

Cassie Tanks. Understanding the processes and motivations behind participatory metadata: A case-study of the UNC Story Archive. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. December 2021. 58 pages Advisor: Rebecca Vargha.

This case-study of the UNC Story Archive examines data derived from semi-structured interviews to explore what processes are used by community members who participate in metadata creation about their story and their community. The findings reveal that the keywords and phrases (metadata) selected by UNC Story Archive contributors to describe their archival contribution are a result of an intricate negotiation of relationships, identity, and information seeking practices. The study data illuminates how contributors navigate relationships with the UNC campus as well as with those who are part of the “in group” and the “out group” of the communities each identified with. This results in metadata that reflects desires to ensure that their story is elevated as an important piece of the larger institutional historical discourse and to account for their safety, or to protect their community.

Headings:

Participatory metadata

Oral histories

Special collections

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESSES AND MOTIVATIONS BEHIND
PARTICIPATORY METADATA:
A CASE-STUDY OF THE UNC STORY ARCHIVE

by
Cassie Tanks

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Approved by

Rebecca Vargha

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INTRODUCTION

Community focused archive collections are important to critical archival and historical work. Practitioners and scholars in this field argue that individual “stories are historical and valuable in intent because they provide rich evidence about and insights into the past from the perspective of the community member” (Roeschley and Kim 2019, 27). Previous work on participatory practices in community centered collections has explored archives located in the communities they are documenting as well as the theory and practice of community centered archives at government, library, archival, and museum (GLAM) institutions. What is less explored, however, are community-based participatory archives at a GLAM institution where the community of the institution itself is the focus. To explore this niche of inquiry, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s UNC Story Archive and its use of participatory metadata tagging underwent study.

This paper explores why contributors to a student and alumni focused archival collection of recorded audio stories selected the keywords and subject headings (metadata) that they did. Specifically, this study focuses on contributors to the UNC Story Archive, an archival collection developed to preserve the stories of students and alumni who are part of communities that have been traditionally underrepresented, misrepresented, and/or outright silenced in the archives. This paper will use the case study to support a recommendation for similar participatory practices, when possible, to increase access for the communities the contributors are a part of and identify with

The UNC Story Archive

Overview

The UNC Story Archive is a collection of recorded audio stories in the University Archives at the Wilson Special Collection Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The collection is a recent addition to the University Archives. The framework began to be put in place in August 2020, the inaugural recording took place in November 2020, and it is currently a collection of thirty-three contributions and counting. Inspired by the North Carolina State University Wolf Tales collection and the Virginia Tech Stories Project, the UNC Story Archive strives to push against prevailing patriarchal, white, and cisgender-hetero-normative narratives in the University's history. It is a space for Carolina students and alumni to share their story and experiences that have been underrepresented, misrepresented, or outright silenced in the archival record. Contributors add their stories to the collection with audio recordings similar to oral histories, text transcripts, participatory descriptive metadata, and, when provided images and other digitized ephemera.

A founding principle of the UNC Story Archive is collaboration with contributors and the centering of their experiences. This extends well beyond the audio recording and into the descriptive metadata process. All contributors are invited to complete the "Story Description Form" (Figure 1) to describe themselves and their story in their words. The form includes the following introduction:

UNC Story Archive: Story Description

To provide essential and accurate contextual information for researchers interested in using our collections, contributors are asked to provide as much information about your story that you feel comfortable sharing publicly. We will use the information you provide to compose a description of the collection, which will be available and searchable online.

This is your space to create keywords and subject headings for your story. For more information about keywords and subject headings, and why they matter, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/KeywordsSubjects>

Contributors are then asked to answer the following questions:

- Name
- Pronouns, Gender Identity, Sexuality (Share to whatever extent you are comfortable)
- The University Libraries has adopted a policy to describe contributors to collections by racial, ethnic, tribal, and other similar self-identified categories. In the field below, please describe the racial, ethnic, tribal, and/or other categories that best describe you and the community you identify with. If you do not wish to self-identify, please type "I decline to state".
- Age at time of recording
- Place of interview (example: In my living room in Durham, North Carolina)
- Please list keywords you would use to describe your story in your voice- this can be vernacular or "code words" used by you and your community, ethnicity, race, religion, group identification, self-descriptions, and more. For more information about keywords, and why they matter, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/KeywordsSubjects>
- Please separate keywords with a semicolon (example: non-traditional student; grad student; adopted)
- Please list names and places that are important to your story. Also consider spelling out any acronyms and listing any idiomatic words/phrases that you think a listener might have difficulty spelling or understanding.
- Please separate names, words, and phrases with a semicolon. Example: Buster; VA (Veterans Affairs)

Of these questions, the only that require answers in order to submit the form are “Name”, “Pronouns, Gender Identity, Sexuality (Share to whatever extent you are comfortable)”, and “Place of interview (example: In my living room in Durham, North Carolina)”.

