The flexibility of the records continuum model: a response to Michael Karabinos’ “in the shadow of the continuum”

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Abstract

In an article entitled “In the shadow of the continuum: testing the records continuum model through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ‘Migrated Archives’” published in *Archival Science* in 2018, Michael Karabinos argued that the Records Continuum Model cannot be applied if the records under scrutiny have not been pluralised and that openness and accessibility are keys to the functionality of the model. He proposed a “shadow continuum” to analyse the Migrated Archives when its existence was unknown to the public. The author of this response believes that Karabinos’ analysis is based on a misunderstanding of the dimensions of the Records Continuum Model and that the addition of a “shadow continuum” is unnecessary because the model can be applied even if records have not been made public. She proposes an alternative way of mapping the Migrated Archives onto the Records Continuum Model, which highlights important issues relating to the ownership of the archives and to the way they have been managed and used.

Keywords Records Continuum Model · Migrated Archives · British colonial archives · Kenyan archives · Ownership of archives · Rights in records

Introduction

In 2012, Australian archivist Michael Piggott wrote that “the repeated assertion that the [Records Continuum] model is a worldview, that it can be read into any era, that it is era independent and relevant across cultures has never been seriously tested, by its supporters or anyone else. In its literature there are occasional brief attempts, but almost always for modern Western settings” (Piggott 2012, p. 185). Karabinos’ analysis of the Migrated Archives is one of the rare attempts to apply the Records Continuum to a culturally diverse context.

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In his article titled “In the shadow of the continuum”, Karabinos sets out to test the universality of the Records Continuum Model by applying it to the case of the “Migrated Archives”, records from British colonies that were transferred to the UK at the time these colonies became independent countries and then stored away and “forgotten” until 2011 when a court case brought by 5 Mau Mau veterans led the High Court to order that the British government release all the records relevant to the Kenyan case in its possession (Banton 2012b). On 5 April 2011, Lord Howell of Guildford, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, admitted that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) held records that had been created by former British administrations in thirty-seven territories (Howell of Guildford 2011). Between April 2012 and November 2013, most of these files were transferred to the National Archives where they were reviewed and described before being opened to the public (Anderson 2015).

Karabinos (2018b) argues that the Records Continuum Model cannot be applied if the records under scrutiny have not been pluralised and that openness and accessibility are keys to the functionality of the model. He affirms that before the Migrated Archives were publicised, they could not be analysed with the Records Continuum Model. He sees the fact that the Records Continuum Model cannot be used by researchers to analyse the context of records unknown to them as a “flaw” in the model. He asserts that “the continuum model is ill-equipped to analyse what is unknown – even when it exists” (p. 221). Therefore, he concludes that “[t]he universality of the records continuum model hinges on societies and situations where access to information, and pluralization, is ensured” (p. 221). He then proposes a “shadow continuum” to analyse the Migrated Archives during the time when their existence was unknown to the public.

I believe that Karabinos’ analysis is based on a misunderstanding of the dimensions of the Records Continuum Model and that the addition of a “shadow continuum” is unnecessary because the model can be applied even if records have not been made public. In this article, I respond to Karabinos’ arguments and I propose an alternative way of mapping the Migrated Archives onto the Records Continuum Model, which highlights important issues relating to the ownership of the archives and to the way they have been managed and used.

Karabinos’ argument

Karabinos believes that the Records Continuum Model is not adequate to explain the history of the Migrated Archives because the model is too dependent on pluralisation and on “a culture of openness and accessibility” (Karabinos 2018b, p. 207). He proposes to use instead a “shadow continuum” to analyse the processes that took place when the archives were not known to the public. This shadow continuum “can be visualized as the dark spaces of the records continuum model, where records become obscured and hidden from view” (p. 211). According to him, “[u]sing the shadow metaphor highlights the areas, where the actions of the continuum model are kept intentionally veiled by those who control a record” (p. 211). He claims that the “shadow continuum” raises “our awareness of these moments, where there are

