ARCHIWA SPOŁECZNE

Community archives in the UK: an overview

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Abstract

This paper will survey the state of the art of community archives in the UK. As this is potentially a wide-ranging frame of reference special attention will be paid to community archives created by the Digital Humanities and Oral History communities. Two case studies will be examined, that of the 'Dig Where We Stand' community archives project (http://tinyurl.com/ktc3z5j) and the Hidden Histories project (http://hiddenhistories.omeka.net/). As well as exploring questions about the multifaceted interrelationships that exist between community and national archives, this paper will reflect on a host of challenges and benefits to be gained, for both academics and communities, at the interface of such research and community-based practices.

Introduction, or the use of the term 'community Archive' in the UK

In the UK, the term 'community archive' is one that has now gained a good deal of acceptance[1]. Nevertheless, the term is a complex one that can be used to refer to a variety of projects. There are many reasons for this. For example, the term 'community' has been used, within and without the heritage sector, in ways that belie the breadth of its semantic reach. Indeed, Waterton and Smith have elegantly argued that it has become an "an epistemological obstacle … [it] has all too easily become an explanation or solution 'rather than something to be explained'"[2]. The use of the term archive has also proved problematic; for example, its use in this context has occasioned debate about, among other things, whether the collections gathered by community archive groups are archives proper. However, objections of this kind have become less common in recent years[3].

The term 'community archive' is both used by, and can be applied to, a wide range of projects that often address address topics that have been either omitted or excluded from mainstream archival collections[4]. Accordingly, they may well have a political and activist agenda[5]. Their

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[1] A. Flinn, *Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges*, Journal of the Society of Archivists 28, no. 2 (October 2007): pp. 151–76: 152-3.

[2] E. Waterton, and L. Smith. *The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage*, International Journal of Heritage Studies 16, no. 1–2 (January 2010): pp. 4–15: 5.

[3] A. Gilliland, Flinn, A. (2013) *Community Archives: What are we really talking about?*, Keynote address, Nexus, Confluence, and Difference: Community Archives meets Community Informatics: Prato CIRN Conference Oct 28-30 2013, Editors: Larry Stillman, Amalia Sabiescu, Nemanja Memarovic, Centre for Community Networking Research, Centre for Social Informatics, Monash University. Pp. 1-23: 3–4.

[4] A number of publications mention this aspect of community archives. See for example, Flinn 2007 op. cit.; M. Stevens, A. Flinn, & E. Shepherd, 2010. *New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on*. International Journal of Heritage Studies, 16(1-2), pp. 59–76: 60-61.

[5] See, for example, A. Flinn, Archival Activism: Independent and Community-Led Archives, *Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions. InterActions: UCLA* Journal of Education and Information Studies 7, no. 2 (2011). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9pt2490x.pdf. ; A. Flinn, A., M. Stevens (2009). *It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri" . Telling Our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the United Kingdom, Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream*. J. Bastian, B.

archives may comprise one or more categories of artefacts, such as documents and images, oral history recordings, ephemera, and material objects. A community archive may be formally based within or (more commonly, it seems) without the mainstream GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector. Stevens et al. argue that the location of the archive should not be used to evaluate their designation[6]. Indeed, community archives may collaborate with GLAM institutions at various, and, in some cases, non-contiguous points in their lifecycle, as will be discussed below.

In the many definitions of 'community archives' that are found in the literature it is their diversity, above all else, that tends to be emphasized. The 'vision document' of the Community and Archives Heritage Group, for example, states:

Community archives and heritage initiatives come in many different forms (large or small, semi-professional or entirely voluntary, long-established or very recent, in partnership with heritage professionals or entirely independent) and seek to document the history of all manner of local, occupational, ethnic, faith and other diverse communities[7].

Indeed, it should be noted that some projects that the term 'community archive' might reasonably be applied to prefer not to use this term, examples of such projects include "community heritage projects, local history societies, and oral history projects"[8]. An expanded term is also used by 'Community Archive Wales', namely 'digital community archives', which it defines as:

Alexander, (eds.) *Community Archives. The shaping of memory*. London: Facet Publishing (2009) pp 3-28.

[6] Stevens et al. 2010 op cit, p.60)

[7] CAHG. *Community Archives & Heritage Group: Our Vision*, 2009. http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/new-contributions-3/history-and-purpose.