The image shows two screenshots of the UNC Story Archive's 'Story Description Form'. The left screenshot is the 'Self-identification' step, which includes five numbered questions with text input fields and a 'Next' button. The right screenshot is the 'DESCRIPTION KEYWORDS' step, which includes instructions, a link for more information, a question about separating keywords with semicolons, a text input field, and 'Back' and 'Next' buttons.

UNC Story Archive: Story Description

To provide essential and accurate contextual information for researchers interested in using our collections, we ask contributors to provide as much information about your story that feel comfortable sharing publicly. We will use the information you provide to compose description of the collection, which will be available and searchable online.

This is your space to create keywords and subject headings for your story.

For more information about keywords and subject headings, and why they matter, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/KeywordsSubjects>

* Required

Self-identification

1. Name: *

Enter your answer

2. Pronouns, Gender Identity, Sexuality (Share to whatever extent you are comfortable) *

Enter your answer

3. The University Libraries has adopted a policy to describe contributors to collections by racial, ethnic, tribal, and other similar self-identified categories. In the field below, please describe the racial, ethnic, tribal, and/or other categories that best describe you and the community you identify with. If you do not wish to self-identify, please type "I decline to state".

Enter your answer

4. Age at time of recording

Enter your answer

5. Place of interview (example: In my living room in Durham, North Carolina) *

Enter your answer

Next

Never give out your password: [Report Abuse](#)

UNC Story Archive: Story Description

DESCRIPTION KEYWORDS

Please list keywords you would use to describe your story in your voice- this can be vernacular or "code words" used by you and your community, ethnicity, race, religion, group identification, self-descriptions, and more.

For more information about keywords, and why they matter, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/KeywordsSubjects>

6. Please separate keywords with a semicolon (example: non-traditional student; grad student; adopted)

Enter your answer

Back Next

UNC Story Archive: Story Description

NAMES AND OTHER PHRASES

Please list names and places that are important to your story. Also consider spelling out any acronyms and listing any idiomatic words/phrases that you think a listener might have difficulty spelling or understanding.

7. Please separate names, words, and phrases with a semicolon. Example: Buster; VA (Veterans Affairs)

Enter your answer

You can print a copy of your answer after you submit

Back Submit

Never give out your password: [Report Abuse](#)

Figure 1: Screenshot of the UNC Story Archive's "Story Description Form"

The "Story Description Form" includes a hyperlink to an infographic (Figure 2) that describes to contributors why their keywords and subject headings are important. This infographic contains the following information:

- How are Keywords & Subject Headings Used?
 - Keywords & Subject Headings (K & SHs) are metadata about information or data
 - Information or data can be a photo, transcript, audio recording, a flyer, etc.
 - Metadata is information *about* information and can add context to the information
 - K & SHs are also used to help users or researchers find that information in archives, libraries, or databases
- Issues With Keywords & Subject Headings
 - K & SHs have been used to erase identities and communities and uphold oppressive ideologies or systems
 - Example: Library of Congress used "Illegal Aliens" as the official subject heading for people who are undocumented

- K & SHs can be overly clinical, and the context or gravity of the information can be minimized or lost
 - Example: The official Library of Congress subject heading for the HIV/AIDS epidemic is "AIDS (Disease)"
- The information *about* information can affect how it is found or who can find that information
- Why Your Keywords & Subject Headings Matter
 - Your K & SHs will better represent you, your community, and your story
 - Users and researchers will have a better understanding of the context that surrounds your story
 - The gravity or importance of an event, story, thing, or situation can be better represented
 - You can speak truth to power and speak truth to the historical record
- What Can Be a Keyword or Subject Heading?
 - Terms you use for self-identification
 - Vernacular
 - Sayings
 - Code Words
 - Code Phrases
 - Acronyms
 - Slang
 - Any word or phrase that is related to you, your story, or what your

 - UNC Story Archive contribution is about

Keywords & Subject Headings

Why adding your Keywords & Subject Headings to the UNC Story Archive matters

How are Keywords & Subject Headings used?

