

Padraic Cohen

HST 580

1/17/2021

### Week One Reflection Paper

At the conclusion of my first week in the internship program, it would be an understatement to say that I am a little overwhelmed. However, this is not a negative thing – I’m absolutely amazed by how much dialogue and thought goes into the process of cataloguing and archiving. Prior to beginning this course, I saw archives as the fundamental space for our collective memory as a society, for our writings, artifacts and much more – which is easily identifiable in the first reading, “What are Archives.” This is a basic understanding of the role and description of archives, however, JOTPY is different from the traditional understanding and processes which accompany archiving. As the JOTPY archive is a ‘rapid response’ archive, meaning the archiving process and documentation of artifacts is all happening in real time, as the historical moment develops. I will talk about this later in the reflection paper, but during our end of the week conversation, Dana and Kathryn raised excellent points in regards to the influential and necessary role which archivists play in documenting a historical event, as it happens. Their responses emerged from a question of the role of the archivist in this contemporary moment, in that the archivist takes on new responsibilities when documenting the evolution of the historic moment, juxtaposed to the media and social media platforms which are currently dominating the online ‘space’ for Covid related discussion. This glaring ‘conflict’ became evident in Kathryn’s response, when she provided her own experience of remote teaching, she stated it was more efficient that pre-lockdown methods, her students were learning, attendance was up like never

before – yet the media was adamant that remote learning and self-directed classes are destructive to the learning processes. I similarly have encountered this in my own oral history experience with a union leader; it appears that there is an attempt to create a narrative of ‘devastation’ as a result of the ‘new normal’ in opposition to the realities of success. While undoubtedly there is destruction from our current predicament, it is concerning when there is appearing to be an active attempt to smear the successes of adaptation and change.

Therefore, I have to say that the JOTPY to me at least takes on a monumental role in deciding the consciousness of our contemporary moment for future generations. This archive is more important than I previously thought; we need to provide a counter-weight to the wealthy and established outlets which currently occupy the majority of the social consciousness of this particular instance. For without rapid response collections of the JOTPY, the narratives of devastation as a result from deviating from the status quo could have some serious damaging effects on the consciousness of future generations. More so, a rapid response collection like the JOTPY provides people with a moment to critically reflect on the space they inhabit in the contemporary moment, in an age where the idea of productivity has been nullified, people are able to turn inwards and genuinely reflect on the significance of where they are in life – and what is important to them. In this sense too, the JOTPY provides a meditative experience for many, such as myself for example, as I will mention later. The JOTPY undoubtedly can act as a grounding and therapeutic experience for many in this alienating and distant time.

Previously, I was only familiar with the process of cataloguing an item in the system, with the greatest extent of my knowledge only covering the role and purpose of meta-data. Now, due to this I’ve been exposed to such interesting topics and developments in the world of archiving which I have been previously ignorant of. My personal favorite is folksonomies which

was discussed in the John Porter reading, “Folksonomies in the library”, particularly the strengths of a decentralized/localized archival organization, at least that’s what I picked up from the reading. My previous archival experiences only utilized controlled vocabulary. With this information, looking back at my experience at the Military Museums of Alberta I thought that if we employed folksonomies in the archival process, then arguably the 20+ year backlog of items may be easier to reduce. However, I don’t really know if folksonomies would be applicable to a military archival system, as a plethora of the equipment, weapons, photographs that would come into the museum has to follow controlled vocabulary; for example, when we would receive an item and a donator would provide us with a brief description of the item, it would usually be incorrect.

Another point to note, would be my previous archival experiences have been technologically limited, my first experience with the Military Museums of Alberta utilized a digital archival system from the late 90s known as CFAMS (Canadian Forces Archival Management Software). Without saying the obvious that the program was incredibly outdated and technologically inept, the entire archival crew struggled with creating, maintaining and finding archives on the system due to several technical errors – one of which being saving would sometimes just fail to happen, meaning new hires and volunteers had to save their program three to five times; and or would have to re-create the entire document several times. Another problem would be that some descriptor boxes would simply be too small and or could not account for new information added to the system via new artifacts from more recent events. After this, my first paid archives job utilized Microsoft word and excel for the entire archives, I could go on for hours probably with how hard this made the process. Essentially what I’m trying to say is, when I was introduced to Omeka-S I was incredibly blown away with how user friendly and simple the

Omeka-S program is, my previous workplaces could really use something like this. And while there was somewhat of a steep learning curve, I think I'd be able to start working right away after reading/watching the tutorial videos posted on slack as it doesn't seem too different from what I was getting done on Microsoft excel in a sense. However the new terms such as folksonomies will take a while to get used to, and managing such dialogue boxes as "pandemic prompts" is still a little unclear to me, so I look forward to getting some practice runs in until having a crack at actually curating an object.