[8] Flinn, *Community Histories* 2007 p. 154; see also D. Mander, *Special, local and about us: the development of community archives in Britain*. J. Bastian, B. Alexander (eds.) *Community Archives. The shaping of memory*. London: Facet Publishing (2009) pp 29-46.

Digital community archives are collections of material in private hands that have been digitised and interpreted by community groups, enabling the communities to present their own history in their own words[9].

Mapping and modelling

In light of this diversity it is difficult, and perhaps unwise (for fear it might have a stifling effect) to speak in the UK context of an overarching or dominant model for community archives. Yet, in the academic and policy literature one especially characteristic criterion is often emphasised: the role of the community in the archive. In our view, the defining characteristic of a community archive is not its physical location, inside or outside of formal repositories, but rather the active and ongoing involvement of members of the source community in documenting and making accessible their history *on their own terms* [emphasis theirs][10].

It is also notable that this criterion has been used to guide a number of the mapping exercises that have taken place since 2006 (when a report commissioned by CADH estimated that there were then more than 3000 community archives in the UK[11]) For example, the 'Community Archives Landscape Research' report for MLA and CADG states:

"This definition [of community archives] is based upon that employed by the Community Archives Development Group and the Heritage Lottery Fund and allowed us to look at community archives that are truly owned, developed and managed by community groups and those that were created by community groups as part of project work by other organisations, and which may or not be maintained and developed by those other organisations in the longer term"[12].

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[9] Community Archives Wales. "Community Archives Wales," n.d. http://www.ourwales.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=en-GB.

[10] Stevens et al. *New frameworks*, 2010, p. 60.

[11] Flinn, *Community Histories*, 2007. p. 164.

[12] K. Norgrove, S. Mirchandani, and J. Goddard. *Community Archives Landscape Research. A Report for MLA and CADG*, 2008. pp. 3–4

This criterion was also taken into account in the *Community archives and the sustainable communities agenda report*,[13] which, among other things, looked at the 'number and nature of community archive projects' in the Pennine Lancashire and Corby areas of the UK[14]. The most recent (and ongoing) attempt to map the community archive sector is the online register of archives that is maintained and promoted by the Community Archives and Heritage Group, feely accessible at http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/archives. Here again the active role of the community is emphasised: "A common theme in this diversity is that the initiative, impetus and intellectual ownership of these projects usually resides with members of these communities"[15]. Nevertheless, Gilland et al. have written of the attention this issue has been given by the CAHG committee when they debated whether community involvement necessitated the active participation of more than one member of the community in the running of the archive while others argued that a largely personal collection might properly be considered a community archive if it was open to the community who actively engaged with and exhibited a sense of ownership over the collection and the stories it told. The committee agreed that it was impossible to narrowly define what community participation might look like in every instance[16].

At the time of writing, the register[17] that CAHG has compiled includes some 566 archives in total, which breaks down as 500 from England, 6 from the Republic of Ireland, 16 from Northern Ireland, 16 from Scotland and 22 from Wales. Based on the keywords assigned to those projects[18] the largest number of declared projects cover the topic of Trade

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http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111013135435/http:/research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?pubid=950
[13] J. Consultants. *Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda*. *MLA, London*, 2009.
[14] Ibid p. 41-51.
[15] CAHG. *Community Archives & Heritage Group: Our Vision*, 2009.
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/new-contributions-3/history-and-purpose
[16] Gilliland & Flinn, *Community archives*, 2013 p. 7.
[17] CAHG. *Archives*. Accessed March 2, 2015
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/archives.
[18] Keywords are assigned by CAHG staff, I presume. I was not able to find an explanation of the source of keywords on the CAHG site but notice that the form that can be used to submit details of archives for consideration of inclusion does not include a keyword field.

and Industry (60), followed by rural (27) and minority and ethnic communities (32). Archives may be added to the site following registration by the user, which is free. However listing on the registry is not unmediated and the website administer makes a final decision as to whether a given group can be deemed a community archive or not, with 'inclusiveness and self-definition being the starting point but not the only criteria'[19].

