The most public of all history: family history and heritage albums in the transmission of records

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

I’m not American by default. It’s a choice. But it is a mask. Who, in the thronged avenues of Manhattan, has not known this? It is the same, for the Korean saleswoman or the Bangladeshi businessman or the Nigerian student, for the Iowan nurse and the Montanan secretary, as it is for me: Americanness draws a veil, it lends a carapace to the lives we hold within.

From Claire Messud, *The Last Life*¹

When asked why genealogists are so nice, Schelly replied that you have to be nice to everyone, because you don’t know who will have the next piece of the puzzle on which you’re working.

From Steve’s Genealogy Blog²

I too cut my scrapbooking teeth on the very first white plastic templates CM [Creative Memories] made.... But I was a scrapbook wannabe for 18 years, knowing it was important but not ever really scrapping. I discovered Heritage Makers two years ago, and stopped being a wannabe & collector and became a Heritage Makers Personal Publishing Consultant. I made over four projects my first six months and was hooked. We had record sales last month....

From Beth M., Blogger on Creative Memories’ bankruptcy in November 2008³

The above quotations are included as final reminders of the metanarrative of migration in the public presentation of family history; the tolerance, one might even say self-serving intentions, but nevertheless karma, demanded for many purposes in family

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history practices; and the potential transmission of records as influenced by the economy. In the latter case, online templates for family history allow an electronic and a physical scrapbook.\(^4\) The electronic one is cheaper, and is likely, for a few years at least, to be a more viable choice for heritage album makers.

As presented in other chapters, philosophies, practicalities, and inventions have created a plentitude of forms to represent the past, inscriptions in the metaphoric book of life and in the real records of lives, and the transmission of records across time and space. Memory keepers, many of whom have served as the foundation of the first knowledge of their family’s past, are now emerging more visibly in the world of recordkeeping and record creation. Their creation and use of records in the public environment of the Internet and in shared endeavors have changed the way memory is transmitted and pluralized.

This chapter asks then for an overall attention to what archival science offers to these other, already publicly known benefits of family history. The “archival role in the shaping collective memory”\(^5\) is addressed first by describing possible programs archivists could adopt in services to researchers of family history, and second, by suggesting future study about family historians and album makers. But first, one final review will be explored: the importance of settings, and then something of the differences and commonalities between family historians and album makers.

**Settings**

Of all the topics discussed, family historians and album makers have emphasized the types of environments where memory is likely to be sought and shaped. These


\(^5\) Reed, “Beyond Perceived Boundaries,” 189.
particular settings are ones where knowledge of records are parts of day-to-day life; where informal and formal education have prepared people to follow the trace of the past in oral accounts and written evidence; and where there exists too some perceived need of making the past continue in the present and future, some ritualistic and psychological engagement with what can be learned from records. This environment is also one that encourages the insertion of the self and family into publicly available spaces (literal or figurative) representing the past. In such places, memory practitioners see themselves as stakeholders in knowing and telling the past, involved, like archivists, in “representation, recall and dissemination.”

Layers and the movement of records are also part of the design of such a setting, since, as many family historians and album makers noted, “We keep finding more records.” This is part of their emphasis on the continuum of connecting the world, connecting all humankind—a Mormon principle, but one always modestly apparent in the work of people interested in family history. The abundance and accessibility of records and the ensuing growth in the numbers of people who use them also has to do with commercial vendors, libraries, and archives and, of course, technology. So, family historians and album makers march with these other agents in many of the same parades. It is this growing network carrying records that makes for a more capacious definition of transmission here in this project. Ultimately too, this more capacious definition influences pluralization, that process whereby eventually records make parts of collective memory.

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7 McKemmish, as cited by Michael Steemson, “Confident Australian Records Managers.”
The network carrying records for family history work is vast. Cyndi’s List alone, begun only in 1996, provides 264,040 links in more than 180 categories. Appropriately for this project the categories begin with “Acadian, Cajun, and Creole” and go through “Writing Your Family’s History”—subjects attentive to beginning interests and processes of work, especially to products of family history transmitted to others. On this list, archives are placed with other cultural repositories: “Libraries, Archives, & Museums,”8 sharing then as the institutional representatives of memory texts. But it is the total list of Cyndi’s that allows a visual representation of how much family history work is shared. Together, all these people and machines move memory texts across time and space.

