PERSPECTIVES

# "Taking Our Own Measure": Archival Engagement and Storytelling

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## ABSTRACT

As archivists are increasingly called upon to measure and demonstrate our value, it is vital to consider not only what we are measuring and why, but also what is beyond measure (what can't be captured by data and metrics) and how we communicate value beyond what can necessarily be measured. In exploring these questions, the author offers some provisional ideas for reframing the discourse and practice around archival metrics and assessment, and for opening space to "take our own measure" more fully and demonstrate the true value of archives. Looking beyond metrics per se, the author first traces a broader notion of *archival engagement* as an outcome-oriented and people-centered conceptual frame for contemplating and assessing archival value(s) beyond measure, and then considers the role of storytelling in communicating value and ways for framing our stories in terms of archival engagement to convey meaning and impact.

## KEY WORDS
Advocacy, Archival engagement, Assessment, Metrics, Outreach

In a 2016 *New York Times* opinion piece titled "Don't Turn Away from the Art of Life," the literary scholar Arnold Weinstein laments the impact of what he calls "the regime of information" on the role of the humanities and arts, especially in higher education. Arguing for the continuing relevance of the humanistic model, he notes that encounters with art and literature "are fueled by affect as well as intelligence" and that such encounters ". . . add depth and resonance to . . . the shadowy, impalpable work of numbers and data." This rumination prompts him to question: "When and how do you take your own measure? And what are you measuring?"[1]

These sentiments may resonate with many archivists. We may sense that archives too "add depth and resonance to" the facts and figures of history and that encounters with the archives are also "fueled by affect as well as intelligence." We may share a similar concern about "the regime of information," in which we increasingly find ourselves operating, although we might characterize it more aptly as a "regime of metrics."[2] As evidenced by the proliferation of professional literature devoted to the topic of value and assessment,[3] as well as the rise of initiatives to define "appropriate statistical measures and performance metrics to govern the collection and analysis of statistical data"[4] and the resulting guidelines and toolkits,[5] archivists currently operate in an environment in which our work is more and more driven by data and based on evidence, and our value is increasingly defined by the "statistical measures and performance metrics" that we devise and employ to describe our services. For those in administrative and management positions, we may find ourselves navigating between the competing models of humanistic inquiry and organizational excellence and grappling with the real-world challenges of accomplishing our day-to-day work in the face of competing demands and internal pressures, let alone fulfilling our societal mission and purpose in an ever more divided world facing both internal and external threats. These challenges are only more pressing in the current moment as we reckon with the impact of a global pandemic, the legacy of systemic racism, and the increasing threats of climate change.

Given the current climate—organizational, economic, political, sociocultural, environmental—in which archivists work and live, we are and will increasingly be called upon to measure and demonstrate our value: the value of our work, the value of our institutions, the value of our profession. It is imperative that we heed and respond to this call and that we do so proactively and wholeheartedly because there is much at stake: from our mission as an archival institution to our purpose within society; from the archivist's role within the institution to our relevance to the community, society, and world; from our very existence as a profession to the survival of the archival record. The stakes are high and only getting higher, and dedicated resources are required for archives and archivists to persist in our work and for the primary sources to endure.[6] Within and across institutional settings and sectors, the persistence/existence of archives ultimately depends on our capacity to advocate for,

promote the use and understanding of, and communicate the meaning and impact of archives writ large and small.[7]

At the same time, the archives profession's growing focus on data and metrics prompts questions similar to those raised by Weinstein, prompting in turn deeper questions of a more critical, self-reflexive, and even existential nature:

- How do we take our own measure as archivists, as archival administrators, as institutions, and as a profession?
- What are we measuring? And why?
- What does assessment demonstrate about our value or about archival value, more broadly?
- What is beyond measure (i.e., What can't be captured by metrics)? And how do we "measure" what is beyond measure?
- More important (and the focus of this discussion), how do we communicate the value of archives beyond what can necessarily be measured?

In exploring these questions, I offer some provisional ideas for reframing the discourse and practice around archival metrics and assessment. Looking beyond metrics per se, I will first trace a broader notion of *archival engagement* as an outcome-oriented and people-centered conceptual frame for contemplating and assessing archival value(s) beyond measure, and then I will consider the role of storytelling in communicating value and ways for framing our stories in terms of archival engagement to convey meaning and impact.[8]

My viewpoint in this exploration is shaped by my own cultural context of identifying as a white, cisgender, able-bodied woman in a white-dominated profession; by the institutional contexts in which I work (previously an archives and special collections in an academic library in a predominantly and historically white institution and more recently in a research library in a federal institution); and by my perspective as an archival administrator and manager with a background in technical services and archival processing. Acknowledging my own positionality, the main points will, I hope, be of broad interest and relevance.

## From Archival Value(s) to Archival Engagement

What are the archival values beyond measure? And how might archival engagement serve as a broader term of practice?

In reckoning with the shifting value proposition of archives, it is important to consider the *different facets* of archival value, as they relate to the various manifestations of archives and the roles that archives play, including the value(s) of archives as

- Primary sources/records,
- Bodies of knowledge and practice,
- Institutions,

- A profession, and
- Social/cultural agents.