Awareness and support

Flinn has written of how an increased awareness of community archives has existed since the year 2000. Increased awareness was detectable not only in the GLAM sector but by professional bodies, funders and government policy makers too. This, in turn, gave rise to a host of initiatives which have sought to not only further the work of such projects, but to understand, and where appropriate directly engage them. For example, he mentions the role played by the Community Access to Archives project (2003-2004), the establishment of the Community Archives Development Group (CADG) and reports such as the "Impact of Community Archives" (CADG 2007) and the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) commissioned Community Archives and the Sustainable Communities Agenda (Jura 2009) …A sign of the extent to which professional recognition of the status of community-based archives and community-based archivists had evolved beyond the traditional indifference and disparagement was the incorporation in 2012 of CAHG as a special interest group within the Archives and Records Association (ARA), the recently re-organised professional body[20]. We will now look at some examples of the kinds of support that community archives in the UK can avail themselves of, should they wish to do so.

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[19] Gilliland & Flinn, *Community archives*, 2013 p. 5.
[20] Ibid pp. 6-7.

Networking and advocacy

The Community Archives and Heritage Group is an important group that supports and promotes community archives in Ireland as well as the UK. In their vision statement they make clear that they not only view their role as offering a 'forum' and a 'collective voice' but that they also:

[Act] as a point of contact between community archive activists and other community development practitioners and cultural heritage professionals (including librarians, archivists and museum curators) to enable, where appropriate, mutually beneficial relationships[21].

They facilitate this in a number of ways, for example, through face to face meetings and annual conferences (reports of the conferences can be read on their website). Their twitter feed @CArchives attracts a notable amount of engagement with more than 500 followers. As well as the register of Archives described above the group has also published a number of resources to guide both new and established community archive groups, for example, documents like 'Starting a community archive – a checklist'[22] and 'Cataloguing guidelines for community archives'[23]. Arguably signalling the growing significance of community archives sector, as well as the group itself, in 2011 the organisation moved from being run on an informal basis to adopting a constitution[24].

Various examples of the way they have fostered the 'mutually beneficial relationships' referred to above can also be pointed to. For example, since 2005 they have been affiliated to the National Council on Archives.[25] In a very practical way it should also be noted that their work is

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[21] CAHG. *Community Archives & Heritage Group: Our Vision*, 2009.
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/new-contributions-3/history-and-purpose
[22] CAHG. *Starting up a Community Archive - a Check List*, 2012.
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/guideline-check-list
[23] CAHG. *Cataloguing Guidelines for Community Archives*, 2009.
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/cataloguing_guidelines
[24] CAHG. *About the Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG),* 2011.
http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/new-contributions-3/history-and-purpose
[25] NCA. [ARCHIVED CONTENT] NCA: *The National Council on Archives :: About NCA › Affiliated Groups,* n.d.
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110909164408/http://nca.org.uk/about_nca/affiliated_groups/

acknowledged and, where appropriate, referred to by mainstream archives, such as the National Archive (the official archive of the UK see http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/). For example, documents such as 'Collection development tools and guidance'[26] point readers to this CAHG directory as well as other documents and projects relevant to the community, for example, the recently launched 'Community Archive accreditation scheme'. This may seem like a very obvious point to make, and indeed we might simply expect bodies like the National Archives to point to the work of community archives. However, it is notable that in the document under discussion that the question 'Isn't this peripheral to core work?'[27] is addressed and sensitively answered, indicating that this is still a concern for some who work in mainstream archives. More direct ways that the National Archive has been engaging with the community archive sector for some time now can also be seen. For example, together with West Yorkshire Archives Service, Hackney Archives Department, the National Archives of Scotland, the National Council on Archives, the National Library of Wales, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and Commanet they funded the Community Access to Archives Project (CAAP). The project sought to understand interactions between mainstream archives and community archives and drew especially on case studies drawn the areas of Hackney and West Yorkshire[28]. One of its most notable outputs, its Best Practice Model "envisaged two possible frameworks for engagement between the two sectors: a 'partnership development' and a 'project development' model, the former based on developing a relationship and the latter on taking this through to a discrete outcome".[29] While CAHG can be seen as an example of a national and bilateral (in the context of Ireland and the UK) network of community archives, examples of more local organizations can also be noticed. For

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[26] The National Archives. *Collection Development Tools and Guidance*, 2011.
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/collection-development-tools-and-guidance.pdf
[27] The National Archives. *Collection development*, 2011 p. 26.
[28] F. Midgley, *Best Oractice Model for Community Archives*, 2005.
https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=archives-nra;83e23f1.05
[29] Stevens et al. *New frameworks* 2010, p .61.