In considering this movement, the ideas of Anthony Giddens, who so influenced records continuum thinking, are again helpful. Both family historians and album makers are, in Giddens’ schematic, communities marked by present activities, yet influenced by structure carried from distant times and places, older “locales” reproduced in the present.9 These structures are familiar and provide “ontological security.”10 But change within any life and especially within lives marked by movement, by migration, also brings reflexivity, a pondering over “‘theoretical understanding’ of the grounds of their” activities.11 In seeking to understand change, family historians and album makers orient

themselves towards a “mnemonic response,” as Susannah Radstone quotes the words of Andreas Huyssen, in describing “a turning away from modernity’s faith in progress.”

The three quotes beginning this chapter speak to these three ideas of sameness, change, and responses, and relate again to the layers of the whole of this project: Older forms of family history, gender-based roles of keeping family history, social behaviors concerned with identity, records, and recordkeeping—all bear the imprint of the past in the present lives of these practitioners. Circling about these attributes are also technological advancements that layer how family history is perceived, and how family historians and album makers wish their work to be perceived, within an “epidemiology of representations” or the disposition towards taking a particular cognitive path.

**Differences Between Family Historians and Album Makers**

Within this framework, two areas in which the work of family historians and those of album makers continue to diverge are in their definitions of memory work itself as finite or infinite, and in their varying emphases on records either as identity or as evidence.

**Almost Finite versus Infinite Work**

Album makers make albums. Family historians gather family history. The differences between the two verbs “to make” and “to gather” tell the main difference between the practices of the two. Most simply put, album makers see their work in separate projects, as completions of separate albums. Though technology (new types of albums, and online...
scrapbooks) are changing this attitude, on the whole album makers see their legacies as finished at some point. Family historians see their work as never ending, as an ongoing process.

Less apparent are their different paths to memory work that come as a result of the conceptualization of work that continues and work that can end. Family historians “research”; album makers “find out.” Album makers see their work as closer in time, residing within the lives of their children, and not extending out beyond direct lines. The definition of usability for album makers is present-oriented. Their contexts, formats, and contents are dependent on the telling of their creators, whereas family historians’ files and copies go directly back to sources, and thus could extend forward to future users whoever they might be. In other words, “context control” 15 is, from the outset of their creations or gatherings, less present for album makers than it is for family historians.

Identity/Evidence Split

Family historians concentrate on records as evidence, whereas album makers look to records for marks of identity, reading the self who looks for records, and less so ancestors, there. For family historians, genealogical “proof” requires sources, information, evidence—and analysis of all three. 16 The record itself concerns proof, and thus a verifiable, evidential quality. As Joseph in Chapter One underscored, his most important learning was in “forming evidence for whatever I put down.” Family stories are all “good and fine,” but what one usually finds is that they “are untrue” or “slightly

15 Sue McKemmish, Barbara Reed, and Michael Piggott, “The Archives,” in Archives: Recordkeeping in Society, ed. Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward (Wagga Wagga, New South Wales: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, 2005), 170.

16 Mills, Evidence Explained, 24.
wrong, or misinterpreted.” Family historians work to prove or disprove private accounts, and all their work is oriented towards “building a case around what is in the records.”

Album makers look for something that connects to the trace of the personal. The handwriting of the album maker is always emphasized, deemed one of the tangible marks of identity. Album makers discuss software to convert one’s computer-generated text into a style imitating one’s own handwriting. Yet, album makers also were more willing to hold in their creations two or more opposing memory texts. About one section of her album, Yamilee noted:

I know that my great-grandmother’s mother, she’s from the islands, the Caribbean, from Saint Lucia. And I know her mother passed away in the fires. They always say “the fires.” And I did some research and found out that, like, in the ‘40s there were massive fires in Saint Lucia. That a lot of people, like, lost homes and everything. But now here’s something that I’m like, this didn’t add up. They said she died in the fires. But the records say that no one died, actually in the fire.

