings, and the advocacy of Care Leavers.⁴⁵ This evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that

⁴⁴ Wanda J. Orlikowski and Jack J. Baroudi, “Studying Information Technology in Organizations: Research Approaches and Assumptions,” *Information Systems Research* 2, no. 1 (1991): 6.

⁴⁵ Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs. *Inquiry into Child Migration* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001); *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on Child Migration* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001); *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004); *Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited: Report on the progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009); Victorian Auditor General. *Residential Care Services for Children* (Melbourne: Victorian Auditor-General’s Office, 2014); Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce. *Wilam Naling ... Knowing Who*

compliance with the United Nations Conventions on human rights and the rights of the child is hampered rather than facilitated by extant archiving and recordkeeping frameworks. It is clear that these frameworks and systems were built for previous eras of child protection and welfare that put the rights of organizations, institutions and governments providing and responsible for these services ahead of those of the child or young person. Embedded in the design of past and current systems are the constructs and values of a different paradigm of space and time wherein records are considered as static 'end-products', and archives as stand-alone collections of 'relics'. Additionally, such designs have been constrained by the legacy of the limited possibilities of pre-digital archival and recordkeeping technologies. The result is often poor quality or negligent recordkeeping that takes no account of the archiving and recordkeeping needs of children and young people in Care or the lifelong needs of their adult selves.⁴⁶

The suite of research projects in the *Archives and Rights of the Child* program seeks to address the systemic problems identified in this critical analysis through research that supports the transformation of recordkeeping frameworks, processes and systems as outlined in the next section.

Transformative Action

Myers and Klein characterize critical approaches to research in information systems as motivated by a desire to engender social, political and technological transformations to overcome disadvantage, exploitation, disempowerment, domination and disenfranchisement.⁴⁷ In the archiving and recordkeeping field, this involves acknowledging and interrogating the roles that archiving and recordkeeping research and practice play in the exercise and abuse of power and privilege in society. Beyond this, critical approaches involve addressing the recordkeeping and archiving

You Are...: Improving Access to Records of the Stolen Generations, A Report to the Victorian Government (Melbourne: Department for Victorian Communities, 2006); Victorian Ombudsman. Investigation into the Storage and Management of Ward Records by the Department of Human Services (Melbourne: Victorian Ombudsman, 2012).

⁴⁶ Wilson and Golding, "Latent Scrutiny"; C. Humphreys, and M. Kertesz, "Making Records Meaningful: Creating an Identity Resource for Young People in Care." *Australian Social Work* 68, no. 4 (2015): 497–514; Royal Commission, "Inquiries"; Gavan McCarthy, Shurlee Swain and Cate O'Neill, eds., "Archives, Identity and Survivors of Out-of-Home Care." Special issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*, 40, no. 1 (2012); Cate O'Neill, "Accessing the Records of the Forgotten Australians: Learning from the Human Rights Context to Improve Archival Practices and Restorative Justice." Presented at the International Council on Archives Congress 2012; CLAN, *Struggling to Keep It Together a National Survey About Older Care Leavers Who Were in Australia's Orphanages, Children's Homes, Foster Care and Other Institutions*. Sydney: Care Leavers Australia Network, 2011; Munro, "The Munro Review."

⁴⁷ M. D. Myers and H.K. Klein, "A Set of Principles for Conducting Critical Research in Information Systems." *MIS Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2011): 17–36.

aspects of significant social and political issues and acting to enable archiving and recordkeeping to better support social and political transformations.

To this end, a number of projects in the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program involve the creative use of digital and networking technologies to serve those in “most immediate and urgent need for responsive usable spaces and systems for safeguarding and accessing records related to themselves or otherwise affecting their lives and well-being”.⁴⁸ A key aim is to design systems to encompass sophisticated and clever recordkeeping analytics, facilitate interactions, be alert to opportunities and failings, and enable those using them to achieve knowledge generation and personal utility beyond simple data entry and retrieval.⁴⁹

The *Connecting the Disconnected* project is pioneering a participatory methodology for designing integrated recordkeeping and archival systems that address the identity, memory and accountability needs of those who have experienced childhood Out-of-Home Care. The aim is to harness new digital and networking capabilities, rich recordkeeping metadata, and the expertise of impacted communities in order to develop systems configured around community information, self-knowledge and memory needs. This research aims to transform existing fragmented evidence and memory management systems into sustainable information infrastructure that better recognizes, respects, and protects human rights.