It is also important to consider the *evolving concepts* of archival value, as they relate to the various uses of and interactions with archives over time, the various relationships forming and formed by archives, and how these have shifted. These include concepts of inherent value, created value, added value, and affective value. For the purposes of this discussion, I offer the following definitions.

*Inherent value* refers to the value inherent to archives by virtue of their nature as the byproducts of activity, often expressed in creator-based terms of evidential value (as opposed to informational value) or primary value (as opposed to secondary value). Concepts such as these formed the basis of modern era or traditional archival theory and practice as exemplified in the writings of Hilary Jenkinson and Theodore Schellenberg, and they underpin other notions of value that are predicated upon use, such as historical value, legal value, scholarly value, and the like.

*Created value* refers to the constructed and competing values at play in the creation and use of archives, shaped by the ways in which archival methods and practices create (more than just preserve) value and, in turn, shape the *created* nature of archives. Concepts such as these are informed by the postmodern archival turn, as reflected in the work of Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz examining "archives, records, and power," among many others and across disciplines.[9]

*Added value* refers to the values increasingly grounded in practical and administrative considerations of measuring and demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of archival programs and services (what value we add) for purposes of maintaining or gaining support for the archival enterprise. Concepts such as these are increasingly informed by, if not the result of, the current climate of rising demand and diminishing resources, and the growing focus on metrics and assessment within institutional settings and across the profession.[10]

*Affective value*, based on a sense of the possible meaning and impact of archives on the user, refers to the emotional, intellectual, and physical responses/experiences engendered in the user through their encounter with archives. Concepts such as these are reflected in the variety of initiatives around archival advocacy focused on raising public awareness, such as the Society of American Archivists' "Archives Change Lives" initiative[11] and are also being brought to bear in critical archival studies focused on developing more liberatory frameworks and models for archives.[12]

All these dimensions of archival value can usefully be grouped into two broad categories based on the philosophical concepts of intrinsic value and extrinsic value.

*Intrinsic value* can be understood as "the value that [a thing] has 'in itself,'" or "for its own sake, or as such," or "in its own right."[13] For purposes of this exploration, intrinsic value corresponds to inherent value or the value inherent to archives as primary sources/records by virtue of their nature as the byproduct of activity.[14]

*Extrinsic value* can be understood as the value that a thing has not "for its own sake but for the sake of something else to which it is related in some way."[15] For purposes of this exploration, extrinsic value comprises the value(s) derived from the process of encountering, experiencing, and interacting with archives—in essence, *engaging* with archives. As a broad category of archival value, it encompasses the created, added, and affective value of archives as bodies of knowledge and practice, institutions, a profession, and social/cultural agents and is grounded in, although not necessarily determined by, the inherent value of archives as primary sources/records.

To "take our own measure" more fully and demonstrate the true value of archives, archivists need to address all the dimensions of archival value; the stakes are simply too high not to do so. In particular, we need to focus more explicitly and intentionally on the extrinsic values of archives—the created, added, affective values—that cannot necessarily be measured and therefore tend to be overlooked or to remain invisible.[16] Thinking in terms of *archival engagement* provides a broader outcome-oriented and people-centered conceptual frame for assessing both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of value and for communicating the values of archives more broadly to convey meaning and impact.

In defining *archival engagement* as a term of thought and practice, it is useful to think of it as both a verb and a noun. As a verb, it refers to the act of engaging, drawing favorable interest in or attention to archives (*the action*). As a noun, it refers to the state, condition, or fact of being engaged, the emotional involvement in or commitment to archives (*the outcome*), which in turn implies a being (individual or group) who is engaged, emotionally involved in, or committed to archives (*the people*).[17] It is also useful to think of the term as it relates to all the different roles involved in the archives: from creator to archivist to user to subject. From within their respective positions and to varying degrees, each role potentially engages with the archives they create, steward, use, or represent in ways that have meaning and impact.

In refining the term further, a useful model can be found in the notion of civic engagement, developed in the context of public policy, as the combination of civic awareness and civic participation. According to communications and political science scholar Michael X. Delli Carpini, civic awareness refers to the "cognitive (e.g., knowledge), attitudinal (e.g., interest), and affective (e.g., concern) involvement in civil society," and civic participation refers to the "individual and collective actions designed to address public issues through the institutions of civil society."[18]

Adapting and expanding these definitions for archival purposes, I offer a working conception of archival engagement:

> The individual and collective actions intended to cultivate ***awareness of*** and ***participation in*** archives and to ***create meaningful connections*** with archives (archivist's

role); as well as the individual and collective acts of becoming aware of, involved in, and connected with archives (creator's, user's, subject's roles)

By this definition, archival engagement takes many forms, from online discovery of archival collections to individual research in the archives to teaching with archives in the classroom (reference and instruction). It includes efforts to promote archival awareness and participation for purposes of documenting underrepresented communities (collection development and community archiving), serving the research needs of new and diverse users (outreach), and securing the necessary resources and support to meet operational needs and institutional goals (advocacy). It also includes the value-added activities to collect, preserve, and provide access to archives (selection/acquisition, processing, cataloging, and digitization). At its core, archival engagement in all its forms is about connection—connecting people to archives and facilitating meaningful connections with archives—through the sharing of information and energy and through the creation of meaning.[19] It goes beyond the transactional and instead encompasses the interactional, experiential, and relational.

