


Appraisal: Constructing Cultural Memories?

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**APPRAISAL:
CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL
MEMORIES?**

ARCHIDIS 2011



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 - Memory of the World
 - The idea of uniqueness
 - Symbol or fetish?
 - Assigning values
 - The archival divide
 - Societal provenance
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 - Conflating archives and collective memory?
 - Cultural memory: canon and archive
 - Romancing the archive
 - Invention and mediation
 - Archives and other memory texts
 - Commemorative vigilance
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 - Societal appraisal
 - Politics of memory
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Dutch West India Company
(Westindische Compagnie) Archives
submitted by the Netherlands, Brazil,
Ghana, Guyana, Netherlands Antilles,
Suriname, United Kingdom and United
States of America



Stockholm City Planning Committee
Archives
submitted by Sweden



Benz Patent of 1886
submitted by Germany



The uniqueness of an archival document

1. the physical document itself is unique,
or
2. the information it contains is unique, or
3. the process which the record produced
is unique, or
4. the uniqueness is derived from the way
individual items have been assembled
into files, that is the document in the
context of other documents.

James O'Toole, 'On the Idea of Uniqueness' (1994)

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Selection criteria for the Memory of the World Register

The nominated item should have

created great impact over a span of
time and/or within a particular cultural
area of the world. It must have had
great influence – whether positive or
negative – on the course of history.

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“Memory is a process, not a thing,
and it works differently at different
points in time.”

Olick and Robbins (1998)

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Every interaction, intervention,
interrogation, and interpretation of a
record,
by creator, user, and archivist
is an activation of that record.

Each activation attributes to the
archive's infinite meaning.

Ketelaar (2001)

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“Documentary sources do not possess
an inherent value discernible within
the documents themselves.”

Hans Booms (1972; 1987)

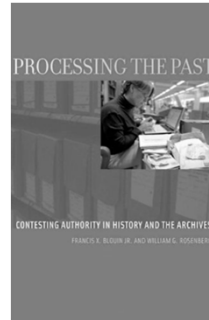
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"We are nothing in an absolute sense.
We are only what we have been – more
exactly, what we remember we were.
We are memories personified."

Franco Ferrarotti (1994)

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Francis X. Blouin Jr.
and William G.
Rosenberg

Processing the Past.
Contesting Authorities
in History and the
Archives

Oxford U.P. 2011

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"The archival divide"

a divide "between the evolving conceptual frameworks for historical understanding and those related to the efficient and practical retention of records...a deeply conceptual separation based on different readings of the relation between past and present, and how pasts can and should be literally and figuratively processed."

Blouin and Rosenberg (2011)

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it is "somewhat ironic that as archivists and records managers have essentialized relationships between documents and institutions as the only viable way to create effective new classification authorities for retrievable records of enduring value, historians have developed radically different ways of understanding institutions themselves."

Blouin and Rosenberg (2011)

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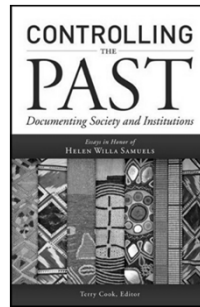
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Provenance

The societal and intellectual contexts shaping the action of the people and institutions who made and maintained the records, the functions the records perform, the capacities of information technologies to capture and preserve information at a given time, and the custodial history of the records.

Nesmith (2002)

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Terry Cook (Editor)

Controlling The Past:
Documenting Society and Institutions -
Essays in Honor of
Helen Willa Samuels

Society of American
Archivists 2011

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"Further understanding of the role of archives in collective memory formation depends on placing archival documents in relation to an array of other memory devices and singling out the unique contribution of archives to this process."

"Rather than conflating archives and collective memory, archivists could build a more compelling case for the social value of archives by enumerating and investigating the conditions and circumstances where archives are instrumental in forming, reviving, or transmitting a sense of shared experience."

Hedstrom (2010)

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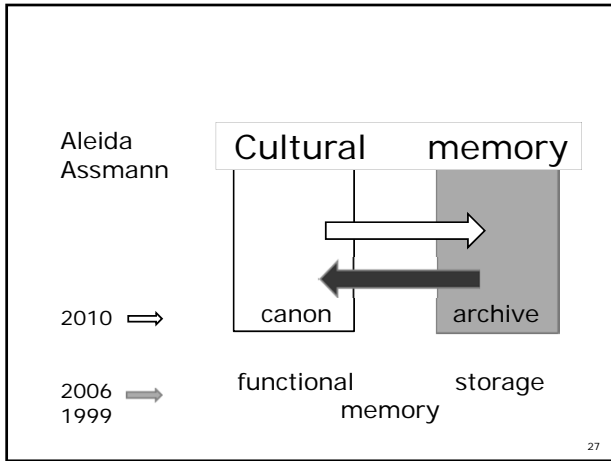
Collective memory

"the representation of the past, both that shared by a group and that which is collectively commemorated, that enacts and gives substance to the group's identity, its present conditions and its vision of the future."

Misztal (2003)

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'invention'

on the one hand
discovering what is already there,

and on the other hand

inventing, constituting someone or something

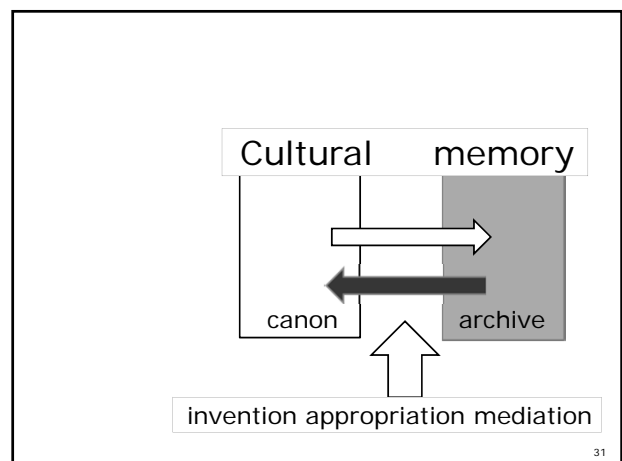
Jacques Derrida (2000; 2010)

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The mediational aspects of collective memory runs through the literature, sometimes implicitly and other times more directly addressed. The shared, negotiated, dialogic, politically motivated, identity-forming, selective, generational, narrative, story-telling, and representational aspects of collective memory all imply that processes of mediation are at work in collective memory development. The

Anthea Josias, Toward an understanding of archives as a feature of collective memory. *Arc Sci* (2011) 11: 95-112

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Nikkei: the Japanese-Canadian community

- Issei - First generation immigrants arriving prior to World War II
- Nissei - Second generation Nikkei born in Canada
- Sansei - Third generation Nikkei born in Canada
- Yonsei - Fourth generation Nikkei born in Canada
- Shin-Ijusha - First generation immigrants arriving after World War II
- Nipponjin - Japanese people currently but only temporarily residing in Canada
- Hapa - Children of mixed marriages

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“Documentary sources become valuable only when the archivist accords them value during the appraisal process.”

Hans Booms (1972; 1987)

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- Societal appraisal
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construction

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"... must practice a politics of memory and, simultaneously, in the same movement, a critique of the politics of memory."

Jacques Derrida (2002)

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