The *Transforming Recordkeeping Systems Design for Interoperability* doctoral project is investigating the design of archival systems as infrastructure for digital equality, exploring the feasibility of a networked approach to archival system design that supports stakeholder rights in records across multiple-systems. It takes a design-science approach to investigate the design of a network-based archival system that addresses the gap between stakeholder needs and contemporary archival service delivery. This approach concerns the development and evaluation of an articulation of concrete system requirements; design artefacts such as new recordkeeping process and data models; and a prototype network-oriented recordkeeping system. With the capability to interconnect archival systems and enable appropriate access to records by all stakeholders, record-holding organizations will be able to meet their ethical and legal responsibilities to the community.

The *Rights in Records by Design* project draws on these two projects and aims to:

- Model the lifelong recordkeeping needs of children and young people in out-of-home Care and Care Leavers as a complex adaptive network/information ecology;
- Explore mechanisms for enabling and supporting agency in the creation, capture, management and use of records within this model;

⁴⁸ Gilliland, “Permeable Binaries”, np.

⁴⁹ Joanne Evans, “Reflections on the Promise and Pitfalls in Reinventing Recordkeeping Metadata.” *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 2 (2014): 175–77.

- Design an innovative and adaptive interoperability framework with supporting policies, protocols and tools in support of this model;
- Investigate the innovative use of digital analytics and information visualization in interfaces and system interactions; and
- Define governance, accountability, monitoring and auditing requirements.

The desired transformative outcome from this project is a model of a Lifelong Living Archive for the Child, a safe and secure keeping place, populated by children and young people themselves and by their care givers, social workers, teachers, health professionals, communities and families, and by their adult selves. Project researchers imagine a secured, distributed, networked system housing vital evidence of a child's (and later their adult selves') identity, life events and experiences, accessible throughout their life. It would interoperate as necessary with a range of organizational systems in a way that lightens rather than adds to bureaucratic burdens. It would also encompass sophisticated analytic capabilities, respectful of privacy considerations, to enable smart monitoring of the official recordkeeping it is expected to encompass and alert those responsible to gaps, omissions, and circumstances which may require their attention.

The *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program aims to complement, and connect with the work within the Care Leaver community calling for and redefining power relations in archival and recordkeeping frameworks as part of their long running campaign for historical justice. Their advocacy and activism has resulted in the many inquiries, apologies, legislative, and public policy reforms as well as critical research which presents alternate spacetime readings of Care records from the perspective of the 'subject' of the record.⁵⁰ Care Leaver advocate and lobbyist, Frank Golding, has also recently developed *A Charter of Rights to Childhood Records* as a tool to facilitate the redesign of archival access systems, drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Records Continuum participatory archiving and rights in records discourse.⁵¹

A child-centred model of Out of Home Care needs recordkeeping and archiving to deliver both micro- and macro- accountability, i.e. immediate action for individuals based on documentary evidence, reporting and action at aggregate levels for operational quality assurance, governance and oversight, and meeting current and long-term needs relating to identity and memory. As predicted by the Records Continuum Model's imperative for *a-priori* design, these cannot be just incrementally added onto existing infrastructures within existing frameworks.⁵²

⁵⁰ Wilson and Golding, "Latent Scrutiny."

⁵¹ F. A. Golding, *Charter of Rights to Childhood Records*, accessed December 7, 2015.

⁵² Commission for Children and Young People. "...as a good parent would..." Inquiry into the adequacy of residential care services to Victorian children and young people who have been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care (Melbourne: Commission for Children and Young People, 2015); Evans et al., "Self-determination"; Gilliland and McKemmish, "Rights in Records"; Melissa Downing, Michael

Participatory Approaches to Archiving and Recordkeeping Research and Practice

Participatory, reflexive models, and methods are crucial to critical approaches to archiving and recordkeeping research and practice in community settings. They also facilitate unravelling the complex challenges associated with the double hermeneutic⁵³ spiral of simultaneously applying critical, participatory approaches to both designing and doing action research and translating it into practice.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Myers and Klein posit that a critical approach in the information systems field has the potential to enrich interventionist methodologies like action and co-design science research.⁵⁵ In the archiving and recordkeeping field, continuum research is contributing to the emergence of archiving and recordkeeping equivalents, such as participatory archiving research and practice, inclusive research design, and the co-design of archiving and recordkeeping frameworks, systems and infrastructure. Evolving records continuum theory and models provide the conceptual frames of reference and tools for analyzing and transforming practice, and are in turn enriched by that engagement.