As a broader notion, archival engagement encompasses both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of archival value, including what can and cannot be measured; and it helps to clarify the different dimensions of value that we want and need to communicate to stakeholders. This reaffirms that the value of archives cannot be defined by metrics alone and that assessing our work is not the same as assessing the value of our work.

Thinking in terms of archival engagement, the larger project of "taking our own measure" is more than data gathering or statistics compiling. It is, to quote historian Antoinette Burton writing about the project of history, "a set of complex processes of selection, interpretation, and even creative invention."[20] And it is directed toward the bigger purpose of communicating value broadly and beyond what can necessarily be measured (*results*), and more intentionally in terms of impact (*meaningful outcomes*). In this larger project, data are a starting point, not an end in themselves; moreover, data have their limits, not only in terms of what can be collected but also in terms of what they can show or tell. We use the data collected to infer value, to "make the leap" from that which can be measured (*users, transactions, and interactions*) to that which can't be measured (*meaning and impact*), from the what and how of our work to whom it affects and why it matters.[21] In the absence of meaningful data, we must find and create other points of departure and other modes of communication for telling the story of archival value.

## Role of Storytelling

As evidenced by the prevalence of the topic across sectors (from corporate to education to government) and the increased emphasis in archival discourse,[22] storytelling is an important tool for demonstrating value, enabling us to convey the data measuring our work and to explain or "show" the value. Storytelling is also a powerful means for communicating the value of archives, including and beyond what can necessarily be measured.[23] And, at its core, storytelling is a vital way to create meaningful connections with archives. We can best harness the power of story for these purposes by approaching storytelling in archives as an *ongoing, proactive, and multidirectional process of creating and sharing meaning* and by framing our stories in terms of archival engagement—that is, in terms of awareness, participation, and connection. Within this frame, we can craft and tell engagement stories about the outcomes toward which we strive (the what and how of our work to cultivate awareness of and participation in, and to create meaningful connections with archives) and the impact (who we reached, how they were affected, why it matters).

How do we tell the story of value—in terms of archival engagement? There are the stories we tell *about* our collections (communicating intrinsic value); and the stories that are told *from* our collections (communicating use value)—and, while important for telling the story of archival value, these stories are not a focus of this discussion.

There are also the stories we tell *to* ourselves, of which we may be less aware. A current storyline that holds sway in our professional consciousness involves the dual narratives of scarcity and overabundance. These narratives give shape to, on the one hand, stories of "not enough" (in terms of insufficient, dwindling, or stagnant resources) and, on the other hand, stories of "too much" (in terms of overwhelming inflows and backlogs of materials, increasing format types and complexity, or growing user demand). In my own experience as a processing archivist and manager of accessioning and processing programs, these are stories I told myself and others about problems such as the backlog, which led to focusing more on symptoms rather than root issues and being reactive rather than proactive in developing and implementing solutions. While we might not be inclined to regard these as stories of value or power, they do implicitly communicate and create a mindset of archives being undervalued and powerless, in effect creating a storyline of depreciation and disempowerment, which in turn reinforces and perpetuates the meta-narratives of scarcity and overabundance. So, to the extent that we become aware of these storylines and how they operate, and consciously work to shift the narrative to focus on what we have and can offer (awareness, participation, connection), rather than on what we don't and can't, these become stories of appreciation and empowerment that do in turn create and communicate value, as well as foster a mindset of abundance and agency.[24] For me, this shift has involved reframing problems that need to

be solved (such as the backlog) as polarities that need to be managed and focusing on what resources we have collectively and can share with one another toward determining what more we can do together, rather than just doing more with less.[25] In this way, changing the story we tell ourselves can better equip us to respond to the pressing challenges facing archives and to advocate for vital resources and support.

Then, there are stories we tell *about* ourselves—stories about our work, our institution, our profession. These stories typically seek to convey what we do and why it's important, whether that is for purposes of promoting use and understanding, building relationships with partners and stakeholders, organizational planning and reporting, or advocating for resources, to name just a few. Framing these stories in terms of archival engagement, we intentionally aim to convey the various ways that we *cultivate awareness* of and *participation* in archives, and the various ways that we *establish meaningful connections* with archives through our individual and collective actions. This framing enables us to "take our own [full] measure" across all the areas of activity in which archivists are engaged and through which creators, users, and subjects are engaged, and to communicate the intrinsic and extrinsic values of archives.

## Engagement Stories

How might we frame stories *about* our work in terms of archival engagement, to communicate meaning and impact and to explicitly address the extrinsic values that are often overlooked or remain invisible?

Leveraging the metrics that we collect (which often record the what and how much or how many), these *engagement stories* would use the data about what we do as a departure point for creating a sense of the meaning and impact (why it matters and whom it affects)—showing how what we do *cultivates awareness and participation and establishes meaningful connections* with archives, and for whom. Such stories might show how our collecting activities serve to raise *community or donor awareness* of the archives through outreach to specific individuals or groups, through acquisition of specific collections, or through documentation initiatives such as oral history. Such stories might show how our processing and cataloging activities serve to foster *user awareness* of the archives and *user participation* through reference requests or research visits for newly processed or cataloged materials. Such stories might show how our instruction activities serve to *establish meaningful connections between students and the archives* through the students' active learning experience in the classroom and doing research on their own.