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example, the *Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network*[30] represents the county of Cambridgeshire and, at the time of writing, includes 32 groups from that area. From their website it seems that their mission is primarily to act as portal for access to community archives content related to their geographical area. Another example is provided by 'Community Archives Wales',[31] which began working with eleven projects in Wales to help them create digital community archives. Since this work was completed other projects shared their work via the site, which has since grown.

Funding

An organization that provides dedicated funding for the cultural heritage sector is the UK Heritage Lottery fund. They provide funding for "not-for-profit organisations and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations … We expect our funding to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities and describe how we will achieve this through a set of outcomes"[32]. Between April 1994 and March 2011, it awarded over £281 million to over 1,050 archive and library projects,[33] and a number of these were community archive projects. Examples of the projects it has funded include the Canvey Island community archive whose aim "to gather memories as well as copying photographs and other documents that relate to the history of the Island. Canvey residents are being asked to share their memories and photographs of life on the island"[34] And the Fielding and Platt community archive project, which

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[30] *Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network*. "CCAN," n.d. http://www.ccan.co.uk/
[31] Community Archives Wales. *Community Archives Wales*, n.d. http://www.ourwales.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=en-GB
[32] Heritage Lottery Fund, 2014. *What we fund - Heritage Lottery Fund.* Available at: http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/Pages/whatwefund.aspx#.VCfeUxYWP6c [Accessed September 28, 2014].
[33] National Archives. *Lottery Funding*, n.d. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/lottery.htm
[34] Canvey Island Archive. *About Us*, n.d. http://www.canveyisland.org/category/about

aimed to "gather and share the spoken memories of people who worked for or lived near the company [Fielding and Platt] whose former site … lies under what is now Gloucester Quays Shopping Centre"[35]. Their UK Heritage Lottery's strategic vision for the period 2013-2018 is available online[36].

Other UK funding bodies in the UK have run programmes relevant to the sector (note however that wholly voluntary groups without institutional affiliations and employment contracts may not be eligible to apply for such funds). For example, JISC ran in 2010 a programme called 'Developing community content' and projects with community archive dimensions were among those funded[37]. Bodies such as the Arts and Humanities research council (ARCH) have also awarded funds for research on community archives, for example, the 'Community archives and identities: documenting and sustaining community heritage' project that was carried out in UCL between 2008-9[38].

Interactions with the mainstream

A number of publications have sought to understand, document or give guidance on aspects of the multifaceted interactions that can take place between community archives, mainstream organisations and the records they manage and create[39]. Nevertheless, it should not be

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[35] Gloucestershire Archives. *Fielding and Platt Community Archive Project Gains Heritage Lottery Fund Support - Gloucestershire County Council*, 2012. http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/article/109601/Fielding-and-Platt-Community-Archive-Project-gains-Heritage-Lottery-Fund-Support

[36] Heritage Lottery Fund. *Heritage Lottery Fund Strategic Framework 2013–2018: A Lasting Difference for Heritage and People*, 2012. http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/Documents/HLFStrategicFramework_2013to2018.pdf

[37] See JISC, 2013. *Mass observation communities online (MOCO)*. Available at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/communitycontent/massobservation.aspx [Accessed September 28, 2014].

[38] A. Flinn, *Community Archives and Identities: Documenting and Sustaining Community Heritage*, n.d. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/dis/icarus/projects/community-archives/index.

[39] J. Consultants *Community archives* 2009; Norgrove *Community archives landscape* 2008; Flinn & Stevens *It is no* 2009; Stevens et al. *New frameworks* 2010; J. A. Bastian & B. Alexander. eds., 2009. *Community archives: the shaping of memory*, London: Facet;

assumed that interactions between the community archive and mainstream bodies are inevitable or that the presence (or absence) of such interactions can be taken as indicators for the likely success of the community archive[40]. Where interactions do take place between community archives and the mainstream it is clear that they are complex and varied in nature. Furthermore they do not tend to be:

either formal or systematic. This is true whether the support comes from cultural/heritage body or from a community development organisation. There is no evidence of a programme of activity from any national body designed specifically to target community archives, through regional networks and local contacts over the medium term. There are very few examples of nationally or regionally led community heritage programmes, such as English Heritage's Outreach Programme. Due to resource constraints, the support of even MLA's Regional Agencies has tended to focus on pump priming exemplar projects for their model value, rather than anything comprehensive. Support is generally fragmented and amorphous … It would be wrong to assume that this fragmentation means that support is ineffective. What it actually does is mirror what is happening on the ground and is, perhaps, inevitable given the sporadic way in which community archives develop and flourish[41].