Jones, Cathy Humphreys, Gavan McCarthy, Cate O'Neill, and Rachel Tropea, "An Educative Intervention: Assisting in the Self-assessment of Archival Practice in 12 Community Service Organisations." *Archives and Manuscripts* 41, no. 2 (2013): 116–28; Cate O'Neill, Vlad Selakovic and Rachel Tropea, "Access to Records for People Who Were in Out-of-Home Care: Moving Beyond "third Dimension" Archival Practice." *Archives and Manuscripts* 40, no. 1 (2012): 29–41.

⁵³ Coined by Giddens, the term "the double hermeneutic" refers to the "mutual interpretative interplay between social science and those whose activities compose its subject matter": Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, xxxii. Schauder highlights the "mind bending" aspect of the double hermeneutic involved in research in the information meta-disciplines: "what is studied – information phenomena – are in essence the same as how they are studied – the 'tools' used to study them," D. Schauder, "Seven Questions for Information Management and Systems Researchers," in *Research Methods for Students, Academics and Professionals: Information Management and Systems* ed. Kirsty Williamson, (Wagga Wagga: Centre for Information Studies, 2002), 307-8. While the construct of the Archive is itself an object of study, it provides the evidence for the study of other phenomena. In community settings, another manifestation of the double hermeneutic emerges. Ketelaar has depicted every community as a *community of memory* wherein collective identity is linked to a community recognizing itself "through its memory of a common past ... To be a community, family, a religious community, a profession involves an embeddedness in its past and, consequently, in the memory texts [in any form, written, oral, as well as physical] through which that past is mediated," Ketelaar, "Sharing", 44. See also Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar. "Communities of Memory': Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas." *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 2 (2005): 146-75.

⁵⁴ Sue McKemmish, Frada Burstein, Rosetta Manaszewicz, Julie Fisher, and Joanne Evans, "Inclusive Research Design." in *Working with Communities: Community Partnership Research in Information Technology, Management and Systems*, Special Issue of *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 7 (2012): 1106.

⁵⁵ Myers and Klein, "A Set of Principles."

Participatory research and practice are closely associated with, and share some of the characteristics of, emerging critical approaches to archiving and recordkeeping.

Participatory Research

In recent years, records continuum researchers have engaged in a range of transdisciplinary projects in partnership with communities – including communities of practice. One outcome from these projects has been the advancement of inclusive approaches to research design, as a significant aspect of participatory research.⁵⁶ These advances have drawn on participatory action research and community-centered research in disciplines where there has been a longer established tradition of this type of study.⁵⁷ Key differences with other research methodologies relate to the handling of agency, power, research drivers, reflexivity and impact. Participatory research is underpinned by what Reason and Bradbury refer to as a fundamentally different way of understanding the nature of inquiry, moving beyond simple differences in “methodological niceties”,⁵⁸ to an epistemology of inclusive research.

In participatory research, particularly within community settings, ways in which those involved can be active agents in every stage of the research are sought. The aim is to bring together community participants, other stakeholders and academic researchers as equal partners, and for community expertise, knowledge, perspectives, values, and needs to be the driving force. This has a strong resonance with continuum ideas about multiple agency in records and related constructs of participatory recordkeeping and archiving. Reflexivity is a crucial component of such research design which aims to be transformative – a vehicle for change in social, health and economic circumstances.

Participatory approaches pioneered in earlier projects are being implemented in the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program. A desired outcome of the *Setting the Record Straight for the Rights of the Child Initiative* and its planned National Summit in May 2017 will be the establishment of partnering relationships between

⁵⁶ Sue McKemish, Rosetta Manaszewicz, Frada Burstein and Julie Fisher. “Consumer Empowerment Through Metadata-Based Information Quality Reporting: The Breast Cancer Knowledge Online Portal.” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60, no. 9 (2009): 1792–807; McKemish and Gilliland, “Archival and Recordkeeping Research.”