She paused then continued “But that can just be reporting. You know, sometimes, they just say no one passed. Well, maybe they died two weeks later. So, you never know about that kind of stuff. And that’s something that—it could be that discrepancy, so I included it all.” What did she mean by the inclusion of “all,” as in “so I included it all?” In her heritage album she gave credence to both the official version and her own family’s understanding of their ancestor’s death. She preserved the narrative related to identity. But she also she created a record that shows the complexity of recordkeeping itself, especially in times of disasters.

Commonalities Between Family Historians and Album Makers

17 Lightle and Anderson, The Creative Memories, 17.
Despite these differences, among the two groups, there is an ethos of sharing, not so different from the civility noted in the quotation with which this chapter began, and not so different than the hospitality of the story of Miho Baccich in Chapter Seven. “A treasure for a genealogist to behold is a family album, a scrapbook, or even a box of pictures.” Similarly, family historians are often the starting point for album makers. This commonality has to do with their beliefs that all work on family history adds to a collective project on various families. The second commonality—and the one most critical for archivalization—concerns their willingness towards, and skills with, technology.

The Bigger Picture: The Collective Nature of Family History

In both large and small ways, family historians and album makers present an optimistic belief that presenting the past is a valuable legacy. Genealogical pursuits are noted as being “good for the family,” for “helping us to remember where we have come from” and “uniting us with others.” Such comments reflect the emphasis pervasive in many quarters (not just in family history) on family, on the worry that families are not together enough, and that migration, divorce, and other social factors have ripped families apart. For family historians and album makers, their memory work is the best way to combat this concern. They see patterns in the past that make the dissolution of the family in the present seem part of a larger design, and they reunite families in files and albums.

They also believe that records themselves are never isolated from other records.

This is a pragmatic as well as a strategic concern: multiple records are needed to

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20 Braun, *Crafting Your Own Heritage Album*, 16.
document fully any one life, and family historians and album makers—by sharing their works—ensure that various individually perceived legacies have a greater chance of survival. Sharing can be in the future. “A record that doesn’t quite fit within the pattern may yet be used later. “At some point,” a number of family historians said, “someone will take up this work.” For album makers, community ownership of the albums, “should anything happen” is a central theme; and for family historians, membership in a group ensures that the work (if not the proposed but rarely completed book) will go to the group, a repository, or someone in the family.

The two groups also share in a belief that all people need some hobby or pastime, and that this particular one in family history has benefits that far exceed other activities. They think of their memory work as “a thinking” pastime, with people who are basically drawn to groups—social beings who enjoy being together. The group members assist one another in myriads of ways outside family history: in celebrations, in sicknesses, and in day-to-day collegiality. Helping strangers, again xenia, is also part of this ethos. Such connections result in “more pieces to the puzzle,” a “richer life,” and some indefinable quality that “brings good karma.” Four family historians and three album makers told stories of records coming to them when they had given up all hope of finding documentation. Amazingly, someone, completely unknown, appeared to help them solve a problem. Similarly, two told of books and records suddenly “right before my eyes” or arriving in the mail unrequested. They attribute these gifts to their own generosity to others.

Technology
All album makers but one believed themselves to be proficient in new technologies (digital photography, scanning, various software packages, computer back-ups, email, and other social networking applications). All but seven family historians considered themselves adept and skilled in microfilm, software packages, databases, online searching, and email.

More importantly, both groups recognize that large portions of their work would not be possible without the technologies of printing, photography, and electronic resources. The dates of technological changes touching family history have much to say to archivists. The first great popularization of family history of the twentieth century (1970–1999) coincided with greater access to microfilmed records and later to electronic databases. The birth of the current scrapbooking craze (1995–present) ran concurrently with the expansion of the scanning technologies, digital photography, and digitally presented records online. What this did was to allow the development not only of the networks of family history work, the huge increase in the numbers of these researchers who might never come to archives, but also the growth of private or personal archives. Family historians and album makers are on the frontlines of these new endeavors, interpreting the past for family members first and then concurrently with schools, newspapers, films, online sources, and other outside purveyors of various memory texts.

