

## Affect and the archive, archives and their affects: an introduction to the special issue

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In recent decades, affect (both as a verb and as a noun) has become a major focus of fields as diverse as psychology and psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and critical theory. There is no singular crosscutting definition of affect. It may, for example, be approached clinically, phenomenologically, or critically. One goal of this special issue, therefore, has been to draw together and elucidate some of these different disciplinary understandings and point to their potential for research and practice in the archival field.

Arguing that emotions are innate at all evolutionary levels and in all animals, including humans, psychologist Robert Plutchik's influential classification approach identified eight primary emotions: anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation, trust, and joy. He represented these emotions, their intensity, the relationships between them, and the ways in which they can co-occur to form derivative emotions on his "Wheel of Emotions" (1980, 2001). His approach has generated a rich continuing research engagement around the affective and the human psyche. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on Silvan Tompkins' psychobiology of differential affects drew from critical to cultural theory as well as from the sciences. Her research is often identified as seminal in precipitating interest in affect on the part of cultural theorists. These scientific and cultural theory approaches do come together in works such as Sedgwick's; however, the genealogy of the study of affect in the humanities and social sciences is distinct from that in the more clinical and scientific

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fields. Since the 1990s, in what has been dubbed “the affective turn,” cultural theorists of affect have presented alternatives to the psychoanalytic approach to affect. They assert that affects, emotions, and feelings are legitimate and powerful objects of critical scholarly inquiry and exist in fraught relation to each other. By contrast, in other disciplinary and professional spaces, the terms “affect,” “emotion,” and “feeling” may be used with much less discursive tension or definitional precision, and even interchangeably.

Notwithstanding such differences and divergences, many of these fields are increasingly engaging not only with the record or the archive as theoretical constructs, but also with actual records and archives. Another goal for this special issue, therefore, has been to begin to probe what the archival field might offer that would cross-inform understandings of and debates about the nature, role, and effects of affect in such diverse fields as psychology, neuroscience, and critical theory. The archival field historically has had a central preoccupation with the actual and the tangible. Many practitioners and theorists continue to evince a profound distrust of stances that seem less than objective and of aspects relating to records and archives that invoke affective responses. And yet, in recent years, a growing number of authors in the archival literature have been focusing on some of the emotions represented on Plutchik’s Wheel (e.g., sadness, trust) and/or engaging with treatments of affect emanating out of such fields as cultural studies, gender studies, indigenous studies, post-colonial studies, anthropology, psychology, and trauma studies (e.g., Adami 2009; DiVeglia 2010; Caswell in press; Caswell and Cifor 2016; Caswell et al. 2016; Cifor 2015; Caswell and Gilliland 2015; Carbone 2015; Faulkhead 2008; Gilliland 2014, 2015; Halilovich 2013, 2014; Harris 2014; McKemmish et al. 2011; Wallace 2014). Such work contemplates questions such as What is the capacity of recordkeeping processes, or of records or the physical place of the archives to engender psychological and physiological responses in those who encounter them? What is the nature of those affects? What are the affects for individuals, communities and nations of the absence or irrecoverability of records? In what ways, and to what extent, do records, and the holdings of our archives capture or contain emotions and other forms of affect that were experienced by the creators or others engaged or present in the making of the records? How should the archivist represent such affect to potential users, and how should the archivist anticipate and respond to affective responses and reactions on the part of those users? What kinds of affect are experienced by the archivist? What ethical imperatives and dilemmas does a consideration of affect present for practicing archivists? What theoretical concepts and models might be challenged by explicitly incorporating affective considerations?

In November 2014, a symposium on Affect and the Archive was held at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), that brought together leading scholars not only in archival studies, but also in cultural studies, gender studies, literature, and anthropology (<https://affectandthearchive.wordpress.com/affect-and-the-archive/program/>). Symposium speakers reported on innovative research happening at the intersections of affect and the archive and especially on those relating to human rights, migration and diaspora, sexuality, labor, bodies and embodiment, and visual art. Building upon the momentum generated by that symposium and the

enthusiastic critical reception of the work it profiled, the call for this special issue hoped to identify whether there was a broader body of ongoing research addressing further dimensions of affect than were surfaced by the symposium. The authors included in this special issue each examine a different dimension of the relations between affect and the archive and archives and their affects, ranging from the affective impact of records on genocide survivors to children removed from their families into state care to the formation of communities and identities around records to the role of archives in societal reckonings with injustice and oppression. Nevertheless, the issue, which includes two of the papers presented at the symposium (Halilovich and Lee), focuses on similar loci of concern to those highlighted in the symposium. We can only speculate as to why this is the case: perhaps because broader society is particularly concerned with these matters in the first part of the twenty-first century; because these areas lend themselves to or necessitate considering issues of affect; because discourse regarding affect is closely related to ongoing discussions of archival ethics and activism in various human rights and community archives contexts; or because methodological and ideological shifts in other fields have encouraged scholarship in these directions.