⁵⁷ P. Reason and H. Bradbury, *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edition (London: Sage, 2008); R. Stoecker, *Research Methods for Community Change: A Project-Based Approach* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005); S. Kemish and R. McTaggart, “Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere.” in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, 271-330 (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2007), 271-330; B. L. Beacham, Kalucy, E. McIntyre, and F. Thomas, “Collaborative Partnerships in Research.” *Journal Watch: Evidence-Based Policy and Practice Research Bulletin* (April 2004).

⁵⁸ Reason, and Bradbury, *The Sage Handbook*, 4.

researchers and community organizations in identifying and tackling the recordkeeping and archiving challenges for past, present and future Out of Home Care.⁵⁹

The focus of such partnering research relationships would be the iterative, reflexive approaches and processes that can enable academic and community partners to work together to plan, design, and execute research in “a negotiated research space, drawing on philosophical approaches and research paradigms that are conducive to the purposes, needs and values of the community and academy-based partners in the research.”⁶⁰ The aim would be for all participants to play a part in identifying the research problems and the desired outcomes; negotiating rights in the research data and outcomes; participating in the iterative implementation, evaluation, and adaptation of the research design as the research unfolds; and sharing in the dissemination of results. An essential component of this approach is rigorous negotiation and definition of research questions and outcomes. The transformative effects of participatory research flow from both the impact of the outcomes of the research, and the empowering and transformative experience of engaging in such research. The transformative effects of participation might include support for action, advocacy, activism and autonomy.

The empowerment of all participants is a primary, if elusive goal, as it involves breaking down long established power relationships. In this regard, the rhetoric associated with the ideal of participatory research rarely matches the reality. The social constructs, values and power differentials embedded in Western and many other academic traditions; ethics frameworks, constructs of Intellectual Property; ownership and rights in research data/documentation/records and authorship; and funding models serve to disempower, disenfranchise and disadvantage the “subjects” of the research. It is difficult for researchers working in these traditions to successfully challenge these systemic barriers to conducting participatory research, and in particular to re-position research subjects as participatory agents. This constitutes a grand challenge for critical researchers committed to participatory approaches – paralleling the challenge in the archiving and recordkeeping field in relation to agency in records in the archival multiverse.

There are many other challenges for this research such as building long-term relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity in an environment in which funding models and timelines are often more accommodating of “helicopter” research. Negotiating differing value systems and values; ways of knowing; research drivers, expectations and needs; agendas, timelines and priorities; resourcing levels;

⁵⁹ The *Setting the Record Straight: For the Rights of the Child Initiative* has been established in partnership with Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), the Child Migrants Trust, Connecting Home, CREATE Foundation, Federation University’s Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History (CRCAH), Monash University’s Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics (COSI) and the University of Melbourne’s eScholarship Research Centre (ESRC). See <https://rights-records.it.monash.edu/>

⁶⁰ McKemmish et al., “Inclusive Research Design”, 1107-8.

and levels of risk can be difficult and time consuming, particularly when there is a lack of robust processes or gaps in the skill sets of the participants. Particularly problematic is the issue of incommensurability where ontologies, ways of knowing, and constructs of research and participation itself are incompatible.

The projects in the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program implement, where relevant and appropriate, participatory research processes based on the work of McKemmish et al.⁶¹ including:

- Early and explicit application of reflexive processes to support the continuous negotiation and integration of differing and co-evolving values, needs, expectations, expertise, and experience that the different partners bring to the design of the research.;
- Individual and collective reflective processes such as private memo-writing, shared storytelling, discussion and reflection, friendship as research method, and autoethnographic practices;⁶²
- Creation of formal and informal spaces for research conduct and evaluation ‘Learning by doing’ through trial and error, including valuing and learning from the false starts, confusion, and misunderstandings;
- Processes for documenting the interactive experience of working together to design and do the research;
- Consciously grappling with the double hermeneutics involved in the interaction between the inclusive approaches involved in designing the research and in doing the research, between the principles and processes involved in negotiating the research design, and the experience of implementing the research design;
- Making opportunities for the deepening of understanding and experience that comes through interpersonal, cultural, and spiritual connections, as well as processes of mutual disclosure; and
- Processes that consciously and systematically take into account potentially diverse and differing perspectives, epistemologies, values and needs and expectations, and include strategies to deal with incommensurabilities.