Some bring creative means of juggling the materiality of the past, and in ensuring its management. Consider Ingrid (b. 1940), who talked of an album of digital photographs made about her daughters’ bedrooms, documenting the bedrooms before she dismantled them to make the rooms serve another purpose. She also made other albums to document artifacts, furniture, previous owners’ names, and dates of their lives:
I realized I had a lot of pieces that were from members of the family ... I decided well, I'll photograph all those things too. So now I have these two gigantic binders ... of photographs of these belongings.... And I put the date of the birth and the date of the death of the person [to whom the object belonged], so there’s no doubt, no confusion. I used their name rather than great-grandmother sort of thing.

Furniture, kitchen equipment, jewelry all function as living memories, while the photographs function as archival memory. Not many people would have had time for this when Ingrid completed her project in 1999, but with today’s digital photography and software packages, more such efforts will be possible and will be completed.

Archival Roles in Shaping Collective Memories

Archivists need to consider how family historians and album makers could choose to link such works to public records. Another consideration for archivists should be simply but profoundly the need for acquisition of knowledge about how such personal archives are managed and their meanings to individuals and groups.

Considering these differences and commonalities, how might archivists have an even more active role in being one of the voices at the table of dynamic memory, in assisting in the development of circumstances that aid more actively in the transmission and pluralization of records? Changes could be made in three areas: in archival education, archival programs, and within the profession of archivists.

Changes to Archival Education

First, an understanding of family history should be required in archival education. At present, the study of family history records and other forms of personal record keeping are available in a concentrated fashion only through a few universities within librarianship programs at Emporia State University in Kansas, and within the joined
archival and librarianship programs at the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of British Columbia (UBC), and Kent State University. At present, there are also aspects of genealogy needs interwoven into existing courses on access. One such course at the University of North Carolina is “Access, Outreach and Public Service in Cultural Heritage Institutions,” and it involves “a guest speaker who is training to be a professional genealogist, discussion of articles on genealogical research, and in-class activity where … students practice doing searches in the census, ellisisland.org, and the online Sanborn maps collection.”

There is also an online course taught through the Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association. The most ambitious program is offered via the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information in conjunction with the Canadian National Institute for Genealogical Studies. The program also has the support of the Association of Record Managers and Administrators (ARMA), Ontario Library Association, Special Library Association, and a consortium of Canadian libraries involved in other shared learning experiences called “SmartLibrary.” This Certificate in Genealogical Studies, specifically for librarians, is awarded to those who complete “reading materials, case studies, assignments, a final exam and the opportunity to interact online with the instructor.”

The courses (like the combined subjects of topics at Emporia State, the two University of Wisconsin campuses, Kent State, and UBC) involve reference work; identification and development of services; a core collection; finding aids, brochures and online and multimedia instructional tools; Internet searches; record types; cooperative ventures and

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21 Amber Cushing, Doctoral Student at the School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, email to author, February 27, 2009.
referrals; developing a genealogy home page; and programming and marketing. Since the program can be completed online, it is open to many different people, and, according to several people on the Librarians Serving Genealogists Listserv (Genealib), popular throughout North America.

What one notices about these courses, however, is that they generally fall under the rubric of librarianship, even when many of the schools have an archives track. The UBC course, like the Toronto certificate, concentrates on “a practical knowledge of key genealogical resources” and the exploration of “collection development, the reference interview, and library-based genealogy programming.” The instructor’s impression is that the course “leaned towards librarianship” even though it was offered as part of a “joint program” for library and archival students. The course is called “Genealogy for Librarians.” Yet, the questions the courses pose are also of interest and especially relevant to archivists. This structuring of courses also is a holdover from the past, the alignment of archivistics with the history profession. Genealogy’s placement mainly in library studies is an odd configuration, given that family historians use records more than books. This should be changed.

Enhanced Archival Programs

With an education about family history records and family history use of archives, archivists would be more interested in shaping their professional work towards

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23 Audra Eagle, email to author, February 25, 2009; Sarah Kirby, email to author, February 25, 2009; Tracy Luscombe, email to author, February 25, 2009; Janet Tompkins, email to author, February 23, 2009.