no traces of archives” (p. 222) and that it “can help alleviate limits of the continuum model by reminding us that records can still be affected by aspects of continuum theory, while their contents are – at a certain moment – shielded from light” (p. 211). He postulates that “records that we have no knowledge of” and for which “there is no physical traces of their existence” exist in the “shadow continuum” where “they proceed through the dimensions of the continuum model, even when their existence is unknown” (p. 211). However, “[o]nce light is shone on a record or archive, it is removed from the shadow continuum” (p. 212) and it can then be analysed with the Records Continuum Model. Applied to the case of the Migrated Archives, “[t]he shadow continuum does [...] express and contextualize the unique custodial history of the Migrated Archives and similar records” (p. 221).

It is not clear whether or not Karabinos perceives the “shadow continuum” as an addition to the Records Continuum Model. On the one hand, he writes that it is a “supplement” (p. 222) or an “addendum” to the Records Continuum Model rather than a new model (p. 221). On the other hand, he asserts that: “It is not necessarily an addition to the records continuum model, but rather, an awareness in our consciousness to those moments, where the continuum model dimensions are obscured from view” (p. 212). He does not propose a visual representation of the shadow continuum, which could help to clarify whether it is a part of the model that is represented differently or an addition to it.

Although the idea of a shadow continuum may be useful to remind outside observers that recordkeeping processes may be applied to records away from the public’s eyes, I believe that it is based on a misunderstanding of the dimensions of the Records Continuum Model and of the reasons why the model was developed.

Response to Karabinos

Karabinos’ reading of the Records Continuum Model is based on a misunderstanding of its four dimensions. He focuses too much on the movements of the records through the Records Continuum Model and does not acknowledge that the four dimensions are present at the same time. His understanding of the fourth dimension, Pluralise, is restricted to what happens after the records are made public. He does not take into consideration the fourth-dimension factors that impact on the records before they are released outside the organisation that created them.

Karabinos argues that “[i]f we take pluralization to mean when records ‘function as accessible collective memory’ (McKemmish 2017, p. 140), then it is nearly impossible to say that there was pluralization during the period the Migrated Archives were secretly hidden at Hanslope Park” (2018b, p. 216). He therefore claims that “[a]nalysis of the Migrated Archives using the continuum model was impossible before they were revealed in 2011 – their pluralization” (p. 216). His description of the fourth dimension as “the dimension of access, and of the historian and other researchers” (p. 209) is to be contrasted with McKemmish, Upward and Reed’s description of fourth-dimension processes (2010, pp. 4451–4452). According to these authors, the Pluralise dimension “represents societal perspectives on recordkeeping – the cultural, legal, and regulatory environment of recordkeeping, which is

different for every society and in every period” (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4451). It is concerned with how this external environment impacts on the records and determines their nature and with “the capacity of a record to exist beyond the boundaries of creating entities, to meet the needs of those not involved with the actions precipitating record creation, capture and organization” (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4451). The processes that take place in the fourth dimension “enable records to be reviewed, accessed and analyzed beyond an organisation or individual life, for multiple external accountability and memory purposes in and through time and space” (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4451). Therefore, fourth-dimension processes involve

- Identifying social and cultural mandates for essential evidence to function as collective memory.
- Establishing recordkeeping regimes that can carry records beyond the life of an organization or person.
- Developing knowledge bases and classification schemes that represent the broadest structural and functional contexts of record keeping [sic].
- Putting in place storage and migration strategies that carry records beyond the life of an organization or person.
- Developing access strategies that manage access across jurisdictions (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4452).

Without these processes, records will not survive until the time when the decision is made to share them outside of the organisation that created them. These processes are recordkeeping processes that are applied by organisations that create and manage records, particularly in the government sector. These processes, at least the first four of them, were applied by the British colonial administrations that created and managed the records of the Migrated Archives and by the FCO after they received the records. Without them, the records would not have survived until the time when their existence was publicly acknowledged.