⁶¹ McKemmish et al., “Inclusive Research Design”, 1126-8.

⁶² L.M. Tillmann-Healy, “Friendship as Method,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, no. 5 (2003): 729–49; M. Brigg and R. Bleiker, “Autoethnographic International Relations: Exploring the Self as a Source of Knowledge,” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 779–98; L. Anderson, “Analytic Autoethnography,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (2006): 373–95; A.C. Sparkes, “Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections on Criteria in Action,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17, no. 1 (2000): 21–43; S. Wall, “An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5, no. 2 (2006): 146–60.

Participatory Practice

Recent archival literature offers a range of models for participatory approaches to archiving and recordkeeping practice. Of particular relevance to the *Archives and Rights of the Child* program is the one proposed by Gilliland and McKemmish for archives that are central to the promotion of social justice, human rights, reconciliation, and recovery. The model references a new concept of the participatory archive, “created by, for and with multiple communities, according to and respectful of community values, practices, beliefs, and needs” and based on acknowledgement of the rights, responsibilities, perspectives, and needs of the multiple parties involved.⁶³ They put forward principles and approaches for the participatory archive based on continuum re-conceptualizations of agency. Their work is complemented by Iacovino’s recent research on maximizing human rights through participatory archiving.⁶⁴

In Australia, projects, framed by continuum, postcustodial, postcolonial and post-conflict thinking, and diverse ways of knowing, have explored how participatory approaches to practice might better meet the needs of communities and support social justice and human rights agendas. Examples include the Monash Trust and Technology Project that addressed the archiving of oral memory, the relationship between Indigenous communities and government archives and Indigenous rights in records;⁶⁵ the Monash Country Lines Archive of animations of the story lines of Australian Indigenous communities;⁶⁶ and the “Who Am I?” project which explored the positive and negative roles archiving and recordkeeping practices play in constructing identity for people who experienced Out-of-Home Care as children.⁶⁷

⁶³ Gilliland and McKemmish, “Rights in Records”, 355.

⁶⁴ Iacovino, “Shaping and Reshaping.”

⁶⁵ McKemmish et al., “Dis-Trust in the Archive”; Livia Iacovino, “Rethinking Archival, Ethical and Legal Frameworks for Records of Indigenous Australian Communities: A Participant Relationship Model of Rights and Responsibilities,” *Archival Science* 10, no. 4 (2010): 353–372; Sue McKemmish et al., “Resetting Relationships: Archives and Indigenous Human Rights in Australia,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 39 (2011): 107–144.

⁶⁶ J. Bradley and Yanyuwa families, *Singing Saltwater Country* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2010). Virtual heritage modeling, involving three-dimensional (3D) animation and visualization technologies has enormous potential in archival research and practice. This is being demonstrated by a multidisciplinary collaboration between animators, anthropologists, Indigenous scholars and Indigenous communities in the Monash Country Lines Archive project (MCLA, n.d.). The project uses 3-D animations, visualizations, and 3D representations to capture the dynamics of oral storytelling, intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and active learning. It points to how research might employ virtual heritage modeling and 3D animation to explore innovative use of multimedia and social media technologies in living online archives.

⁶⁷ Gavan J. McCarthy, Shurlee Swain and Cate O’Neill, ed., “Archives, Identity and Survivors of Out-of-Home Care.” Special issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*, 40, no. 1 (2012).

Participatory Recordkeeping in Out-of-Home Care

National standards for Out-of-Home Care in Australia and other countries now emphasize the need to put the physical, emotional, spiritual and social health and well-being of children and young people at the center of service provision.⁶⁸ They have also identified the right of the child or young person to have access to a complete and accurate history of their time in Care; plans for their future; their health, education, and other important official records; their family and community connections, memories of key events; and other records which support and nurture their sense of identity, security, and connectedness with the world. Emphasis is also placed on children and young people participating in “decisions that have impact on their lives” including decisions about engagement with contemporaneous recordkeeping and the formation and use of an archive throughout their life. The standards are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁶⁹ one of a suite of conventions that support the 1947 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. One of the Convention’s aims is to change views on the treatment of the child, by respecting children as human beings with a distinct set of rights, not as passive objects of Care and charity. The Convention’s guiding principles include non-discrimination, acting in the best interests of the child, and the right to life, survival and development. It also emphasizes the right of the child to participate in decision-making which impacts on their lives, supported by adequate access to relevant information.