- Keywords & Subject Headings (K & SHs) are metadata about information or data
- Information or data can be a photo, transcript, audio recording, a flyer, etc.
- Metadata is information *about* information and can add context to the information
- K & SHs are also used to help users or researchers find that information in archives, libraries, or databases

Issues With Keywords & Subject Headings

- K & SHs have been used to erase identities and communities and uphold oppressive ideologies or systems
 - Example: Library of Congress uses "Illegal Aliens" as the official subject heading for people who are undocumented
- K & SHs can be overly clinical and the context or gravity of the information can be minimized or lost
 - Example: The official Library of Congress subject heading for the HIV/AIDS epidemic is AIDS(Disease)
- The information *about* information can affect how it is found or who can find that information

Why Your Keywords & Subject Headings Matter

- Your K & SHs will better represent you, your community, and your story
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- The gravity or importance of an event, story, thing, or situation can be better represented
- You can speak truth to power and speak truth to the historical record

What Can Be A Keyword or Subject Heading?

- Terms you use for self identification
- Vernacular
- Sayings
- Code Words
- Code Phrases
- Acronyms
- Slang
- Any word or phrase that is related to you, your story, or what your UNC Story Archive contribution is about

For any questions, please contact Cassie Tanks at ctanks@unc.edu.

Cassie Tanks | 2020

Figure 2: The “Keywords & Subject Headings” infographic provided to UNC Story Archive contributors via URL hyperlink in the “Story Description Form”

Positionality Statement

As the graduate assistant who has spear-headed the creations, collection, and management of the UNC Story Archive, the researcher is an “insider” with the group of

contributors I recruited study participants from. I had already engaged in email, phone, and video-conferencing correspondence with contributors. These communications pertained to their initial contribution to the archive as well as scheduling a pre-recording session, a recording session, and additional correspondence regarding the transcript of the audio recording. My relationship to the UNC Story Archive and the contributors served as the catalyst for this research study. Also, I am a first-generation college and non-traditional student, and this self-identification has affected my perspectives as a student and in my steering of the UNC Story Archive. Through conversation many contributors to the UNC Story Archive, and thereby the participants in this study, know of my self-identification as a first-generation and non-traditional student, as well as my personal relationships with people who self-identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I also have an “outsider” status in relation to the study participants and the research. Nearly all the participants were raised in North Carolina or the southeastern United States, but I only recently moved to the area after a lifetime in southern California. Further, many participants self-identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, a group to which I do not identify with.

Literature Review

Introduction

The underlying principle of the UNC Story Archive is to uplift voices and stories of the members of the UNC community who have been institutionally marginalized. That central ethos inspired this research. To fully appreciate the findings of this research and how it fits into the shifting landscape of archival and collection praxis, critical literature and practices must be evaluated. Scholars who have written extensively on community collections in government, library, academic, and museum (GLAM) institutions, assessed power dynamics inherent in traditional GLAM practices, and engaged with how participatory collaboration with recorded stories can push against marginalizing GLAM practices have paved the way for this work.

Community Collections in Government, Library, Academic, and Museum (GLAM) Institutions

It is easy to imagine an archetypical academic library: neoclassical columns, dark wood, golden accents, and a rarified air that seems to permeate everything. What is more difficult to imagine is how an institution so steeped in historical practices that have propped up narratives of wealth and whiteness for generations can be reformed to reflect the varied and diverse people in its community. Historian of Canadian history and Canadian national archivist, Terry Cook, challenges the traditional founding mythologies

of archivists and archival practices and, instead, argues that modern archival practices have evolved through four distinct, though not mutually exclusive, or entirely discrete, paradigms to today's focus on community.