Aside from this, the town hall meeting and the end of the week meeting I joined were incredibly insightful events that really gave me a formal introduction to the world of archiving. The first event was useful in that I got to see the organizational process of including students into archival internships, which what I had done in my undergraduate course a year ago. While I didn't learn to much for myself and the archival processes in this particular meeting, it nevertheless was an interesting experience; as the nature of a rapid response collection offers a unique opportunity for members of the contemporary event to have an active role in writing history – the more people of diverse backgrounds, such as students that are brought into these spaces, the more future historians will have to work with when recalling this event. Not just in artifact recollection, but the diverse minds and ideas of the numerous minds working on compiling artifacts from what they personally saw as relevant in a specific item, with each varying from the last. I'm having a hard time putting this concept down on paper, but just the idea that historians may have more to say about the archivists than the artifacts themselves, as when we chose/compile these objects, we are putting a part of ourselves into the archive. The second meeting touched upon this with Katheryn and Dana's input, which brought me to think

about how important our role is in providing the future with information which often conflicts with what is portrayed by our media and social media outlets.

Another point raised by Dana will greatly help me out throughout this whole internship, when she spoke about her work hours. Typically, I would try and bang out around 8 hours a work a day, two to three days a week during my previous experiences. And I do not know if I'll be able to replicate such a routine when I'm balancing another class and a night-shift part time job. Dana instead provided a better alternative from her own experience, she said she typically put in two to three hours of work a day, it was such a healthy and refreshing concept that I was completely ignorant of, because I'm really set in my 'comfortable' routines of getting it done in one sitting. I'll definitely try this out during this internship and I have a good feeling that this would help tremendously; both in terms of my productivity and health.

One final point that I want to talk about would be our pandemic prompt assignments, where we had to upload our own stories to the archive to gain some fundamental knowledge/understanding of metadata. In all honesty, I hadn't put a lot of thought into my covid holliday, with this opportunity I was able to reflect on my own experience and that of everyone around me in my immediate community. It was a nice moment of reflection which enabled me to have a deeper understanding of what exactly we're all going through – at least those with the privilege to have a home, work from home etc. It was a moment of reflection I desperately needed, to say the least.

Okay, I'm going to wrap this up right away but I'm incredibly excited to get started on this internship properly, as in curating and actually logging items into the archive as 'finished' pieces!

## Week 2 Reflection Paper

This week we focused on the subject of silence within the archive, a topic I am fascinated with. To put it simply, silence within an archive is the result of a population, person, or group being denied space within the archive; and subsequently historical memory. Rodney Carter's *Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and power in Silence* provides an excellent quote which best summarizes archival silences, "I'm interested for the most part in what's not happening, that area between events that could be called the gap. This gap exists in the blank and void regions or settings that we never look at."<sup>1</sup> In order to understand why these 'gaps' exist; one must understand that archives represent power; which was also discussed in Carter's essay. For the archives are essentially the repositories for memory, which shape the consciousness of future generations and their respective collective memories. Therefore, organizations or groups with power then have the ability to reshape the archive through both the power of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>2</sup> To be concise, these groups can determine what goes into the archive, and what will not.

An example arises from Marisa J. Fuentes' book, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. Her book originally was meant to tell the stories of enslaved black women in the British Caribbean, however, when she attempted to utilize the resources typically required for writing history – the archives, she was shocked to learn that there were little to no archival traces for the lives of these women. There were no records of where they lived, what their homes were like, their food, burial traditions; nothing. Instead, the archive only had mere references to these women in several documents such as 'runaway slave' posters, records of state

---

<sup>1</sup> Rodney Carter, *Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and power in Silence*. 1

<sup>2</sup> Rodney Carter, *Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and power in Silence*. 2

executions, and court proceedings where a slave was utilized by their owners to commit a crime. This is the result of the historical context of slavery, that being blackness was not understood to be 'human' in the eyes of the white-slave holders of this colony; therefore they had no legal representation of their personhood. Similarly, many slaves were unable to read or write their own histories, meaning the only representation of these individuals existence would be in unnamed government and law-enforcement documents; essentially, these people did not exist. I read this book for a previous class, and understood that Fuentes ended up compiling a history of these Caribbean women by reading against the grain, which is in itself an incredibly difficult act.

Exclusion then is yet another faucet of inclusion – this is the process of deciding what and who will be given archival space. Exclusion and inclusion can both be purposeful and unconscious. As for Fuentes, Caribbean women were not viewed as people, so there was no reason or cause to document the lives of those whose personhood was rejected and ultimately objectified. While arguably this is also engineered silence from our own contemporary understanding of slavery, there is a stronger case of engineered silence. There is no better example of engineered silence than 'Operation Legacy,' which was presented by Simon Fowler's *Enforced Silences*. In Canada, we are the inheritors and in some regards, the actors who carried out Operation Legacy at the twilight of the British Empire. Operation Legacy was in effect, the denial of archival space for sensitive and damning documents throughout much of the British Empire's colonial holdings. Evidence of genocide, mass murder, and engineered famines were either hidden from the public eye or destroyed entirely. In Canada for instance, operation legacy could be linked to Canada's dark history with residential schools, largely we were told that these schools were simply poorly-staffed and mismanaged; which ultimately lead to the horrific stories

of sexual, physical and mental abuse which Indigenous children suffered. However, the reality was much, much worse as in both 2018 and 2019 chilling discoveries of mass graves of children were discovered in both Alberta<sup>3</sup> and Manitoba<sup>4</sup> near former residential schools. When I think about engineered silences, I cannot ignore the glaring silence of Canada's residential schools; the lack of archival evidence of the atrocities has enabled many to gloss over the stories of residential schools as simply the result of mismanagement, when in reality they were tools of genocide. It must also be noted, that in these specific instances it is up to archivists to help address these silences; and bring the voices and experiences of these children into history by identifying them.<sup>5</sup>