All of these variously tell the important story of the created, added, and affective value of our work. While these *engagement stories* are based in part on the evidence of the data collected, they are more than just stories *about* the data or *as told from* data; they are stories that require a leap, whether of interpretation or narration,

to create the meaning that we seek to communicate. In the absence of meaningful data or when such stories are employed prospectively, they even require a leap of "creative invention." These *engagement stories* might form part of our annual plans and reports and our formal and informal communications in print and online (such as magazines and blogs) and targeting different audiences; they might also inform our presentations and conversations, shaping our "elevator speeches" and reshaping our professional storylines. The possibilities are endless.

As an example of "creative invention" to translate the data of processing metrics into an engagement story, the chain of events around the J. Herman Blake Black Panther Party Collection held by the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library nicely highlights the impact of processing. The collection was acquired in spring 2016 and was processed and made available shortly thereafter. An announcement on Twitter about the availability of the collection caught the attention of a researcher who happened to be in town for a conference, prompting them to make a special trip to the Rose Library to do research in the collection. Within the first year of it being available, a number of researchers used the collection in the reading room and in classes. Staff also mounted a small exhibit of materials from the collection, which moved the donor to tears when they came to visit. The spring 2017 issue of the Rose Library magazine included a feature highlighting the impact of processing this collection.[26]

Moreover, as the focus of our work evolves from resources to services to partnerships,[27] we might leverage the metrics we collect to proactively call attention to the harm caused by the work we have or have not done, creating a sense of the negative results (the gaps or silences in the records, the misrepresentations of groups, the communities not being served) and the detrimental impact (the symbolic annihilation experienced by those who are unrepresented and underserved).[28] From this departure point, such *engagement stories* might prospectively convey how different models of activity, such as postcustodial collecting and documenting, would raise awareness and promote participation of new constituents and/or establish meaningful connections with new community groups or audiences, resulting in a more inclusive archival record and cultivating feelings of "representational belonging"[29] for historically marginalized groups. Importantly, such stories about our work will not only communicate the value we add and create *for others*; they will also communicate the value we share *with others* and gain *for ourselves* (as individuals, as institutions, as a profession) in developing and deepening our own awareness, participation, and connection with archives through learning from and cocreating with partners. These *engagement stories* might serve as tools for outreach and advocacy, employed to garner institutional support for undertaking and sustaining such activities that are otherwise largely supported through grants or special funding. They might inform plans for reparative action to address harmful practices in collection

development, description, access, and outreach.[30] They might also serve as a gateway for envisioning and creating the future of archives for all.

For ideas and inspiration in crafting *engagement stories* about our work, we might look to some examples of data storytelling and storytelling beyond data. Data storytelling can be defined as "communicating with data by bringing stories to life with compelling data visualizations."[31] *Engagement stories* in this vein entail a creative leap from the raw data to a visual story that expresses a meaning beyond what the data convey. Administrative examples of data storytelling can be found in the dashboards shared publicly by museums and libraries that present graphs and charts based on collections, services, and programs data to highlight the reach and impact of the cultural heritage institution.[32] A digital humanities example can be found in the research project A Portrait of a Collecting Strength, which created network graphs based on descriptive metadata for African American manuscript collections in Emory's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library to visually analyze and represent the impact of the library's work building these collections.[33]

We might also look to examples of storytelling beyond data, such as the stories created as part of SAA's "Archives Change Lives" initiative that employ narrative techniques to create and communicate a sense of "how important archives and archivists are."[34] Then there are the impact stories created by institutions that often employ personal narratives to craft and convey a particular meaning—one of change and the difference made for the person(s) served—to demonstrate the value of the services provided and, therefore, the value of the institution.[35] *Engagement stories* in this vein venture further into the space of "creative invention," embracing the qualitative or even anecdotal "data" of personal experience as a departure point and explicitly employing personal storytelling as a mode of creating and communicating meaning in terms of impact.

To harness the power of personal storytelling for crafting *engagement stories* about our work, we might look to storyteller Micaela Blei's framework (or "bumpers") for personal stories, which she outlines as 1) The Context BEFORE, 2) And Suddenly…, 3) Trying to get what I want, 4) A Change, and 5) The Context.[36] Building upon Blei's "bumpers," I offer a possible framework for archival engagement stories that includes the following elements:

- **Context:** What is the need or problem?
- **Action:** What is the response (specific resource, project, encounter, or service offered)?
  - Who is involved?
- **Change:** What is the outcome, and for whom? What difference does it make for the person(s) involved?
  - Do they *become aware* of archives for the first time?
  - Do they *participate in* archives through hands-on interaction and active learning?