25 Janet Tompkins, Instructor, UBC Genealogy for Librarians, email to author, February 27, 2009.
innovative programs that join family history in projects that create collective memory, that place records in the eyes and ears of so many today via technology. Chris Hurley and Barbara Reed have suggested some models that would address varied researchers as contributors and partners in the transmission of records. Hurley discusses the collaborative model of “online banking systems” constituted by “both organization and customer simultaneously but representing significantly different viewpoints.” Speaking of all records and their representations, he argued for inclusion of various accounts of records creation and records use from multiple standpoints in description of records. In addition, Hurley and Reed both provide insight into mutually beneficial arrangements with small groups that could be copied in similar ventures with family historians and album makers, such as electronic spaces shared between groups and repositories. Album makers and family historians already work in such spaces via various photo-sharing sites. Archives could offer similar preservation and access, with custody shared or specifically allotted. This type of arrangement would mean another type of outreach that would link, for example, digitized public records with private records maintained on other websites by family historians and album makers on their website. A model might be the Dutch Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie which allows entering a surname to gain information not only on their collections, but also on connections to family associations and other records. In these ways, the layers of materials, the public and private

26 Reed (“Beyond Perceived Boundaries,” 183, no. 13) cites a conversation with Hurley on this topic in a seminar.
interchange of ownership and the influence of interests are shown as part of shared knowledge.

Reed concludes that archivists should make an “active examination” of pluralization itself. She asks for more contextual information in classifications and descriptions, priority statements linking appraisal decisions to point of capture, and new legislation giving people access to records about themselves.\(^{30}\) Her suggestions remind of past and present activities, set together, drawing on traditional and futuristic trends. To learn from the past, one could draw on the findings of Eric Ketelaar who demonstrated that the value of archives as a patrimony was located initially within the private sphere of families.\(^{31}\) In the present column, there are innovative projects allowing users to add to digitized collections, such as the Polar Bear Project at the University of Michigan.\(^{32}\) Might we then ask if family history, so much of which make up the private archives of today, could lead in helping archivists thinking of how to shape new programs? Recall the surprise that greeted those family historians who contributed to the Library of Congress website, mentioned in Chapter Two.\(^{33}\)

A recent study of the use of Web 2.0 by archives found few other repositories using these “latest generation” of applications that allow “users to create, interact with, and share information.”\(^{34}\) While many repositories have blogs, podcasts, Flickr connections, and Facebook pages, they are lacking in sites that allow work alongside archivists to add knowledge of collections to sites. There are economic reasons for this

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\(^{30}\) Ibid., 189–193.


\(^{33}\) Graham, “Tales from the Vault.”

hesitation, of course, but policies and pilot projects could be more actively begun. Album makers were particularly interested in interactive sites that would let them use their expertise and link private records to a larger history, though many did not see this history as located through libraries and archives. Yet archivists have a ready audience in album makers who are used to receiving announcements via websites and email. A simple announcement of the holdings of scrapbooks, for example, linking historic scrapbooks in repositories to contemporary online scrapbooks or vendor sites could be one approach.

Family historians also have knowledge of records that they are already adding to websites. Even beginning an online chat about these sites would be a start in allowing family historians “into the archives” as co-creators of ideas about future use.

Another achievable model for album makers and family historians might be the “suitcase” technology that allowed immigrant groups in the Netherlands to record their (audio and visual) memories and then to deposit their archives into the city repository. Such a suitcase could allow album makers to add materials from their crop sessions. On a smaller scale, a digital scrapbook project created by communication scholars showed the desire of participants in a research study to keep both an electronic and a paper copy of albums. Beth M., the blogger above, would see her own ideas in this project, and indeed this choice is already offered many scrapbook makers today by such companies as Heritage Makers. These electronic scrapbooks could easily be shared with archives,

with their continuing preservation and migration to new technologies as the work and responsibility of the repository. Archives could also assist in establishing standards and calendars for these sorts of preservation projects. Archival standards for digital copies, though discussed in album making and family history communities, are rarely achieved.