As for our archive, the JOTPY there is evidence of silence as this particular archive is strictly online. Yet it must be noted that this is not a purposeful silence rather, it is the result of the online nature of the archive. Essentially, those who do not have access to internet, a computer, a smart phone – or they are technologically illiterate such as the elderly (which is further complicated through an inability of family members to help guide those who are unfamiliar with technology due to the pandemic and social distancing – as discussed in this week's zoom meeting) are all unable to contribute their own experiences to the JOTPY. After our meeting, I'm having a hard time thinking about ways in which the elderly can be taught remotely to upload their own stories – yet I think there could be some better actions taken for those who do not have access to personal devices. As during the meeting, one person who is a librarian noted that many use the computers at the library to access the internet, maybe if there were cut out flyers detailing what the JOTPY was, and step-by-step walkthroughs of how to

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/unmarked-graves-residential-school-alberta-saskatchewan-1.5045182>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/unmarked-graves-of-children-from-residential-school-found-beneath-rv-park-1.4076698>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/unmarked-graves-of-children-from-residential-school-found-beneath-rv-park-1.4076698>



access/upload content to the archives posted alongside the computers could be a potential action to help mitigate some silences.

To conclude, I found reviewing other collections in a critical manner to be a really beneficial practice for myself in regards to identifying silences, with the previous readings in mind. Specifically, the practice curation assignment was incredibly useful in regards to providing questions I will no doubt be asking myself in my future durational endeavors, ranging from the technical to the ethical.

### Week 3 Reflection Paper

Light touch curation essentially means to alter an item as little as possible; while this must be striven for in all archival practices, when confronted with a unique reality such as our own, this may become problematic. Light touch curation is important in that its employment accurately preserves the original contributor's intended meaning; what they felt to be important and relevant in their contribution to the archive. However, as previously stated, this may not be entirely possible given the nature of our own archive, as Erin Craft noted in her essay, *A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID-19 as a Community of Practice* as she wrote, "What began as a light touch curation process in March turned into a thirty-page curating checklist document by June 2020. This adjustment reflects the thought and care that each curator pours into the archive. The thorough checklist also productively combines the collective strengths of a community of practice with the regularization and codification valued by institutions such as a university."<sup>6</sup> To be more concise, the JOTPY began to become more specialized in regards to its curatorial strategies, as Mark Tebeau's suggested curators to pick areas which interested them, to

---

<sup>6</sup> Erin Craft, *A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID-19 as a Community of Practice*. Sage Journals

make a “project need.”<sup>7</sup> It could be argued that this change came about due to the sheer chaos of this particular historic moment.

Essentially, curatorial submissions are flooding into the archive – and while this is indeed a blessing, it forces curators to no longer take on a passive mindset; meaning rigorous controls must be applied in order to best ascertain the value of a specific item, even if this value was invisible to the donor. Elizabeth Mariano describes this new impetus for the archive when she wrote, “the time has come where historical repositories cannot be passive nor apathetic when it comes to collecting and “cannot be content to wait and accept whatever objects or documents chance happens to place into [their] hands. [They] should take an active, deliberate, analytical approach to the issue of selection and documentation,” else all they are left with are stories and items that others have chosen and have deemed worthy of preservation.”<sup>8</sup> I haven’t elaborated as much as to why this is happening, but it is entirely due to the moment we live in, and the realization that we have been given an ability to define the historical value of the COVID-19 pandemic as it happens, not waiting for future generations to do so for us; with the vast swaths of passively curated documents. Essentially, we are writing the memory for COVID-19 as it happens, by curating objects in accordance to rigorous collections, collected vocabulary and curator tags – we are essentially ascertaining the value of the object in the historic moment, which is only something historians dream of doing when looking to the past.<sup>9</sup>

However, this does not give the archivist the ability to entirely redefine the object, or remove something which is not compatible with a given collection which is an obvious don’t of the JOTPY. This week, I had the opportunity for a 1:1 curation experience, we covered some of

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Mariano Mubarek, *The End of Passive Collecting: The Role and Responsibility of Archivists in the COVID-19 Era*. Sage Journals

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

the basics of curation such as the pandemic template, identifying class and taking on the ‘active’ historian role when deducing what would be the most relevant controlled vocabulary to assign to the object. As for don’ts, removing entirely an object or a piece of an object from the curatorial experience must be avoided – instead of deleting a file, or a link, it is far preferred to just make the mistake ‘invisible’ and make a correction publically. For example, if a user uploads a text document in a word format, it should be converted to a pdf; with the original remaining in the archive as private, to best preserve the original. This is similarly extended to links into the archive, which must be logged into the way back machine. All of this is done to help extend the technological lifespan of the artifact, as newer editions, or loss of said program, the original file may quickly become outdated and inaccessible. Another point that came up would be privacy, and minors in the archive – any sensitive information or minors must be listed as private and uploaded to the curatorial questions if I have a question regarding the documents. We’ll be dealing with how to censor any sensitive information and the faces of individuals in the next module from what it looks like, but that is one of my largest concerns so far. Returning to the ‘historian’ aspect, while, I failed to mention that oversaturating the object with more than 8 lines of controlled vocabulary, or curator tags can dilute the historic meaning of the object, making it harder for people now, and later to understand what is important in the artifact, this is another don’t of the archive.