- Do they *connect with* archives in a way that has personal meaning for their life and work?
- **Impact:** What is the benefit of the change for the person(s) involved? Why does it matter?[37]
    - Do they see, understand, or perceive in a new way? (Cognitive experience)
    - Do they feel a sense of "representational belonging"? (Emotional or affective experience)
    - Do they connect with others in a new way or feel a sense of common humanity? (Relational experience)

While not explicitly framed as such, an example of an engagement story can be found in a *Penn State News* piece that tells the story of a collaborative student media project in the Eberly Family Special Collections Library through the lens of the students' experiences before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact for students in terms of awareness, participation, and connection.[38]

By employing such a framework for archival engagement stories, we can bring more focus and intention to our storytelling and engaging our audience, empowering ourselves as storytellers in communicating the value of archives. And we can do the same by attending to our choice of words when crafting engagement stories. Rather than using words that describe the *what* and *how* of our activities (collecting, processing, reference, instruction, outreach), we might choose words that convey a sense of meaning in terms of impact:

- Collecting → Documenting
- Processing → Preserving for access
- Reference and instruction → Inspiring discovery, learning, creativity
- Outreach → Connecting people and communities

A shift in language, however slight, can open space for creating and sharing meaning that resonates with ourselves and others in a more personal way. In my own work as an archivist and administrator, I communicate the broad meaning and impact of my work as connecting people to stories and empowering and inspiring people to tell their own stories. In my work with colleagues previously in the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State and currently in the Special Collections Directorate of the Library of Congress, I communicate the meaning and impact of our core, mission-driven work in terms of Build, Steward, and Engage, which is reflected in unit-level action plans and reports, presentations, and communications with internal and external stakeholders and which aligns with institutional strategic goals and objectives, all of which serve more broadly as stories *about* our institution.

Framed in terms of archival engagement, such engagement stories seek to convey the mission and purpose of our institution, sharing the heart of what we do and how we do it—in other words, how we as an institution *cultivate awareness and*

*participation* and *establish meaningful connections* with archives—in terms of whom it affects and why it matters.

What story do we tell about our mission and purpose? We can start by considering our institution's mission statement, how we convey what we do, and why it's important. Does our mission statement speak to the impact of what we do and, more intentionally, whom we aspire to reach? Do we use terms that will connect with different audiences? Does our story connect with the heart as much as the head? Do we connect with the story that we're telling?[39]

As an example, during my time in the Rose Library at Emory, the staff undertook a collaborative effort to develop a new mission statement, which didn't represent a new mission per se, but which affirmed and communicated our broader purpose of collecting and connecting stories and engaging diverse communities.[40] Similarly, when crafting a mission statement for the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State, I specifically employed archival engagement as a lens for our story:

> The Eberly Family Special Collections inspires curiosity, discovery, and creativity by connecting people to the distinctive resources of Penn State.
> - We respectfully **build** collections and documentation to ensure a more representative historical and scholarly record.
> - We responsibly **steward** resources to facilitate enduring preservation and equitable access.
> - We actively **engage** our students and communities to raise awareness, promote participation, and create connection with special collections across Penn State.

Importantly in both instances, we acknowledged that as our core work needs to continually evolve, so too do the stories of our mission statement so that archives remain vital and relevant for present and future audiences.

Going beyond our mission statement, what stories do we tell about how we achieve our mission, for instance, on our institution's About Us page? What stories do we tell about the work of the archivist through exhibits, programs, publications, and social media? How do we reveal the physical and intellectual processes that shape the archives to cultivate awareness and participation? How do we show the meaning and impact of the archivist's own engagement with archives in a way that engages users? These and other open questions point to further possibilities for archival storytelling and future directions for exploring archival engagement as a term of thought and practice.

## Conclusion

In responding to the imperatives of measuring and demonstrating value, archivists can't afford to "turn away from the art of [archives]" (in a slight rephrasing of Arnold Weinstein), otherwise we risk overlooking the values beyond measure and

diminishing the overall value of archives. The concept of archival engagement outlined here grounds what we do, how we do it, and why we do it in the meaning and impact that it has on the lives of the people, communities, and cultures that engage with/in and that are engaged by archives. As a term of thought and practice, it offers a way for archivists and administrators to "take our own [full] measure" and communicate value including and beyond what can be measured. Through the stories we tell about archival engagement, we can both engage our audiences and empower ourselves, further cultivating awareness, participation, and connection in the telling of these stories of archival value.

## Notes

1. Arnold Weinstein, "Don't Turn Away from the Art of Life," *The New York Times*, February 23, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/opinion/dont-turn-away-from-the-art-of- life.html?_r=0.

2. This is distinct from "the regime of misinformation" or "disinformation" currently facing us as a society, which presents its own concerns and challenges for archives and memory work but is not the topic of this discussion.

3. For instance, see the assessment-themed issue of *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 13, no. 2 (2012), https://rbm.acrl.org/index.php/rbm/issue/view/53, captured at https://perma.cc/7462-ZA5L.

4. SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on Public Services Metrics, http://www2.archivists.org/groups/ saa-acrlrbms-joint-task-force-on-public-services- metrics#.V5IYVo5if5k, captured at https://perma.cc/ SQ96-Y6BC and SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on Holdings Metrics, https://www2.archivists. org/groups/saa-acrlrbms-joint-task-force-on-holdings-metrics, captured at https://perma.cc/HSZ8-ZNHP.