Records that have not been made public are nevertheless affected by concerns, influences and expectations from the fourth dimension (Reed 2005). A record has the potential to be kept as a “record-as-collective memory” (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4448) even if it hasn’t yet been made public and is unknown to observers outside the organisation that created it.

As Barbara Reed wrote,

[Records] are created with the requirements and constraints of each of the other dimensions of the continuum clearly affecting their creation and subsequent management. All records exist in each of the dimensions simultaneously, and we actively choose when to apply the specific characteristics of the dimensions both during creation as well as once creation has taken place (Reed 2005, p. 179).

The decision to keep records secret is usually justified by considerations which come from the fourth dimension, such as the need to preserve national security or to conform to privacy legislation. In this way, the records are affected by fourth-dimension concerns even though they are not known to the public. All records have a “potential

to be part of the collective memory from the time of their creation” (Reed 2005, p. 180). However, in practice, the people who manage and use the records, motivated by their organisational contexts, choose “to impose a particular dimensional perspective that informs the means of managing and organising records” (Reed 2005, p. 181). They can choose to keep the records secret, but that does not mean that the records are not impacted by considerations from the fourth dimension and that they cannot be analysed from a Continuum perspective.

The Records Continuum Model does not require that all records are pluralised following a specific pattern. Contrary to Karabinos’ assertion that the model is dependent on a culture of openness and accessibility, it can also be applied in contexts characterised by limited openness and accessibility. Not all records are destined to be made public. Sharing them beyond the confines of the organisation that created them is a potentiality, something that may happen if the people who created the records or those who manage them (or anybody who gets hold of the records) decide to do so. It is not something that will necessarily happen. Many records were never planned to be released to the public either because they were intended to be kept private or because they were of no interest beyond the immediate circle of their creators. However, the Records Continuum Model can still be used to map those records or as a diagnostic tool.

Karabinos’ assertion that the Records Continuum Model can only be used after records have been pluralised raises important questions about the intended uses and users of the Records Continuum Model. As I have mentioned previously, the Records Continuum Model can be applied even if records have not been made public. It can be used by the people who are in charge of the records. A current recordkeeping perspective can be applied to the records to determine what needs to be done to capture them and fix them in context so that they can be recalled and retrieved when they will be needed, and a historical recordkeeping perspective that focuses on the processes that have already been applied to the records over time can also be considered (McKemmish 1997, p. 7). An analysis of the Migrated Archives could have been done by the government officials who knew of the existence of the records and who had access to them. It could have helped them to place the archives in their context and to reflect on the implications of their decisions.

Karabinos asserts that “the accessibility of traces of the [Migrated Archives] collections prior to 2011 was not enough for a researcher to understand the extent of the collections” (2018b, p. 219). His use of the term “trace” in a paper about the Records Continuum is confusing. He does not acknowledge that the way he uses the term is different from the way it is used in the Continuum literature and in particular as a label on the Records Continuum Model. This could lead to confusion and misunderstandings. Karabinos defines “traces” as “publicly accessible information that offers enough data to contextualize a missing record, determine its content and existence, and to uniquely identify it” (p. 212). The traces, therefore, point to the existence of a record. However, “trace” is one of the labels on the evidential axis of the Records Continuum Model, where it is used to signify the “representation of the acts” that take place in the Create dimension (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4452). A “key component” of Karabinos’ definition of traces is “that they are publicly accessible” (p. 219). On the other hand, the traces in the first dimension of the Records

Continuum Model may only be visible to a small number of people involved in their creation.

Some clues had been left in the colonial archives that indicated that some records had been removed and sent to the UK (Anderson 2015; Banton 2012a, b). These clues may not have been sufficient for researchers to analyse the Migrated Archives from a Continuum perspective. However, the colonial officials and later the FCO staff would have had at their disposal sufficient information about the records to analyse them from a Continuum perspective. The Records Continuum Model was developed for practitioners to make sense of their practice, not for researchers (McKemmish et al. 2010, p. 4455). Karabinos' argument appears to be based on a narrow interpretation of the Records Continuum Model as a model to be used by researchers, which leaves out the possibility of practitioners using it to reflect on their practice.