On a final note, I would like to work closely with the social justice collection, as I’m becoming more and more exposed to social justice issues in my own province and abroad; I feel compelled to preserve these sentiments and the struggles of our common era into the future. In particular, I’d love to help provide narratives from my own province and country of Alberta, Canada. I’d also like to help provide insight onto indigenous issues without overshadowing

Indigenous movements in my province, as due to the COVID-19 pandemic there have been numerous attempts on behalf of conservative governments to curtail Indigenous sovereignty and ultimately continue the colonial cycles of exploitation and assimilation.

#### Week 4 Journal

This week we primarily dealt with privacy in the archive, with regards to ethics. Essentially, digital archives have been increasingly courted by agencies and members of the state for both surveillance and law enforcement purposes. This is made possible by the accessibility of digital archives; therefore archivists have been given a new impetus to review the ethics of curation for this new digital age. To prevent archives becoming tools of the state, archivists must take on a new active presence in redacting sensitive information such as names, faces, addresses and social media handles. As Kritika Agarwal noted in her essay, *Doing Right Online: Archivist Shape an Ethics for the Digital Age*; the primary goal of the archivist now is to prevent archival spaces from becoming tools of oppression, as she wrote, “The stakes are undoubtedly high. In September 2016, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that its police force had used the service Geofreedia which analyzes social media information to “monitor protests”...Ensuring that archivists and historians do not become complicit in the marginalization of vulnerable populations because of their online practices is certainly an ethical conversation worth having.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the accessibility of digital archives raises concern for consent – as another example for Agarwal’s essay demonstrated how archival materials can be easily removed from the archival space and put onto new media with a larger audience. In this instance, this failure to acknowledge the wishes or even ask the previous contributors ultimately resulted in their item being blown into the public eye – which many of them wished would remain in private, or for a smaller

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20200604212321/https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2016/doing-right-online-archivists-shape-an-ethics-for-the-digital-age>

community. Therefore, due to the accessible nature of the digital archive, archivists must/should invest extra energy in gaining consent from the original contributors to upload their artifacts into a larger, more accessible space.

To summarize then, the ethics of privacy have now compelled archivists to fundamentally reevaluate their practices, meaning archivists now must understand that their archival space can easily be repurposed into a tool of surveillance by the state. Therefore, archivists must protect privacy to the utmost in order to make this as difficult as possible; or impossible all together. Similarly, the accessibility of new archival spaces such as the JOTPY has similarly forced archivists to acknowledge that some artifacts will undoubtedly be exposed to a larger audience; therefore archivists must understand and find the creators of these objects and acquire their permission to do so, as a means to protect the privacy of these individual's lives.

#### Week 5 Reflection Paper

Aside from partnering with university and educational institutions, it may be worthwhile to take advantage of the digital era in developing a more prominent footprint for the JOTPY on social media and utilizing the advertising features to draw more digital foot-traffic to the archive from across the world. While there is a JOTPY presence on social media it may be worthwhile to share more articles increasing public participation, stressing the ability and need for everyone to participate – with specific interest in breaking down the stigma that what people are doing is somehow unimportant. Archivists should also be interested in increasing the presence of the JOTPY on their own personal social media platforms as it would be useful in driving up participation – maybe even providing evidence of your own artifacts being uploaded would be useful in increasing interest from friends and family, and even strangers. Another point too would be to increase physical advertisements or calls for submissions throughout your local

town, putting up flyers with a brief overview of the archive and detailed steps to submit. It might also be worthwhile to reach out to local historical societies, as they too have their own networks and will drive up their own participation online and possibly through their affiliates as well.

#### Weekly Journal Submission Week 6

I was successful in garnering attention and interest in submitting, but I do not think anyone I spoke to has actually submitted to the archive at this current moment. The only challenge which I faced in this regard would be pandemic exhaustion, as I realize that people will not submit to the archive as soon as possible, because there is just so much going on in people's lives in the current moment. I feel as if many of those who I've reached out to will be unable to allocate time to submit, and I'm not blaming them for this, there's so much going on in the current moment that having mental clarity in this period of isolation and anxiety is hard to come by. I'm speaking mainly from experience, as I have had a hard time coming to complete my own deadlines for this month, I'm lucky that I have assignments with set deadlines that compel me to get them done, such as this one, which also force me to reflect on my current studies and activities within the internship. I'm not too sure if this is a genuine challenge, but I'm just trying to empathize with people; some will just never get around to it I feel, there's just a lot going on in people's lives at this current moment that it may easily slip from their to-do list. That's all I can think of, I had no physical or technological issues when reaching out to people and peaking their interests, but I can't actually 'get' them to submit. Just to reiterate, I wasn't able to get people to actually submit, but I was able to peak people's interest in potentially contributing one day, so I guess that isn't too bad.