5. Examples include but are not limited to About Archival Metrics, https://sites.google.com/a/umich. edu/archival-metrics, captured at https://perma.cc/MNV6-49T6; Society of American Archivists, "Standardized Statistical Measures and Metrics for Public Services in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries," https://www2.archivists.org/standards/standardized-statistical- measures-and-metrics-for-public-services-in-archival-repositories, captured at https://perma.cc/B2UQ-J99A; and "Standards Portal: Guidelines for Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries," https://www2.archivists.org/standards/guidelines-for-standardized-holdings-counts-and- measures-for-archival-repositories-and-special-colle, captured at https://perma.cc/4G6V-EEEE.

6. There is a wealth of recent literature that speaks to the critical issues facing archivists and what's at stake for the archival mission. One example, among many, includes the special issue on "Libraries and Archives in the Anthropocene," edited by Eira Tansey and Rob Montoya, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 2, no. 3 (2019), https://journals.litwinbooks.com/index.php/jclis/article/ view/156. The COVID-19 pandemic and social uprisings in response to racial injustice raise the stakes even higher, posing an existential crisis for archives and archivists that calls for both reckoning and transformation. A powerful example can be found in Zakiya Collier et al., "Call to Action: Archiving State-Sanctioned Violence Against Black People," Black Voice News, June 10, 2020, https://www. blackvoicenews.com/2020/06/10/call-to-action-archiving-state-sanctioned-violence- against-black-people, captured at https://perma.cc/F9WZ-FBQL.

7. In her seminal volume of the Archives Fundamental Series, Kathleen Roe makes a clear and compelling case for advocacy and awareness being "essential activities that underpin the work of the archives profession," and she provides a roadmap for archivists to develop an "advocacy frame of mind," outlining steps for developing goals for initiatives, understanding audiences and stakeholders, and developing a compelling message. Roe also details abundant examples of advocacy and awareness initiatives at both the institutional and professional levels, including those spearheaded by the Society of American Archivists, especially through the work of the Committee on Public Awareness and the

Council of State Archivists among others. See Kathleen D. Roe, *Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2019).

8   This outcome or impact orientation is in line with the outcome measurement approach of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Project Outcome, which focuses on measuring "what good did we do" (outcome or impact) rather than "how much did we do" (output or results). Association of College and Research Libraries, "Project Outcome," https://acrl.projectoutcome.org, captured at https://perma.cc/RRJ3-2X3T. In a similar vein, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has developed a Research Library Impact Framework and, with IMLS funding, is initiating pilot research projects and practice briefs aimed at helping ARL members "communicate the impact and relevance of research libraries' and archives' activities in ways that resonate with budget holders and stakeholders." Association of Research Libraries, "Research Library Impact Framework Initiative and Pilots," https://www.arl.org/category/our-priorities/data-analytics/research-library-impact-framework, captured at https://perma.cc/E884-UT7P.

9   Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1–19, http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/a:1020826710510. Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 171–85, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435620.

10  See endnotes 3, 4, and 5. See also Association of College and Research Libraries, *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*, researched by Megan Oakleaf (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010).

11  Society of American Archivists, "Archives Change Lives," https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/archiveschangelives, captured at https://perma.cc/M3T3-E9R3. See also Roe, *Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists,* 72–88.

12  For instance, see the special issue of *Archival Science* on "Affect and the Archive, Archives and Their Affects" and the article by Marika Cifor in particular: Marika Cifor, "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 7–31, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9261-5.

13  Michael J. Zimmerman and Ben Bradley, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*), ed. Edward N. Zalta (2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/value-intrinsic-extrinsic, captured at https://perma.cc/59V2-GG5G.

14  Likewise, this use of the philosophical concept of "intrinsic value" has some correspondence to the term as defined in the SAA Dictionary of Archives Terminology and as developed at the National Archives and Records Administration in the early 1980s, which emphasize the "usefulness and significance" of records as deriving from their "physical or associational qualities" and being "inherent in [their] original form." See SAA Dictionary of Archives Terminology, s.v. "intrinsic value," https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/i/intrinsic-value, captured at https://perma.cc/W8FE-WLMH, and "Intrinsic Value in Archival Material," Staff Information Paper Number 21 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), web version prepared in 1999, https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/archives-resources/archival-material-intrinsic- value.html, captured at https://perma.cc/L4U9-PY88.

15  Zimmerman and Bradley, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value."

16  Current discourses around invisible labor and maintenance in archives and allied fields speak to and serve to illuminate key facets of extrinsic value, for instance the emotional labor in the memory work of archives (see Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 23–43, https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13557; and Katie Sloan, Jennifer Vanderfluit, and Jennifer Douglas, "Not 'Just My Problem to Handle': Emerging Themes on Secondary Trauma and Archivists," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 6, article 20 (2019), https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol6/iss1/20) and the nature and impact of contingent labor in grant-funded projects (see the white paper by Sandy Roderiguez, Ruth Tillman, Amy Wickner, Stacie Williams, and Emiliy Drabinski, "Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums" (2019), https://osf.io/m6gn2, captured at https://perma.cc/6WVD-NDC3).

17  *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "engagement," engaged, engaging."