Changing Professional Roles

Yet a more radical change could be in the involvement of more archivists in popular history, especially in televised programs. The British, Australian, and Canadian show *Who Do You Think You Are*, in which celebrities’ searches for ancestors are shown, will be transformed for American audiences in 2009. Other programs, like *African American Lives* that grew into the book *Oprah’s Roots*, and various episodes on the History Channel that use archivists as guides, are also good models.

An expanded role for archivists could be found in other types of programs, as well. On the model of “Book TV” where already scheduled programs in bookstores, university classrooms, book fairs, and such venues are presented every weekend, archivists could work with others in the cultural sector to tape educational and professional programs and see that they are broadcast each week, either on television or some online source such as YouTube. Then the archival community could have a part in defining most simply the definition of the word “archives” and more complexly, records used by family historians. The interest of others now in records via the mediating role of technology is high and many scholars claim that televisions offer “the principal means by

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38 *Who Do You Think You Are?*, documentary, directed by Christopher Bruce (Los Angeles, CA: Is or Isn’t Entertainment and Wall to Wall Productions, forthcoming 2009).

which most people learn about history.\textsuperscript{40} As Laura Bear found in her study of Indian
genealogies, “We need to see archives as active institutions that bring certain people and
communities into specific relationships with the documentary past in ways that help to
shape experiences of belonging and citizenship.”\textsuperscript{41} She was looking backwards at
historical records, but just as important is the view of an active archives in the present.

These appearances and writings could be supplemented with an advisory role to
private archives, as well, not just those in grand houses but in living rooms, television
rooms, and so forth. This advisory role could be familiar ones—teaching about records
use, maintaining tutorials on websites, and educating archivists and librarians to help
family history users. Some of this innovative work is being done now. Just during the last
five years, the National Archives and a number of other repositories have enlarged their
websites to do such teaching,\textsuperscript{42} but archivists could also do this on a one-to-one basis,
providing freelance archival support or services through archives for a fee, much as
genealogists are now connected with archives. Peter Van Garderen praised the work of a
group called Data Portability.org, doing just that.\textsuperscript{43} MyLifeBits project from Gordon Bell
also shows ways that home archives will be managed.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] Gary R. Edgerton, “Introduction: Television as Historian: A Different Kind of History Altogether,” in
\textit{Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age}, ed. Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C.
\item[41] Laura Qbah Bear, “Public Genealogies: Documents, Bodies and Nations in Anglo-Indian Railway
\item[42] See “Genealogists/Family Historians,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration,
http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/ (accessed March 25, 2009); “Genealogists,” Kansas State Historical
Minnesota Historical Society, http://www.mnh.s.org/genealogy/ (accessed March 25, 2009). These and
other sites show vast changes in working more work with family historians since I wrote of them in Tucker,
“Doors Opening Wider.”
\item[43] Peter Van Garderen, “DataPortability.org - an important step forward for personal digital archives,”
April 16, 2009); Cox, \textit{Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling}, 22–24.
\end{footnotes}
The conversation of collective memories would then be more consistently placed to include discussions of context, custodianship, interpretation, and the symbolic creation of a large archives that is not held in one place, yet ensured collectively as a legacy for future generations. Archivists could provide some of the vocabulary we have already articulated for theoretical consideration of records. Our context, especially the archival bond, the “custodial bond,” and the interpretive cast we see in records use, could be explained and suggestions could be made about how family history work mirrors these other bonds. It is this advice that archivists need to present to the world.

**Future Study**

Much more work could be done to learn about how family history influences processes of collective memory, living memory, and archives. Comparative studies of genealogy in varying cultures (one religion to another, one country to another, one continent to another) could teach us about different stances towards authority, gender, conformity, and uncertainty avoidance, to take categories studied by Geert Hofstede. Are records used as often in genealogies where heretofore they have been instruments of oppression? Does a society schooled in Buddhism believe that it would be noble to forego the legacy of family records? Could a society that encourages children to know their ancestors through records become a more peaceful society as many heritage album makers have suggested? Does a more pluralized society set the framework of access to family history differently than does a more autocratic or hegemonic society? Another