#### Week 7 Reflection Paper

Social media undoubtedly makes collecting materials and expanding the influence of the archive incredibly easy. However, social media is not the ‘be-all-end-all’ in regards to promoting the archive; rather it can easily create archival silences if it were the only mode of promotion utilized by the archive. As we’ve seen with our own electronic archive, there is a glaring issue when confronted with people who either do not have access to social media, or are technologically illiterate such as the elderly. Those who do not have social media, or who don’t understand how this technology works would be marginalized from this approach. However, as previously stated, social media would be instrumental in harnessing potential participants of the newer or younger generations, all of which already have prominent social media personalities. Due to this, by introducing these newer generations to social media it could easily bring newer participants and exposure of the archive. Furthermore, cooperating with social media pages, or organizations on the same level as academic institutions could be beneficial, such as social justice orgs or art accounts – as they are already collecting information and material which could easily be converted into a collection for ‘professional’ archives like the JOTPY. Technological illiteracy could even be combatted by putting the impetus for those on social media to reach out to those marginalized by this technological approach – however, this is not entirely possible given the current social distancing restrictions and pandemic reality. Recorded oral histories over the telephone on the other hand, could be a viable means to counteract this. While this will not entirely address or reduce the marginalization of people thru social media, it may nullify the silence given the current restrictions and new prominence of social media based promotion. Essentially, maybe it would be beneficial to create a small infographic post on social media, detailing how to conduct an oral history. I’m really going off topic here, but social media could

be used to provide oral history prompts such as the silver lining prompt we utilized a week ago, with a short list of 'do's and don'ts.'

Regardless, social media is a blessing to promoting and expanding the archive, yet it's base undoubtedly marginalizes the technologically illiterate and those who do not have the resources or even a social media personality themselves.

#### Weekly Journal, Week 8.

This week I primarily dealt with curating the legacy items; which arguably is one of the most challenging things I have currently done for the archive. Curating the objects isn't difficult, but I have encountered some technical issues with the old Omeka site, nothing too serious but enough to make me frustrated every now and then. The website itself is easy to navigate, however, when I would look for a specific item using the accrual number, I would often be brought to a completely different item – meaning I had to manually search for the item every now and then. This was very difficult when I would have to curate an item in a collection, as each object would have a similar title. I really noticed a large difference in regards to the controlled vocabulary present in the old archive, and similarly the lack of contributor tags, or folksonomies. On top of this, we had to prepare pre-interviews and questions for an oral history project we are working on next week. I have some experience with oral histories; I have made two last semester for a union representative and my friend Charlie on the subject of the labour movement in the pandemic. On a personal note I don't think I it was too difficult to arrange a question sheet, or gauge who I'd like to interview, but I've just been so worn out this past week – as I was busy writing and researching for a final paper for my gender history in Islam course, so I don't think my work was up to my own standard. On top of this, I overlooked the assignment and only created one question sheet for my mom, and not my grandma. I've just been so worn out



these past few days, but hopefully with the ending of that class I can dedicate more hours to the archive than before, free of stress.

For my interviews, my first narrator who is my mom, I wanted to try and touch upon as many subjects as I could while remaining relevant to the overarching topic at hand – which would be her work. Essentially, my mom works for the Calgary police service/city of Calgary as a crime analyst. She's a supervisor so she employs and hires civilian workers that work alongside the police – she is not a cop herself either. However, they do work in close proximity with officers, and I wanted to get her take on the pandemic, how her work environment changed and similarly how her attitude to the police even changed; as I've noticed my mom become more open about discussing their conduct in and around the office. Fore mostly, this occurred during the BLM protests in Calgary, as videos became released documenting the brutality officers employed against non-white people throughout the city. on top of this, she would tell me how police officers would not wear masks and would infect one another, these same cops would come into her office without a mask and stun her entire office. She also would tell me about how the city council removed the 'golden handshake' a retirement plan for employees of the city, something she was holding out for. I'm not entirely too familiar with the subject, even after researching it. I feel this would be nice perspective, as while my mom works with the police, she is still a civilian; meaning she has a unique perspective into the operations and conduct of officers during the pandemic from a third party role, if that makes sense. I'm not too sure if this could be included in the law enforcement collection, as she isn't an officer but a civilian working for both the police service and for the city – but that should really be up to the curator, and not me I'd imagine.