18  Michael X. Delli Carpini, "Michael X. Delli Carpini's Definition of Key Terms," Spotlight on Digital Media and Learning, http://spotlight.macfound.org/blog/entry/michael-delli-carpinis-definitions-key-

terms, available via InternetArchive: https://web.archive.org/web/20160305000920/http://spotlight. macfound.org/blog/entry/michael- delli-carpinis-definitions-key-terms (these links worked prior to publication but are no longer available). Elsewhere, Delli Carpini et al. situate civic engagement as a facet of a broader notion of public engagement; other facets include political engagement, public voice or expressive engagement, and cognitive engagement. Cliff Zukin, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini, *A New Engagement?: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 50–58. This broader framing also maps to the two dimensions of *awareness* (cognitive engagement) and *participation* (political, civic, expressive engagement) highlighted here to which I've added a third dimension of *meaningful connection* (affective engagement).

19  The notion of connection as the sharing of information and energy is inspired by clinical psychiatrist Dan Siegel's work on presence, the three pillars of which he identifies as focused attention, open awareness, and kind intention. According to Siegel, kind intention focuses on the relational interconnection that we share with one another and with the world, and he goes on to suggest that from a science perspective, we can understand "connection" as "how energy and information are flowing between our bodily selves and others." Dan Siegel, *Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence* (New York: TarcherPerigee, 2018), 82.

20  Antoinette Burton, Introduction, in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), 7–8.

21  Elsewhere, I apply a similar lens of inference to the work of archival arrangement and description. Jennifer Meehan, "Making the Leap from Parts to Whole: Evidence and Inference in Archival Arrangement and Description," *American Archivist* 72, no. 1 (2009): 72–90, https://doi.org/10.17723/ aarc.72.1.kj672v4907m11x66.

22  Recent examples range from Tanya Zanish Belcher's 2018 SAA presidential address, "Keeping Evidence and Memory: Archives Storytelling in the Twenty-First Century," *American Archivist* 82, no. 1 (2019): 9–23, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-82.1.9, to Micaela Blei's "Storytelling Workshop" held at the past several Society of American Archivists Annual Meetings to the open mic storytelling session A Finding Aid to My Soul, now a regular feature on the SAA program. Kathleen Roe also underscores the vital role of storytelling in conveying one's advocacy and awareness message: "We can relate information *about* the records we have in our holdings by sharing stories that reflect the individuals and events in them. We can also demonstrate the impact and outcomes that result from a user's research in our collections. Both can be very effective ways to demonstrate the value of archives to a range of audiences." Roe, *Advocacy and Awareness*, 64. See also Kathleen D. Roe, "Why Archives?," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 6–13, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.6.

23  Elsewhere, I explore "story and meaning" as a core archival value and potential source of empowerment for archivists and those we serve. Jennifer Meehan, "Archival Intangibles: Empowerment Through Story and Meaning," in *Archival Values: Essays in Honor of Mark A. Greene,* ed. Christine Weideman and Mary A. Caldera (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2019), 2–15.

24  I expand upon the power of the stories we tell about ourselves and our work in Meehan, "Archival Intangibles," 8. At a deeper level, I see this mindset shift as a necessary part of a larger paradigm shift toward redefining value and power relations in archives around the different roles involved: creator, archivist, user, subject. Similar shifts toward empowerment are also at play in the critical discourses on invisible labor and ethical practices that promote transparency and accountability, and in community-based archives that utilize an "asset-based community development" approach, such as projects funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services Community Catalyst Initiative, https://www. imls.gov/our-work/priority-areas/community-catalyst-initiative, captured at https://perma.cc/PF6S-RKQN.

25  I had the good fortune to join Jillian Cuellar, Audra Eagle Yun, and Jessica Tai on a panel at the Society of American Archivists 2022 Annual Meeting to discuss our perspectives on and experiences with "archival debt," touching on many similar themes and in which I explored in more detail the stories I/we tell about ourselves and our work in grappling with wicked issues such as hidden collections and silenced voices. Jillian Cuellar, Audra Eagle Yun, Jennifer Meehan, and Jessica Tai, "Forgiving (Y)our Archival Debt" (panel discussion, Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, 2022).

26  Sarah Quigley, "Powerfully Documenting the Black Power Movement," *Reveal* (Spring 2017): 12–13. This example comes from a joint paper that I presented with my colleague Carrie Hintz, in which

we discuss how we put data to use, in essence how we translate data for different purposes, turning our numbers about *what we hold* and *what we do* into stories about *why it's important*. With regard to "creative invention," we make the point that "While we tend to think of things as being lost in translation, in the context of data-driven practice, something crucial is actually found in translation—and that something is value in terms of meaning and impact. And by 'found,' [we] really mean 'created.' After all, we are in the business of creating value, both through the resources we offer and through the stories we tell." Carrie Hintz and Jennifer Meehan, "Found in Translation: Turning Our Numbers into Stories" (paper presentation, Rare Books and Manuscript Section Preconference, Iowa City, Iowa, 2017).

27  This characterization of the organizational shift in archives is informed by the work of organizational learning theorist Otto Scharmer, who describes such a shift as mirroring a larger shift in our economy "from a product-driven economy to a service-driven economy and . . . now shifting to an experience-, data-, and innovation-driven economy." He argues that in light of this shift, an organization's relationship to the customer must likewise "evolve from push (product driven) to pull (service driven) to co-creating (presencing)" and that "each relational mode—push, pull, presence—requires a different managerial mindset and relational competence." C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2016), 74–75. I find Scharmer's insights to be deeply relevant and potentially useful for reenvisioning "the archival enterprise" for the twenty-first century.