47 A comparative study was begun in 2002 by the International Council on Archives, Committee on Outreach and User Services, but the committee was disbanded in 2004. See papers presented as part of the Family History Migration, and Reading Room tools, International Council on Archives meeting, Vienna, August 24, 2005: Daniela Ferrari, “Recherches des données anagraphiques des italiens émigrés,” (15th International Conference on Archives: Archives, Memory and Knowledge, Vienna, August 23–29, 2004), and Tucker, “Visible Enough to Us?”
avenue of inquiry could involve learning if interests in family history have or have not
grown with more open access to records, collecting policies, and other aspects of
contemporary rights to access and privacy.

Finally, much more could be done in understanding and demonstrating the forms
of records used in family history. A mapping project tracing the material culture of
family history over selected decades in selected locales would make for a website of
interest to many memory practitioners and to funding bodies. At present, family
historians and album makers have such websites themselves, in part. The privately
created and maintained website showing painted family registers is one example of what
is already being done. Archives and libraries could either link to such projects or enter
into an agreement with individuals to help them expand such public information.

What is important now is not to miss this continuing technological revolution,
now flowing in private archives every day on websites, at family reunions, at
genealogical meetings, and at crop sessions. From such gatherings, many archivists could
come to an understanding of far-reaching and dynamic professional roles.

Concluding Remarks

All of these changes should be addressed in order to turn “differences” between
archivists and memory practitioners of all sorts “into assets rather than barriers.” Again,
there is the return to the layers within our own profession, its division from family
history, but also the very real knowledge that archivists can bring to seeing this form of
public history. Are not our own beginnings located similarly in some environment that
nurtured an interest in records of the past on a shelf or in a box?

48 Vandergriff and Vandergriff, “Records and Registers.”
49 Roy Rosenzweig, “Everyone a Historian,” in The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in
What has been learned here is that family historians and album makers connect with the past, and collect memories in some form that will be passed to future generations. To do so they come to oral and written accounts with an interest that is nurtured by themselves and by others. Gender and migration have influenced these processes, but boundaries of these sorts are constantly being redefined. In other words, archivalization is cultivated by social forces and available technology—always evolving forms in themselves, and thus dynamic processes. Work on records, in turn, involves research and creativity; it also involves standards of evidence and preservation as prerequisites for legacies of identities. Work on these records also involves daily practices of memory transformed into simple housekeeping tasks, naming practices, observations of holidays, and other temporal adjustments. Records, technologies, and living practices mediate and construct the work of family history. Transmission of memory traces is ongoing, but not always visible. Transmission of records is a part of this transmission of memory, inseparable from it but also complexly situated on different paths.

The family historians and album makers do not say it this way, of course. They say rather that they are looking for “the bigger picture,” which they interpret as “wholeness” that has to do with the past and the present, crafted for the future. They seek, as the novelist E. M. Forster added to his similar declaration, to “live in fragments no longer” 50; they seek this often times feverishly through records.

Salman Rushdie in his essay, Imaginary Homelands adjusts some desire for wholeness to another explanation. He writes:

Human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to death.\textsuperscript{51}

Records literally are the debris, the remnants of the past, which Rushdie, Forster, and other writers claim as metaphorically representing life, and especially memory of life. An expanded definition of transmission attends to the fact that archivists should be experts in such memory work and therefore should be ready to learn from the most public of all history practiced by people interested in their families. For this reason, archival rules and policies governing transparency about the context of creation and various movements of the passage to and possibly from an archives should themselves be transparent to all potential users of records. In this dissertation, these layers (or generations of uses) of records and settings (or circumstances) involved in locating memories lead to an expanded definition of transmission understood as "reaching beyond ... boundaries," rather than "patrolling them."\textsuperscript{52} The archival role requires assistance, learned from family historians and album makers, in building the edifice of the whole of memory as less shaky, as indeed built-to-be-built-upon.

\textsuperscript{52} Verne Harris, “Against the Grain: Psychologies and Politics of Secrecy,” (paper, The Philosophy of the Archives Conference, University of Dundee and Edinburgh, April 2008).