For my second interview subject, my grandma, who I still need to create interview questions for; I wanted to talk to her more about an experience she brought up during the ‘silver lining’ project we did last week. She brought up she lived through a polio epidemic in the mid-1930s in Calgary, what she explained to me in the pre-interview process sounded eerily similar to our own pandemic. While she was very young at the time, what she said seemed like it would be invaluable to document, as her own outbreak experience is comparable to ours due to her own family’s isolation/distance from the outbreak epicenter. on top of this, the Great Depression was in full swing – which is another dimension which I would like to explore with her as she has on numerous occasions told me of her memories of the great dust clouds, the droves of the unemployed, the migrant families who came west for work which never existed etc. All of which apparently occurred here in the midst of a polio outbreak, I must also reiterate that she has not brought this up to me at all until the silver lining project, so I was pretty shocked. She also felt like she could have said more for our silver lining project, so I felt compelled to give her more time to speak about her own experience in the pandemic as a senior, she is very religious so I imagine religion would also be a very prominent topic throughout the interview, we’re from a Roman Catholic family so I believe her experience with being cut off from community and church would be very important to document and would help with the religion collection

For the readings this week, they were very familiar to me as I took James McGrath and Mark Tebeau’s Oral History practice course last semester and loved it. Yet for the meeting this week, I was very happy to see Brandon bring up the concept of an ‘organic’ conversation. From my experience with conducting oral histories, this is the most important factor – it is simply a conversation, you’re giving this person a safe space to talk about their experiences and share their stories. You must practice active listening, and adjust your questions on the fly if necessary,

but above all give your narrator the space to do so. If your narrator is struggling, or thinking of an appropriate answer, the best thing to do in this scenario would be to simply reassure them – as in tell them to take as much time as they need, or remain silent. That is one thing which I have found beneficial from my own experience, which I believe was also touched upon in the interview.

### Week 9 Journal

This week I had to plan and prepare oral history interviews for both my grandma and my mom. I have experience conducting and creating oral histories but this week I have to say I was not on top of my game. It's a very time consuming process, with particular regard to fabricating the proper questions needed for a good oral history interview – most notably these questions must be neutral and not contribute to leading the conversation. As in, I needed to make questions which avoided skewering the interview with the supplanting of my own biases on the interviewee's thoughts, for example I can't simply go "I remember you were upset about this, does it still upset you," rather I should propose a more neutral question such as "How did this event make you feel." This is a very simple change, but I was unaware by how many revisions I needed to make; again reinforcing that I did not do a very good job. From my experiences with oral histories, the most important think when conducting a history is to remember that it is an organic conversation – something that is constantly reminded throughout the experience through the need to give into social ques such as nodding, or going 'mhm' while the narrator speaks. I find oral histories to be incredibly relaxing and easy – however this was with my family and for my grandmother, other family members were present and listening which gave me a small amount of anxiety. It's weird but, I feel more comfortable interviewing strangers than my own family, I can't explain it really. Returning to questions however, it is incredibly important to

have them reviewed by peers, something which I am incredibly grateful for as without this peer review process, my interview would have been worse than it already was. What I feel I did wrong in this interview is just that I was incredibly wound up, I spoke with a mumble, I didn't respond to sounds such as my dog howling for the longest time until he started howling (he was alright, just lonely, and if we let him out he'd be barking instead of howling – we were apprehensive of putting him out because we just got him groomed and didn't want him rolling in the mud outside, but we let him out and he did just that ahaha) Similarly, I feel as if I wasn't listening properly as I felt that some of my questions had already been answered – I just felt that I needed more information on these particular cases or areas in the interview. I don't feel either that I am writing out a proper journal submission for conducting an oral history, it's just been an incredibly busy week – the most important thing I would see as important in setting up a proper oral history environment would be to remove all distractions before the interview began, I made the mistake of thinking my dog would remain quiet throughout the process in this particular field.

#### Week 10 Journal

Quite a bit goes into developing an oral history, the pre-interview portion itself either makes or breaks an interview as it's here that that the historical value or potential of the interview is assessed and developed upon when forming questions. After the pre-interview, creating interview questions is no simple task either; in particular an interviewer must research the historical period or event being discussed by the subject. Developing this historical understanding is not only essential in understanding the context of the interview, but subsequently useful when conversing with the narrator themselves when jogging their memory, or when directing a conversation into a particular topic. For example with my own grandma,

prior to the interview I did some brief research on the polio outbreak that occurred which she had briefly mentioned in the ‘silver-lining’ interview. When I started throwing out some dates like 1953, she instantly began talking about that particular summer, which I had to quickly remind her to save some of the information for the interview. That is another part of the oral history process which is quite difficult for me in particular, and that is keeping the conversation during the interview – not before.

That sounds like a very arbitrary point to make but it is quite difficult to keep myself, and the subject from discussing important topics before the interview; I make sure to bring up these points later so that the narrator is able to say what they wanted to on tape. Most importantly above all is creating a safe space for a natural conversation, which albeit is heavily one-sided while maintaining the social cues of a normal conversation. What I mean by this is making the entire interview feel like a regular conversation without the constant cues to tell the narrator to keep going; rather what is most important is that the narrator feels compelled to speak even without these cues, that they feel that this is their time and more importantly what they are saying matters. That is what happened with my grandma, prior to this interview she did not have the space or time to genuinely reflect on her pandemic experience, after the interview she thanked me and put heavy emphasis on the topic of religion which came up during the interview. To her, this space allowed her to genuinely reflect on what her faith meant to her, and how the pandemic strengthened her faith – without in person masses or community, she was able to come closer to understanding what her faith meant to her. Similarly with my mom’s interview, we have had similar conversations in the past which asked many of the same questions, which I only realize when looking back on the interview itself. At the end of the interview, she went on to provide some of the most hard-hitting information I have heard her speak in regards to her work,

and its environment. In particular there was some self-reflection which I have never seen from her either.