Karabinos writes that “[the Records Continuum Model] has yet to undergo the necessary rigorous testing regarding its universality that such a model should to become engrained in a scientific discipline” (2018b, p. 218), but he does not explain how this could be done. One may wonder if it is at all possible to test the universality of a model in archival science. Has the alternative model, the lifecycle model, been rigorously tested in various cultural contexts? In practice, the lifecycle model takes different forms in different countries. For example, the French model of the *trois âges des archives* (“three ages of archives”) (Pérotin 1961) takes an approach different from that of the US model based on Schellenberg (1956). Do these national variations imply that it is not a universal model? Anyway, Karabinos himself admits that it is not an adequate model to explain cases of archives that have been removed from their context (Karabinos 2015, p. 7).

An important limitation of Karabinos' “shadow continuum”, from the perspective of researchers, is that, like the Records Continuum Model, it cannot be used by those who don't know about the existence of the records. It is a tool for analysis that can be used by researchers only after the records have been made public. At that time, they could also use the Records Continuum Model to frame their analysis. This restricts considerably the usefulness of the “shadow continuum”.

Upward and McKemmish wrote that

Models can never fully represent the dynamic, complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of records, and their rich webs of contextual and documentary relationships in and through spacetime. Within these limitations, what the records continuum model is reaching towards are ways to represent the continuum as richly and extensively as possible. Thus the records continuum model is a tool for perceiving and analysing complexity, providing multi-dimensional views of recordkeeping and archiving, ‘at the point of creation, within groups, at organisational and interorganisational levels’ (Upward and McKemmish 2001, pp. 39–40).

This is what I will attempt to do in the next section, where I will propose a Continuum analysis of the Migrated Archive.

A Continuum analysis of the Migrated Archives

In this section, I will first map the Migrated Archives onto the original model of the Records Continuum, then I will use two other models that I developed to explain special archival contexts (Frings-Hessami 2017, 2018) to see if they bring additional insights into the contexts of the Migrated Archives.

Numerous records were created in the British colonies that documented and supported British colonial administration. These records were captured in government recordkeeping systems and organised in government archives. Around the time the former colonies become independent countries, some of these records were selected to be transferred to the Colonial Office in London. They were removed from the existing recordkeeping systems and packed to be shipped to London. When they arrived in London, they became part of a different recordkeeping system and sent to storage. They were not made public before the time when a court case brought by five Mau Mau veterans led the FCO to admit their existence and the British government agreed to release them to the National Archives. During their time in the colonies and in the possession of the Colonial Office, then of the FCO, the records were impacted by concerns from the third and the fourth dimensions of the Records Continuum. The creation and capture of the records had been motivated by the needs of the colonial administration and the decision to keep them secret was motivated by the intention to protect British interests and avoid embarrassment.

All these processes can easily be mapped on the Records Continuum Model. If one were to accept that the records created by the colonial administrations were British public records—which is highly contested since the colonial governments were separate entities and their records were not subject to the Public Records Act 1958 (Anderson 2015; Banton 2012a, b, 2017)—it could be argued that the transfer of the records to London was similar to the normal administrative procedure of transferring records between government departments and that these transfers therefore do not justify any special representation on the Records Continuum Model or the use of a different model. It could also be said that what happened to the Migrated Archives is similar to what happens to any government records that are classified and only made public after the expiry of a closure period (although in this case, the records were kept hidden for longer than usual and became forgotten). The British colonial administration had put in place specific controls for handling “top-secret” documents in 1950 (Anderson 2015). Therefore, there was not a radical break in the way the records were managed after they were transferred to London since most of the records removed due to their “sensitivity” would have been treated as confidential government records when they were in the colonies.