In the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program, the *Transforming Recordkeeping Systems Design for Interoperability* doctoral project has developed a Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model to explicate degrees of agency in recordkeeping as a foundation for the design of interoperable, participatory recordkeeping, and archiving.⁷⁰ And the *Early Childhood Recordkeeping Literacy* doctoral project addresses the need to build archiving and recordkeeping literacy into curricula from early childhood to better equip future generations to exercise agency in the creation, management and use of records and to better understand the impacts records and recordkeeping can have on their lives.

Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinary approaches are crucial to the use of critical approaches to solving these wicked archiving and recordkeeping problems. The concept of transdisciplinarity emerged in the second half of the 20th Century in response to a growing recognition of the complexity of big societal problems and that solving them requires new ideas, methods, and models that transcend disciplinary boundaries. It

⁶⁸ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. *An Outline of National Standards for Out-of-home Care* (Department of Social Services, 2011).

⁶⁹ United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations, 1990.

⁷⁰ Gregory Rolan, “Agency in the Archive: A Model for Participatory Recordkeeping.” *Archival Science*, July 5, 2016. doi:10.1007/s10502-016-9267-7.

has further evolved to encompass the need for the research community to partner outside of the academy in order to develop deep and rich understanding of the problem and solution spaces. Lawrence⁷¹ identifies four characteristics of transdisciplinarity in that it:

1. “Admits and confronts complexity ... and challenges knowledge fragmentation. ... As well as complexity and heterogeneity, this mode of knowledge production is also characterised by its hybrid nature, non-linearity, and reflexivity, transcending any academic disciplinary structure.”
2. “Accepts local contexts and uncertainty. It is context-specific negotiation of knowledge.”
3. “Implies intercommunicative action ... It is a research process that includes the practical reasoning of individuals with the constraining and complex nature of social, organizational and material contexts. ... requires close and continuous collaboration during all phases of a research project or implementation of a project.”
4. “Often action-oriented. It entails making linkages not only across disciplinary boundaries but also between theoretical development and professional practice.”

These characteristics are also intrinsic to Records Continuum thinking, as discussed above. They are necessary for developing rich understandings of the role that records and recordkeeping play throughout people’s lives at individual, community, organizational, and societal levels, and using that understanding to develop better archiving and recordkeeping frameworks, processes, and systems. Records Continuum models have been a useful basis on which to undertake dialog across disciplinary and stakeholder boundaries on the archiving and recordkeeping needs of children who have been in out of home care;⁷² dialog which in turn illuminates and extends core understanding.

The projects in the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program involve researchers in the academy and community from a range of disciplines and fields, including archives and recordkeeping, information technology, art and design, Indigenous studies, human rights, education, social work, and history. As illustrated in Figure 4, they bring the multiple expertise and experience needed to make the breakthroughs critical to solving the complex, multifaceted, and fundamental problems that the program has identified.⁷³

⁷¹ R. J. Lawrence, “Deciphering Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Contributions.” *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 1, no. 1 (December 2010): 125–30.

⁷² Humphreys and Kertesz, “Making Records Meaningful.”

⁷³ National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure Taskforce on Grand Challenges, *Final Report, March 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.nsf.gov/cise/oac/taskforces/TaskForceReport_GrandChallenges.pdf.