I could see myself doing more oral histories in the future, however if I were to do that I would need to invest into some new hardware aside from just my phone. This would be useful for remote interviews, and if I were to do in person interviews following the pandemic, I would need to get a professional microphone and recording device. I really do enjoy oral history projects, it's an incredibly fun experience and I feel like history is being made in that exact moment; I feel like one day someone in the future would look back on this interview and use it for a paper, or just to listen to for fun – the thought of someone learning from the conversation really makes me happy.

#### Journal Post 11

For me, this is my first time writing for a public audience and I have to say this is incredibly difficult; I've read the supplied blogposts and I hope I've done a good enough job trying to follow their writing style. But regardless of this, it still is incredibly hard to know what is acceptable for a public audience and what is not. What I do know however, from the 'how to' reading we were assigned, is that when writing for a public audience the first few lines, or even the first sentence is the make or break moment. If you do not possess a sufficient or enticing hook, your reader will simply click off. The biggest issue for me however would be using more than three prepositional phrases, I use way too many and this exercise has helped me identify the over-saturation of them in my regular writing.

However, even after reviewing my finished blog post I still feel incredibly anxious with whether or not it's suitable for a public audience – not regarding its subject matter but it's attractiveness to said public. I wasn't able to find any better images other than a map, which I felt

was needed to help the reader understand where exactly this is occurring, as this also serves a dual purpose of identifying unceded land on a map which traditionally has no borders within it. However returning to the slack guidelines, I'm not too sure if I followed the third rule, "Do not allow a noun and a verb to become separated by more than 12 words" properly; I've reviewed my work and have had family and friends review the work with only minor revisions, I know I made more mistakes and I genuinely think this isn't very well put together. The main reason for this being is I feel like I just wrote another paper for a history class; this is just how I write – and I need to learn how to break away from these habits.

#### Week 12 Journal Post

In these short weeks, this internship has prepared me immensely for working in an archival environment much more than my previous experiences have. Previously, I've had to work with outdated technology, and overall little to no supervision; meaning I was incredibly anxious and confused throughout most of my work experiences. However, with this amazing opportunity, I have finally been able to learn the fundamentals of this craft, and build some confidence in my abilities through this rich experience which I have been given. I don't want to get too personal, but a good portion of my life has had myself doubting myself, my abilities, and my overall value – but this short experience has proven that I can contribute meaningful work and help in working on something important. I've helped develop a collection for my nation's experience of the global pandemic that one day someone will look at for knowledge; that's something I proudly say I was a part of. On a professional sense, I took this internship to help better understand the tools of the trade for archiving, as I would like to go into this field for work as I pursue a PhD in the future. At this current moment, this internship has undoubtedly prepared me for such an experience; as when I was drafting my resume after our meeting I was absolutely

stunned by how much I actually learned, and accomplished. I'm going to be applying for a job in British Columbia here that months ago I would be completely underprepared for, and now after this I feel as if I'd be an excellent fit in the company (it's a university, but for simplicity's sake I'm calling it a company) and I will be applying for this position very soon. I feel like I'll be repeating myself, but this internship has helped me immensely on a personal level, which I only came to realize when writing my resume – I'd have moments where I'd go "I really did that?" And when Dr. Tebeau stated that we were working on the most ambitious online archive, I was absolutely blown away; I had no idea how I could feasibly work that into my resume, this experience has made me immensely proud of what I have accomplished and my abilities.

On top of this, I have absolutely loved working with Dana and Robin on our exhibition, our collections have similarly intertwined with one another on a few occasions, and developing these connections has helped strengthen my love for this work and the skill to work with others – which I've been previously not had a lot of experience with in my last few archival jobs. Needless to say, I am immensely grateful for this job, and I cannot wait to apply what I have learned here in my future endeavors.

### Week 13 Reflection Paper

This week we were required to present the work we have completed so far, and our overall plan for our exhibits. We were also supposed to give back constructive feedback for those who presented. After my group finished presenting our exhibit, we received some incredibly helpful feedback – almost every single person who responded made mention of the passion that went into this project. Acknowledging passions, and building upon them – or rather redirecting them can be a powerful strategy when providing useful peer feedback. Robert's feedback in particular stood out to me, as he acknowledged the significance of the artifacts we have



collected, he stated that the overabundance of items could actually detract from the experience. Robert then employed another successful strategy for effective peer feedback which would be using his own experiences to convey information. Robert provided his experience of his visit to the 9/11 museum, specifically the most impactful moment for him there. He said that the audio portion of the museum, which included small audio clips of interviews following the attack left the largest impression of him, and that really resonated with our group. Currently, we are actively reshaping our exhibit to follow a similar model and I have to say we really owe it to Robert for his excellent feedback. Another important strategy to give effective feedback would be to not entirely focus on 'what is being said' but essentially, what is not being said. This strategy was employed during the presentation as a means to highlight possible weaknesses within the exhibit, more accurately silences which detract from the overall theme of inclusivity which the exhibit largely revolves around. This strategy illuminated that our exhibit left out the deaf and hearing impaired collection, and raised the question of "who else," which has now become a focal issue faced by our group after the meeting. To address this, we have thought about utilizing a call to action at the end of the exhibit to get people to be inspired to add their own stories to address silences – if we stretch ourselves too thin by attempting to include as many people as possible, we ultimately dilute the mission, or direction of this exhibit.