A comprehensive summary of the mainstream organizations that community archives tend to interact with is given in the above cited report. There it is noted that support for such projects often comes from museums, archives and libraries because they are also concerned with cultural heritage collections. Nevertheless, it is emphasized "because the majority of the support comes from the local authority sector, they are not always trusted Organisations"[42]. Indeed, the sometimes fraught relationship that can exist between the mainstream and community archive groups is something that is often emphasised in the literature. For example:

V. Gray, 2008. *Who's that Knocking on Our Door? Archives, Outreach and Community*. Journal of the Society of Archivists, 29(1), pp. 1–8.

[40] Norgrove et al. *Community archives landscape*, 2008 p. 4 cf. p. 9.

[41] Ibid. p. 20.

[42] Ibid. p. 9.

While there are now a range of frameworks for collaboration between mainstream and community archives, many community archives remain suspicious of the mainstream agenda and deeply committed to preserving their autonomy. This wariness is rooted in long and bitter experiences of exploitation and discrimination and, in some cases, an acute awareness of the ways in which colonial domination was enforced through the appropriation and accumulation of the material culture of subordinated peoples." [43]

Further evidence of this can be noticed in the careful advice that, for example, the National Archive include in relevant documentation for Archivists who will work with this sector:

Managing relationships with potential depositors has to be a critical part of this work. To descend on a community looking to "take away its records" can lead to a long term breakdown of relationships, where a partnership approach to documenting local life might have proved successful. Instead community-based projects with a clear remit to improve the representation in collections can be successful. A strong example is the Bristol Black Archives Partnerships which combines community work with a mission to encourage donations of material to archives and museums, preserving the memory of the black community in Bristol[44].

Other organisations that support community archives include those who operate in the area of Built Heritage (for example, English Heritage, The National Trust and the Council for British Archaeology); Natural Heritage organizations; Community Development organizations ("Councils for Voluntary Service, the Workers Educational Association, Community Development Trusts, Community Housing Foundations, Community Resource Centres and Social Enterprises".); Regional development agencies; and private organizations. It is noted that interactions with Educational Institutions are fewer: "its interaction with community archives tends to be limited to where a University has developed a particular

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[43] Stevens et al. *New frameworks*, 2010, p. 69.
[44] *The National Archives Collection* 2011, p.17.

research specialism that relates to an aspect of a community history.[45] More recent research has resulted in a detailed and nuanced examination of the nature of some interactions between publicly-funded archives in the UK and independent, community archives. Using ethnographic research methods Stevens et al. found such interactions to cover five main areas: "custody, collection, curation and dissemination, advice, and consultancy"[46]. In relation to custody, for example, they emphasise that custodial models are now being developed and implemented due to "growing professional acceptance of the post-modern critique of archives as sites for the materialisation of dominant power structures", and that such models are further facilitated by technological developments[47]. Approaches that may be seen as being related to the post-custodial approach are facilitating the ongoing participation of community archive groups in the management of the materials they have deposited. For example, the 'Future Histories' community archive project has been working with two repositories: Middlesex University and the Victoria and Albert museum. The custody arrangement sees Future histories:

As manager of the collections … responsible for decisions around access (which files should be closed, for example), future deposits, the loan terms and, most importantly, the dissemination of its contents. These arrangements enable the network of social relationships in which the collections are embedded to be maintained even after the transfer to the mainstream repository and for the originating community to continue to retain a sense of ownership[48].

Achievements, problems and legal system

The limitations of space will allow me to consider only very briefly the remaining questions specified for discussion by the organizers of this conference. The problems and achievements of the community archive

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[45] Norgrove et al. *Community archives landscape*, 2008, p. 17.
[46] Stevens et al., *New frameworks,* 2010, p. 63.
[47] Ibid p. 61.
[48] Ibid p. 65.