Although it appears that the Records Continuum Model can be an adequate model to use to analyse the Migrated Archives, I will try to map the Migrated Archives onto two other models to see if they bring any additional insights into the processes that were applied to the archives.

Appropriated Archive Continuum Model

I developed the Appropriated Archive Continuum Model to analyse the Khmer Rouge archives that were appropriated by the government that overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime (Frings-Hessami 2017). I argued that the model could provide a better explanation for the special processes that take place when archives are appropriated by a successor government following a violent change of regime. In that model, I added an extra dimension, *Appropriate*, to accommodate the processes that occurred at the time the archives were appropriated by the government that came to power after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime and transformed into archives that supported its political aims.

The Appropriated Archive Continuum Model could be applied to the Migrated Archives. The transfer of the records to London could be viewed as an appropriation of records that belonged to the former colonies by the imperial government. However, there are some important differences between the Migrated Archives and the Khmer Rouge archives around which the Appropriated Archive Continuum Model was built. The processes that were applied to the records after they were transferred to London are not comparable to those that were applied to the Khmer Rouge archives, which were transformed into the opposite of what they had been created for, from records created as evidence against the enemies of the Khmer Rouge to records kept as evidence against the Khmer Rouge themselves (Frings-Hessami 2017). On the other hand, in the case of the Migrated Archives, there were both a continuity of government and a continuity of purpose. The records brought to London had been created by British colonial administrations. They were kept by the FCO as records of some aspects of British administration, which contained information that was considered too sensitive for the records to be handed to the post-independence governments. The repurpose and the reinterpretation of the records to support individual claims did not happen at the time the archives were removed from their countries of origin and sent to London. It occurred later, after they were transferred to the National Archives several decades later.

In the case of the Khmer Rouge archives, I argued that the political appropriation and reinterpretation of the archive that occurred were fundamentally different from ordinary curatorial processes (Frings-Hessami 2017, 2019). However, the processes that were applied to the Migrated Archives after they were relocated to London can be seen as ordinary curatorial processes. What was out of the ordinary was the fact that the archives were forgotten, although it is the size of the archives rather than the “forgetting” that is unusual. Individual records or files can easily be misplaced or forgotten, but it is highly unusual to forget about the existence of 19,957 files in a storage facility (TNA 2019). As in the case of Khmer Rouge records, parts of the original records were lost or destroyed, but the selection process for the Migrated Archives was directed by the British government (Anderson 2015; Banton 2012a, b), even though it was applied differently in different places (Anderson 2015; Banton 2012a; Hampshire 2013; Karabinos 2018a).

These important differences notwithstanding, applying the Appropriated Archive Continuum Model and saying that records that belonged to the former colonies were appropriated by the British put an emphasis on the illegal and unethical nature of

the transfers, which deprived the newly independent countries of important parts of their heritage (Mnjama 2015; Mnjama and Lowry 2017), and consequently on the moral right that the people from these countries have over the records.

Repurposed Archive Continuum Model

The Repurposed Archive Continuum Model is another model that could be used to analyse the context of the Migrated Archives. I used that model to analyse the context of Care Leavers' records in Australia and I added an extra dimension, Reclaim, between Organise and Pluralise to accommodate the special processes that need to be applied when records are released to Care Leavers (Frings-Hessami 2018). I chose the term reclaim to highlight the fact that the impetus for change came from the outside rather than from the organisations holding the records. I argued that releasing records to Care Leavers constitutes a repurposing of the archives that had been constituted to support organisational needs without any intention of ever releasing records to the children these organisations were taking "care" of or to their families.

The Repurposed Archive Continuum Model could be applied to the Migrated Archives. The Mau Mau court case can be seen as the impetus that brought up the opening of the archives. There are some interesting similarities between the Care Leavers and their support groups who came to demand access to the records about them and the Mau Mau veterans, their lawyers in the UK and human rights groups in Kenya who requested that the UK Government open its archives. Moreover, there is an important parallel between the Care Leavers who are reclaiming the records as their own and people from former British dependencies who argue that the archives belong to them (Mnjama 2015). After decades of British indecision on the legal status and the final disposition of the archives (Banton 2012a, b, 2017; Anderson 2015), the impetus for change clearly came from the outside and was accompanied by claims of ownership of the archives.

