

Archives Speaking for Themselves: Modeling Discourse in Traditional and Community Archives

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BACKGROUND

- This project was developed during my tenure as a HASTAC scholar at Indiana University and intended as a starting point for future ethnographic dissertation research on community music archives
- With the advent of accessible digital repositories and notions of archival democratization, archival scholarship has shifted toward the study of participatory heritage that invites content originators and localized communities to participate in documentation and preservation (Flinn 2007, 2010; Roued-Cunliffe and Copeland 2017)
- Precise definitions of participatory and community archives can be elusive in scholarship due to the diverse nature of archival purposes and foundational characteristics (Flinn 2015), but frameworks from popular music preservation studies argue that archives are found at varying degrees on a continuum of archival practice spanning from community efforts to authorized practices (Baker and Collins 2015)

Works Cited

Baker, Sarah, and Jez Collins. 2015. "Sustaining Popular Music's Material Culture in Community Archives and Museums." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21 (10): 983-96.
Flinn, Andrew. 2007. "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28 (2): 151-76.
———. 2010. "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship? Democratizing Archives and the Production of Knowledge." *Ariadne*, no. 62.
———. 2015. "Community Archives." In *Encyclopedia of Archival Science*, edited by Luciana Duranti and Patricia C. Franks, 145-148. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
Roued-Cunliffe, Henriette, and Andrea Copeland, eds. 2017. *Participatory Heritage*. London: Facet Publishing.

OBJECTIVES

- Find a more precise definition of community archives and their purposes
- Identify differences between larger institutions and community-based cultural heritage archives in the United States and British Isles
- Utilize direct perspectives of archives by using public-facing self-descriptions as data points rather than secondary scholarly descriptions and determinations of purpose

METHODS

Data Collection

- Collected descriptions from different types of cultural heritage archives including community archives and traditional institutional archives
- 54 text samples were collected from archives ranging in purpose, size, and physical location
 - An effort was made to collect archives from varying geographical areas
 - Approximately 37% of the sample focused on archives with specific purposes relating to music, sound, and audiovisual collections

Data Analysis

- Text samples were transformed into plain text format
- MALLET, a tool for topic modeling, was used to distill trends and affinities among the archival self-descriptions
- The program returned 10 topics each comprised of 10 topic words

Introduction to the Archive

St Ives is a beautiful coastal town in the far west of Cornwall renowned for its fishing and mining heritage. It has long been a magnet for artists – and still is.

St Ives Archive is a community archive staffed by volunteers and funded through grants from local business, donations, sales of publications and membership.

The Archive holds a wide range of records relating to the history of St Ives and neighbouring parishes, including an extensive collection of photographs.

If you are coming to research a specific topic, particularly if you are travelling, please make contact in advance so that our volunteers can prepare for your visit. Some of the records are held off-site and will not be available without advance notice.

<http://www.stivesarchive.co.uk/>



<http://westcornwallmethodists.org.uk/carbis-bay-wesley/>

The St Ives Archive

Housed in the Research Centre at the Wesley Methodist Church
St Ives, Cornwall, UK

SAMPLE TOPICS AND TEXTS

Archive provide st digital ives information volunteers books website

Traditional cultural material tradition centre culture social life traditions aspects

Heritage public community local photographs project American people collection future

Archives research mission communities preserve university unique preservation musical record



<https://mapio.net/pic/p-67965734/>

The University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archives

Housed in the UW School of Music
Seattle, Washington, USA

About: The University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archives has been collecting and curating unique ethnographic music recordings, videos and films since 1964. Its holdings of over 25,000 items include field recordings documenting music traditions of all kinds from most areas of the world, concert recordings of visiting musicians, and films and videos of a variety of musical events, as well as several hundred musical instruments. The Archives is also home to the Seattle Sounds Archiving and Preservation Project (SSAPP), a growing collection of local and regional music. The Archives serves the students and faculty in the UW Ethnomusicology Program, the broader university community, Pacific Northwest tribes, and an international clientele of musicians, students, and teachers.

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/music/ethnomusicology/archives>

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

- Some trends remain consistent with already established scholarly concepts of the community archive
 - E.g., a focus on the local, volunteer work force
- Others show that traditional institutional archives serve missions and audiences similar to those of community archives
 - E.g., connections to location and place, connections to genre, connections to identity, general archival activities of collection, preservation, and dissemination through access and research

Simplified, these results show that although mission is often the same, methods for achieving that mission tend to differ between archives

LIMITATIONS & NEXT STEPS

Limitations

- Text issues
 - Problems with formatting text and discrepancies between text lengths may have contributed to data analysis issues
 - Archives using different terminology to describe similar activities and concepts may account for discrepancies in coherent models
- Sample issues
 - Analysis of public-facing discourse relied on archival online presence
 - Topical skew towards music archives as indicative of imbalanced sample proportions

Next Steps

- Continued broadening of sample to decrease skewed data
- Examination of sub-categories of traditional and community archives
- Creation of a digital resource to explore the trends found in analysis