28  With regard to archives, the term "symbolic annihilation "denote[s] how members of marginalized communities feel regarding the absence or misrepresentation of their communities in archival collection policies, in descriptive tools, and in the collections themselves." Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, "To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing: Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 59, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.56.

29  As a counterweight to symbolic annihilation, "representational belonging . . . describes the affective responses community members have to seeing their communities represented with complexity and nuance." Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez, "To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing," 75.

30  Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, "Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 5, article 6 (2018), https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol5/iss1/6.

31  Brent Dykes, "Data Storytelling: Separating Fiction From Facts," *Forbes*, July 13, 2016, http://www.forbes.com/sites/brentdykes/2016/07/13/data-storytelling-separating-fiction-from-facts-2/#37e5dec13fd1, captured at https://perma.cc/TF2X-ZJCP.

32  Museum examples include Smithsonian Institution, "Smithsonian Metrics Dashboard," https://www.si.edu/dashboard and Victoria & Albert Museum, V&A National Interactive Map, https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1dbDO2xOMJ28QKvyALNx5HG3haug&ll=53.54333269035611%2C-2.959726699999986&z=6. Library examples include Arizona State University Library, By the Numbers, https://lib.asu.edu/about/numbers, captured at https://perma.cc/5FWD-5YR8, and San Jose State University, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, "By the Numbers," https://library.sjsu.edu/library-dashboard.

33  Anne Donlon, "Digital Projects–African American Cultural Networks: A Portrait of a Collecting Strength," https://annedonlon.org/digital-projects, captured at https://perma.cc/A9TF-AN8A. This project was also highlighted in Emory's Rose Library magazine: Anne Donlon, "Networks Demonstrate Collections' Strengths," *Reveal* (Spring 2016): 20.

34  Society of American Archivists, "Archives Change Lives."

35  In academic institutions, impact stories are often leveraged for fund-raising and public relations purposes to highlight the impact of philanthropy and research respectively. For instance, see Raise Penn State, "Impact Stories," https://raise.psu.edu/impact-stories, captured at https://perma.cc/G4GN-XHXW, and Penn State News, "Impact," https://news.psu.edu/topic/impact.

36  Micaela Blei, "Storytelling with Micaela Blei" (workshop, Society of American Archivists 2019 Annual Meeting, August 3, 2019).

37  Kathleen Roe argues that in advocacy and awareness efforts, the one big question for archivists to address is "why?": "Why do we keep what we keep? Why should people care? Why do archives matter?" Roe, "Why Archives?," 6. Expanding upon this in her volume for the Archives Fundamental Series, Roe

asserts that one of the most powerful ways to demonstrate "why?" is by sharing stories about the impact of using archives. Roe, *Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists*, 66–67.

[38]   Clara Drummond, "Students Persevere to Produce Film on Environmental Activism at Penn State," Penn State News, June 11, 2020, https://news.psu.edu/story/623058/2020/06/11/arts-and-entertainment/students-persevere-produce-film-environmental, captured at https://perma.cc/79NN-8UCA.

[39]   Kathleen Roe makes the case that people want to be inspired by citing neurological research demonstrating that "[t]he human brain literally responds to and is motivated by the limbic brain . . . the heart of heart and mind" and that archivists and administrators can communicate the value of archives "in a compelling way that speaks to the limbic or the heart when we talk about *why*." Roe, "Why Archives?," 8. I would amplify this further to argue that we can be more effective in *speaking to* the heart of others when we are connected to the heart or why of our work and *speaking from* the heart.

[40]   The mission statement developed in 2016 read as follows: "The Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library collects and connects stories of human experience, promotes access and learning, and offers opportunities for dialogue for all wise hearts who seek knowledge by preserving distinctive collections, fostering original research, bridging content and context, and engaging diverse communities through innovative outreach, programming, and exhibitions." Notably, the Rose Library's mission statement has since been updated underscoring how the stories we tell about our institution are continually evolving. See Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archival, & Rare Book Library, "Our Mission," https://libraries.emory.edu/rose/about/about-us/our-mission, captured at https://perma.cc/7N68-Y3YF.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jennifer Meehan** serves as director of the Special Collections Directorate at the Library of Congress, in which role she provides leadership and strategic direction for the American Folklife Center, including the Veterans History Project, Geography & Map, Manuscript, Music, Prints & Photographs, and Rare Book & Special Collections divisions. Prior to this, she served as head of the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State and associate director of the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University, and previously held positions at Yale University, the Smithsonian Institution, and Virginia Tech. Meehan has written extensively on archival concepts of evidence and value, the theory and practice of archival arrangement and practice, and the role of storytelling in archival outreach and advocacy, publishing articles in leading archival journals and presenting at national and international conferences. She has served on numerous Society of American Archivists (SAA) groups, including the *American Archivist* Editorial Board and Annual Meeting Program Committee, and she has taught SAA workshops on archival processing. Meehan received a master's in archival studies from the University of British Columbia and a BA in English and film studies from the University of California, Berkeley.