movement have also been taken up in a number of the publications[49]. In terms of achievements, the contributions of such projects to their communities' sense of identity is often emphasized. So too, their contributions to areas of government policy and agendas such as 'sustainable communities', 'Safer Stronger Communities' and the 'Health and Well-being' agenda are emphasized[50]. Flynn has also summarized the achievements highlighted in an earlier report carried out by CADG: On the basis of survey responses from 46 groups and further in-depth case studies of 10, the report discerned a number of impacts with regard to community archives, mostly flowing from the opportunities for social interaction and participation that these activities provide. The report found that community archive activity resulted in cultural capital gains by bringing together groups that rarely met otherwise, particularly across generations, and thus supporting greater mutual understanding and respect; and by re-balancing history and heritage in favour of otherwise under-voiced communities leading to a greater sense of empowerment, belonging and community cohesion. Other impacts identified by the report were contributions to the creation of more attractive and liveable communities, often by renovating a building or community centre as a physical meeting point for community archive activities; providing opportunities for lifelong learning and acquisition of useful IT skills; and stimulating a range of activities which engage and involve the participation of many different groups in the community"[51]. The self-declared problems faced by communities include, among others, practical problems such as issues with storage; the need for standards; sustainability ("Within the community heritage sector, projects and groups are constantly changing, according to the internal politics and circumstances of their members"[52]); and access to funding.[53] From a personal viewpoint I would also emphasise the

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[49] For example, Flinn op. cit. 2007; J. Consultants op. cit. 2009; Stevens et al. op. cit. 2010 and see also relevant publications on CAHG. *Resources*, n.D. http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resources/resources

[50] J. Consultants, *Community archives*, 2009.

[51] Flynn, *Community histories*, 2007, p. 165.

[52] J. Consultants, *Community archives*, 2009 p. 24.

[53] Ibid.

importance of encouraging those who have participated in the building of community archives to reach out further than their local communities in order to share more widely the unique knowledge and skills that they have developed during their work. While community activists may not have any desire to write scholarly papers or become academics it seems to me that their experiences would be invaluable to those working in areas like Digital Humanities. This field has, since the advent of the World Wide Web, in particular, seen the emergence of a number of projects that are at work on building digital archives, sometimes with a social history or public Humanities dimension, for example, Letters of 1916: creating history (see http://dh.tcd.ie/letters1916/). Such Digital Humanities projects are likely to have, now and in the future, a host of questions around issues such as models of interaction with mainstream repositories; approaches to effectively engaging and mobilising members of the public to, for example, contribute materials; pursuing activist and political agendas across scholarly, practitioner and non-expert communities; as well as experiences of collaboration. Surely the experiences of the community archives community can inform all of these issues in a practical, practice-led way and I hope to see more opportunities for exchanges between community archivists and digital humanists on mutually relevant areas such as these. Given the wealth of materials that may be included in community archives, as discussed above, space will not allow detailed discussion of how these archives are regulated by the legal system. Suffice it to say that irrespective of the kinds of material they contain community archives must be aware of and any abide by relevant copyright and data protection laws of the UK.[54]

Closing thoughts

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[54] See Worcestershire county council. *Research Guides: Community Archives*, n.d. http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/Records-CommunityArchives.pdf pp.14-4; The National Archives. *Legislation and Regulations. The National Archives*, n.d. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/legislation/; nowthen, n.d. *Legislation*. Available at: http://nowthen.php5.truth.posiweb.net/accreditation/legislation [Accessed September 28, 2014].

The closing thoughts that the conference organizers asked me to discuss include:

- What problems should be solved by state and where the state should not encroach?
- How can we keep the independency of community archives when cooperating with the state?
- What about those who don't want to cooperate?.

My response is simply that I do not believe such questions can, or should be, answered by a single individual. In my opinion these are questions that must be put to the community archive network via a consultation exercise so that a range of opinions and approaches to such issues can be investigated and, after suitable analysis and dialog, implemented. Thus, rather than answer this question I will close with a quote that pertains to the UK context but is, in my opinion, broadly applicable:

Flexibility on the part of mainstream professionals is crucial and, as we have seen, fewer archivists today insist that community archives surrender their materials if they want to benefit from their expertise. There is still scope for adjusting priorities so that the passing on of skills and the sharing of knowledge between community and mainstream archivists becomes as integral to the latter's work as 'core' activities such as cataloguing and description. And, more fundamentally, there is still a need for archivists (and other heritage professionals) to interrogate prevailing definitions of 'expertise' and to appreciate the tremendous advantages of valuing the contribution of the bearers of alternative forms of knowledge – the 'living archive' – as much as the record itself. For as archivists (and other heritage professionals) have long understood, unless they work to cherish the context from which an archive emerged (in this instance the vibrant scene of politically-driven heritage activism) and find ways to

encode it in their catalogues and descriptions the meaning of the record is very soon lost[55].

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[55] Stevens et al., *New frameworks*, 2010, p. 72.