**Marika Cifor** opens the special issue by introducing affect theory as it has been developed in cultural studies by feminist, critical ethnic, and queer studies scholars. She asserts that such an engagement with affect theory is a significant way in which dimensions of social justice for archival scholarship, practice, and professionalism can be elucidated, fleshed out, and ultimately confronted. Her theoretical approach and argument are grounded in a range of examples drawn from LGBTQ, feminist, and human rights archives. In particular, she brings new attention to economic inequities and their implications for archives under neoliberalism. In another contribution that draws on theory from cultural studies, rhetoric, and gender and sexuality studies, **Jamie A. Lee** analyzes the production of what she terms “the archival body” and argues that consideration of its dynamic distinct and diverse temporal situatedness might be used to augment existing archival approaches. She grounds her scholarship in her experiences as an archivist and user of queer/ed and transgender archives in the USA and Canada. Through the body and its senses—touch, smell, and sight—she argues that users are affectively provoked in the archives. However, it is more than just the users who have and experience affects—the records themselves are repositories of affect. Taken together, Cifor and Lee’s papers illustrate the rich potential of a range of theorizations of affect developed in other disciplines to challenge, intervene in, and enrich archival theory, practice, and professionalism.

**Anne J. Gilliland** and **Michelle Caswell** shift the site of theory building to within the archival field itself, thereby opening multiple possibilities for it to expand outwards and into other fields addressing affect. Using as a starting point ideas generated by their individual research relating to human rights, evidence, and records in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars and the fall of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, respectively, they draw on multiple examples to build multifaceted theory about archives and their affects. They assert that the roles of individual and collective imaginings about the absent or unattainable archive and its contents should be explicitly acknowledged in both archival theory and practice. To this end,

they propose two new terms: impossible archival imaginaries and imagined records. As they note, these terms “offer meaningful affective counterbalances and sometimes resistance to dominant legal, bureaucratic, historical and forensic notions of evidence that so often fall short in explaining the capacity of records and archives to motivate, inspire, anger, and traumatize.”

Responding to and reflecting on the deep implications of archival affects for human lives, anthropologist **Hariz Halilovich** employs a series of ethnographic vignettes from Bosnia and the global Bosnian refugee diaspora to focus on the significance of genocide survivors’ emotional and embodied attachments to records and memorykeeping. These records, both personal and communal, are significant as attempts of survivors’ to reclaim their own pasts and, in the process, to reaffirm their identities and recreate and sustain a sense of continuity in a post-genocide context. Halilovich’s work also makes important contributions to the growing discourse on human rights archives by extending understandings of the roles of records, archives, and personal and community memory in truth-finding, social healing, and reconciliation processes in post-conflict and post-genocide communities.

In the final paper, **Jacqueline Z. Wilson** and **Frank Golding** powerfully articulate another perspective on the implications of archives, records, and their affects on human lives and well-being. The authors, who both experienced out-of-home care as children, examine the significance of the archived records of their institutionalization on their own lives as well as on those of others who experienced out-of-home care as children in Australia. Drawing on their experiences and literature in psychology, they detail the affective ramifications of accessing these records as adults, with special focus on the records’ capacity to revive past suffering. They argue that direct participation by persons who experienced the matters contained in the records is essential if the process of revealing and interpreting the archives is to maintain the dignity of those who are the subjects of the records and also to ensure the integrity of archival research. Their work makes important contributions to ongoing archival discussions about participatory archiving processes and underempowered communities, such as children and their records.

With work ranging from the theoretical to the personal, the authors of this special issue inspire and incite us to examine and to understand affect as central to archives and the archival endeavor just as much as discussion of the archive has become central to many discussions of affect. Despite their range in subject matter, approach, and global focus, the articles included here cannot hope to be comprehensive. Readers of the issue will find many gaps and silences here, including an absence of articles directly addressing affect in relation to labor, race, and ethnicity, belief and faith, psychoanalysis, and the digital, to name just a few. Nevertheless, our hope is that this issue inspires and provides an opening for inquiry on such issues and many others. We also hope that considering and interrogating affect will serve to open rich and mutually informing future trajectories of scholarship and action within the field of archival studies and across disciplines.

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