In the case of Care Leavers' records, the addition of the Reclaim dimension brings the focus of attention onto the special processes that need to be implemented when searching for records about Care Leavers among the organisational records and when releasing records to them. These processes should be different from the processes that records-holding organisations use for other types of records. The records need to be reinterpreted because they were written for a different audience "with minimal regard for what are today regarded as appropriate moral or ethical standards" (Wilson and Golding 2016, p. 106). They documented the views of the organisations and left no space for the voices of the children to be heard (Swain and Musgrove 2012); they contained many inaccurate and misleading statements (Golding 2016); they often recorded only negative incidents (Swain 2014), and were written in negative language (Golding 2016; Murray and Humphreys 2014). As a consequence, the records need to be explained to Care Leavers and Care Leavers need to be supported when accessing those records.

All these characteristics may also apply to some of the records that are part of the Migrated Archives and the way they represent Indigenous people. A particularly

interesting case is the records that supported the case brought by Mau Mau veterans in the High Court.

In 1961, the Colonial Office issued formal instructions about the destruction and retention of documents in Eastern Africa. A telegram from the Colonial Office sent to Kenya on 3 May 1961 advised that the documents to be retained and to be sent to London were those which might embarrass the British government, members of the police or the military forces or public servants, those which might compromise sources of intelligence information, and those that might be used unethically by ministers of the successor governments (Anderson 2015, p. 147). The colonial administration in Kenya worked under extreme secrecy. All African staff were excluded from the process of categorisation of the documents and the British used a “watch system” according to which some records were “labelled to be seen by British (white) staff only” and they created a new classification system in order to hide the removal of documents (Anderson 2015; Banton 2012b). In 1963, four crates containing over 1500 files, which the British did not want to pass on to the incoming Kenyan government, were secretly sent to London “for safe keeping” (Anderson 2015, p. 144). These crates remained in the Colonial Office/FCO storage facility in the London suburb of Hayes until 1994, when they were moved to a new FCO storage facility in Hanslope Park, 100 kilometres north-west of London (Anderson 2015, p. 144).

Anderson attributes the particularly large number of files from Kenya in the Migrated Archives collection to the fact that the Mau Mau counter-insurgency campaign “had created a political climate in which the Colonial Office feared retribution and legal challenge from the incoming African government” (Anderson 2015, p. 146). Some mid-ranking officials made the conscious decision to preserve records that were evidence of the responsibility of senior officers in the abuses committed against African prisoners (Anderson 2015, p. 147, 157). Around one-third of the Kenyan files relate specifically to the Mau Mau Emergency (Anderson 2011, p. 708). They contain “copious evidence of British abuse and torture, of the breaking of the rule of law, of executive interference with judicial process, and of numerous efforts made to conceal misdeeds, and infringements” (Anderson 2015, p. 156, 2011; Elkins 2011). Several documents include detailed descriptions of the methods of torture that were used in the internment camps (Anderson 2011, p. 711).

Since the 1990s, Kenyan human-rights activists had been campaigning for recognition of the abuses committed during the colonial period (Anderson 2015). After 2002, when the ban on Mau Mau organisations was lifted, the Kenyan Human Rights Commission took up the case and collected oral evidence from victims (Anderson 2015). The court case brought by 5 Mau Mau veterans drove the High Court to demand that FCO released all the documents in its possession that related to the Mau Mau counter-insurgency campaign. This led to the admission of the existence of the Migrated Archives. Records from the archives were used in court by the defence, and helped to bring a settlement through which the British government agreed to pay compensation to more than 5000 Kenyans who had been abused and tortured in the 1950s (Anderson 2015).