Needless to say we have made some serious revisions to our exhibit following this meeting, which would not have been possible to make without the effective feedback of our intern meeting. Hopefully our revisions in the coming days will be successful in giving a stronger direction to our exhibit and ultimately help in allowing a potential visitor to understand the powerful social justice movements which have risen through this time of pandemic.

This week I had the chance to rework my blog post, and after looking through the critiques left by Dr. Kole I think I have a better understanding of what to do, and what not to do for when writing for the public. The sentence I just wrote is probably an excellent example of what not to do. For a public audience, should be short and captivating – to encourage the reader to devote more of their time to reading what you have to share. Monica’s example really helped in reshaping the intro of my blog post, I felt also that it better represented the overall theme of colonialism without actually naming it, acting as a minor hook to make the reader wonder, what/who and why. I also scrapped the entire component on the digital divide – as I felt that introducing the divide would ultimately detract from the primary event being discussed, that the divide itself should be given its own space. I also trimmed down my final paragraph to act as a conclusion to the post, to bring it full circle. I felt too that the message within the final paragraph is important in hammering in the takeaway to the reader that this is Canada – I wanted to make sure they did not leave the article with the perception that this is just a minor event, or a ‘reminder,’ I wanted to point out specifically that the process of colonialism is essential in keeping Canada ‘working.’ That the pandemic did not halt for the expansion of the state and the exploitation of First Nations’ land and peoples. I still don’t feel very confident about writing for the public, but this experience has allowed me to put my feet into the water.

#### Week 15 Journal

I would describe this experience as simply phenomenal, I really loved working in the archive and curating the pandemic. It gave me an immense sense of accomplishment and importance, as we are documenting this current moment for future generations, something I only dreamed of doing. Working as an intern was ultimately a relaxing and fun experience, I was able to meet the work load and it gave me something meaningful to do during lockdown; which was a

Godsend. I can't imagine what I would be doing, other than classes if I didn't take this internship, as there isn't a lot going on – or any real job opportunities in the field of history currently where I live. Balancing work and school was difficult, but I managed to pull it off; as the workload I would typically deal with wouldn't suffocate me, rather the work was exciting. I loved the meticulous nature of this internship, searching for details which could give an item its own uniqueness amongst the thousands of others. The internship also proved to be an ability to look at the rest of the world, and in some cases brought global stories to feel as if they were local; to empathize with people who were incredibly far away.

This internship was also made great by the interns themselves, I loved the intern meetings and hearing what everyone was up to and accomplishing. It felt good to hear what others were learning and experiencing as it allowed me to bring new perspectives to my own experiences in the archive. I absolutely loved working with Robin and Dana on the Social Justice exhibit; I never knew how much work and planning went into developing an exhibit; even more so with the physical/technical limitations we had to work around. Nevertheless, I feel like we made something important, Robin tirelessly worked to make sure all three of our visions became reality, she helped make the exhibit what it is today. On top of that, Dana's passions helped give the exhibit a direction and a soul, specifically the portion on racism which was organized by her – that portion is incredibly moving and is riddled with meaningful items which portrayed the worst, and best of the pandemic's campaigns of social justice. Prior to this, the only exhibit experience I have had would be from high school projects, this internship allowed me to see the actual decision making processes and best strategies for developing professional, public facing exhibits which will undoubtedly be a useful skill in the future.

There's so much more that I accomplished in this short internship than I thought possible. I never thought I would have had the opportunity to put together the collection which would hold the collective memory of my nation of Canada. I am incredibly proud that I had the ability to give Canada archival space, even more so the Canada collection is proving to be useful in identifying systemic inequalities within Canada in the time of pandemic, the perpetuation of colonialism and ultimately genocide into the 21<sup>st</sup> century against the First Nations peoples. I hope that as items are added to the collection, these inequalities will become more known and people will be able to recognize and organize against Canada's colonial organization, for a better home for all. I also never thought I would write a blog post for the public, I have had almost no experience writing for the public but this internship pushed me out of my comfort zone, to confront that and begin the process of building up the necessary skills and confidence to write for the public. I personally don't think my blog post was amazing, but I'm never the less proud of it; I was able to work on the document with a close friend of mine and that experience was just so much fun.

I'd love to write more but I feel as if I'm being a broken record, or just fluffing up this last post but I absolutely loved this internship to say it simply. It was an amazing experience which helped build my confidence and work experience in archiving. I know if I manage to find a place that's hiring, I am confident that I could land a position, and it would all be thanks to this internship, this experience which has enabled me to make something meaningful and put my degree to work; an internship which helped me contribute to the development of the future's memory of these plague years.