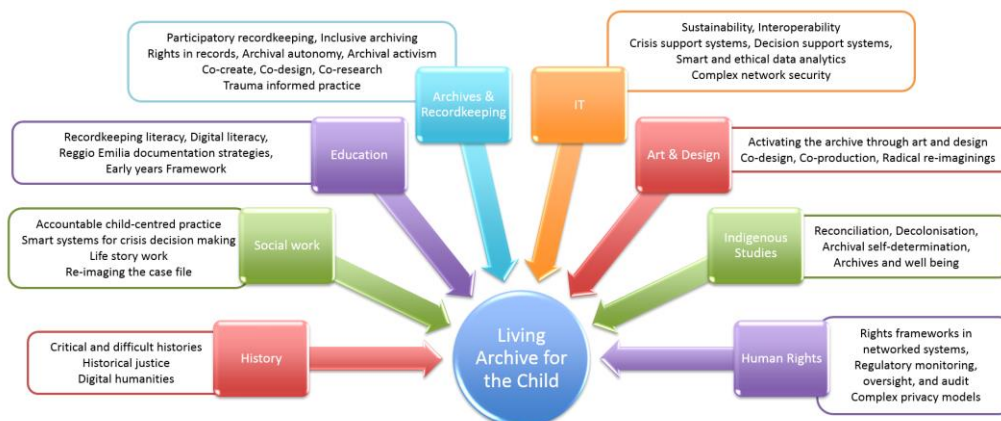


Figure 4. Transdisciplinary perspectives in the Archives and the Rights of the Child Research Program

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have attempted to demonstrate the necessity for, key characteristics of, and methods for a critical approach to archiving and recordkeeping research and practice in order to address societal grand challenges. The ability to tackle such challenges is inextricably linked to public accountability on the one-hand, and a personal sense of identity and connectedness with the world on the other – both of which are underpinned by suitable archiving and recordkeeping frameworks and systems that need to support all involved. However, there is overwhelming evidence that entrenched archiving and recordkeeping frameworks and poor infrastructure impede rather than facilitate such support. A critical posture in research and practice is therefore needed in order to bring about the transformational change that is required to address such challenges.

As a concrete example of such a challenge we introduced the *Archives and the Rights of the Child* program, which addresses the lifelong archival and recordkeeping needs of children caught up in child welfare and protection systems, who experience Out-of-Home Care. In recognition of the manifest need for transformative change in this sector we have explored the research projects which make up this large-scale research program. This paper also describes the ‘double hermeneutic’ approach necessary to ensure that the research itself remains aligned to the critical analysis it conducts of subject matter by addressing issues associated with designing participatory research.

We have shown how continuum theory, and the Records Continuum Model in particular, is employed as a core frame of reference and tool for critical archiving and recordkeeping research. The model can be used to explain and justify a perduring worldview of records and their ongoing entanglement and affect. Interestingly, the double hermeneutic of a critical approach demands the introspection of our own methods and tools. As a result, continuum theory and the various related continuum

models, including the Records Continuum Model, are evolving to keep pace with the changing research and practice paradigms. For example, the multiplicities inherent in recordkeeping can be made more explicit in the models, such as changing the terminology from 'Create' to 'Co-create'. This seemingly minor change, in fact, reverberates around and through the whole model, bringing significant change to its interpretation and application.

Central to this critical research paradigm is its participatory nature that keeps it aligned to the values and morals that underpin equitable archiving and recordkeeping practices, frameworks, and systems. Our participatory approach is inherently transdisciplinary and the research program has sought out a wide variety of partners from various intersecting communities. In seeking a common platform for transformative change, the program researchers, together with research partners, are in the process of facilitating an Australian summit on recordkeeping and the rights of the child. We hope that such a gathering will bring Care Leavers together with practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers from a wide variety of disciplines in order to help set a practical and transformative agenda for change.

The critical approaches to archiving and recordkeeping explored in this paper have implications in other places as evidenced by the close collaborations between Research Continuum researchers and their partner communities and their counterparts in countries that are also grappling with issues relating to child abuse (for example Ireland, Scotland, the Scandinavian countries, and Canada), and the need to embed Indigenous human rights in archiving and recordkeeping (Canada, New Zealand, and the USA).

The difficulty of such endeavors cannot be overestimated given that there is limited evidence of translation of the outcomes of past projects into transformed practice, and many systemic barriers to their implementation. Given the scale of the grand archiving and recordkeeping challenges ahead, manifested in both the complexity of participatory recordkeeping and the deep entrenchment of the existing archival paradigms, frameworks and systems, it is clear that a ground-up re-conceptualization of a new epistemological paradigm is needed. These challenges are indeed wicked, and there is much work to be done.

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