Using the Repurposed Archive Continuum Model and its Reclaim dimension to analyse the Migrated Archive shifts the focus of attention away from the archives

themselves and onto the people who have an important stake in those archives. The impetus that led to the opening of the archives came from the outside after they had been left in limbo for decades, and it was driven by claims of moral ownership of the archives. The Reclaim/Repurpose addition to the model can help to highlight the importance of the personal information that is included in the records and the potential impact that its release may have on the subjects of the records. The model could therefore be used to support calls for special access provisions for the subjects of the records, particularly victims of abuse, as well as to support claims of ownership of the records.

As in the case of Care Leavers' records, there was a power imbalance between the British colonial administration which created and managed the records and the people whose information was documented in the records. Furthermore, the use these people want to make of the records is radically different from what the records were intended for when they were created and captured in the colonial recordkeeping systems and when they were transferred to the UK.

Figure 1 presents a possible Records Continuum analysis of the context of the Migrated Archives. It combines the Appropriated Archive Continuum Model, the Repurposed Archive Continuum Model and Karabinos' "shadow continuum". The transfer of the Migrated Archives is represented like in the Appropriated Archive Continuum Model by an arrow between one Records Continuum diagram which stops when the archives are moved to London and another one which represents their re-creation, re-capture and re-organisation in a different recordkeeping system. Although the archives had not been made public before their transfer to London, the Pluralise dimension is represented by a dotted circle in the first Records Continuum diagram to indicate that although the records were not made public, their creation and their management were influenced by fourth-dimension concerns. The Reclaim dimension of the Repurposed Archive Continuum Model is represented in the second diagram by a curved arrow rather than by an additional circle to indicate the outside forces that pushed for the opening and the repurpose of the archive. Using arrows rather than additional circles can better represent the fact that Appropriate and Reclaim/Repurpose involved processes that may affect the records before or after they have been captured in recordkeeping systems and before or after they have

Fig. 1 The Migrated Archives through a Records Continuum lens

been organised into archives. These processes do not necessarily happen between the Organise and the Pluralise dimensions.

The shadow continuum is represented in Fig. 1 by the shading in grey of the Re-create, Re-Capture and Re-Organise dimensions in the second diagram, which correspond to the time when the existence of the archives was unknown to the public. However, the decision not to release the records to the public was influenced by concerns from the fourth dimension. Therefore, the Re-Pluralise dimension can also be shaded. Moreover, the content of the records was not publicly known before their transfer to London either. This means that to be consistent in the representation of the context of the archives, the four dimensions in the first diagram should also be shaded. The shading of the four circles on both sides of the diagram does not make a visual representation of the shadow continuum particularly useful, whereas the “Transfer to London” and the “Repurpose” arrows clearly represent important processes that have affected the Migrated Archives and that have continuing implications for the way the archives are managed.

Conclusion

Rather than being an addition to the Records Continuum Model, Karabinos’ model is an application of the original model that is taking place “in the shadows” when the records are unknown to the public. Karabinos’ use of the shadow continuum may be useful to bring attention to some aspects of the context of the Migrated Archives, mainly to remind observers that recordkeeping processes were taking place when the existence of the archives was unknown. However, it does not really show anything new. The inferences that Karabinos makes about openness and accessibility are based on a restricted interpretation of the Records Continuum Model as a model that can only be used by researchers analysing archives that are known to the public.

However, as I have shown in this paper, a Records Continuum analysis of the Migrated Archives can be used to highlight important issues relating to the ownership of the Migrated Archives and to the rights of the people who are the subjects of some of the records. The Records Continuum Model can be adjusted to represent exceptional recordkeeping situations. It can show where special recordkeeping processes are needed to meet the need of the people affected by the records. The Continuum analysis of the Migrated Archives presented in this paper contributes to demonstrating the flexibility and the adaptability of the Records Continuum Model. Continuum thinking offers a perspective from which to analyse recordkeeping situations, which can be used in a wide variety of contexts and which makes it possible to uncover important issues that affect the people whose personal information is included in the records.

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