The modern myth of the archivist as “an impartial custodian” of evidence charged with describing and guarding records as “authentic and reliable documentary sources” took root in the late 18th century height of European colonialism and imperialistic practices (Cook 2013). This, according to Cook, is the first evidential paradigm of modern archival practices. Since then, archival collections and practices have made way for the historian-archivist (the second paradigm), thanks to Depression Era social programs, post-war historical scholarship research interests, and the mediator-archivist (the third paradigm) because of the embrace of post-modernism and identity. The embrace of identity, argues Cook, is what laid the foundation for the activist-archivist and participatory archiving practices in GLAM institutions. This fourth paradigm of modern archiving is just dawning and by embracing community activists, as well as “ordinary” citizens, “archivists thus have the exciting prospect of being able to document human and societal experience with a richness and relevance never before attainable” (Cook 2013). Not that community archival collections and archivists are, by any means, self-actualized. The four paradigms described by Cook are not chapters in a proverbial book, when one is finished another begins. Rather, “deeper ethical issues of control, status, power, and neo-colonialism” in GLAM institutions must be constantly negotiated because community archives in these spaces force us to “think differently about ownership of records...oral and written traditions...localism and globalism...evidence, memory, and obviously identity” (Cook 2013).

This constant negotiation of the ethical issues of institutional control, power, and neo-colonialism is central to the work of Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez- scholars, professors, and practitioners of critical archiving. In Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez's article, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," the authors investigate the impact of the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), a community archive that the authors co-founded. At the center of the research is the framework of *symbolic annihilation*, its pervasiveness in institutional archives, and how community archives push against and counter this erasure (Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez 2016). *Symbolic Annihilation* is a "term media studies scholars use to describe the ways in which mainstream media ignore, misrepresent, or malign minoritized groups" which applies to archives at GLAM institutions due to power imbalances, status, and control of a narrative that presents "the white experience as universal" (Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez 2016). Through interviews with members of the South Asian community, Caswell, Cifor, and Rodriguez found that, though interviewees did not use the theoretical term itself, concepts of feeling *symbolic annihilation* of their community in traditional archives pervaded (Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez 2016).

However, after exploring SAADA, interviewees' responses gave rise to a new theoretical framework: *representational belonging*, "which serves as a counterweight to symbolic annihilation and describes the affective responses community members have to seeing their communities represented with complexity and nuance" (Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez 2016). In all, Caswell, Cifor, and Rodriguez's research found that community archives and archival collections have the power to push against institutional erasure by

giving space for “a community to assert its existence in the past” and allows “individuals to ‘suddenly see themselves existing’ in ways that they previously could not and did not” (Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez 2016). This work emphasizes the importance of participatory and community archives in progressing modern archiving into its next iteration- its fourth paradigm if you will- and highlights the ongoing struggle with power dynamics between traditional institutions and communities.

Power Dynamics

In the larger conversation about archives and community, *power* is central (Caswell 2014). Community archives and archival collections confront the power held by traditional institutions because they “recast histories...and seek to undermine both the distortions and omissions of orthodox historical narratives, as well as the archive and heritage collections that sustain them” which “can be read as a direct challenge to the failure of mainstream repositories to collect a more accurate and robust representation of society” (Caswell 2014). In short, community archival practice’s reclamation of their power through representation is a reclamation of history for all of society because it re-centers the people, rather than the institutional narrative. However, much work remains to be done. As Terry Cook presented so effectively, the age of communal archiving and the “activist-archivist” has only just begun.

Arnold K. Ho, Steven O. Roberts, and Susan A. Gelman, each a doctor and scholar of psychology, have uncovered how the mis-categorization of multiracial people is related to racial essentialism, the belief that race has inherent and immutable properties, and stereotyping that is connected to an individual’s negative biases towards Black people. In “Essentialism and Racial Bias Jointly Contribute to the Categorization

of Multiracial Individuals,” Ho, Roberts, and Gelman measured how 121 American adults categorized multiracial faces as either Black, Black-White, or White (Ho, Roberts, and Gelman 2015). Their findings that stereotypical “pro-white/anti-Black” biases influenced how a person categorized another person is significant in understanding the power dynamics in archives, where people quite literally categorize the works, images, and other information of other people. Community archives can combat this mis-categorization power imbalance, which can have deleterious and damaging long-term effects on a community by implementing participatory practices (such as participatory subject headings and keywords) and centering the community members.

Mis-categorization and institutional power imbalances that traditionally favor white narratives is not limited to racial biases, it affects people in the LGBTQIA+ community, past and present. Lizeth Zepeda, a library and archival science scholar and practitioner, examines how “processing through a Queer¹ of color lens can transform” GLAM institutions that have “reaffirmed hegemonic power structures” through the erasure of marginalized communities by “contextualizing and uncovering erased archival histories (Zepeda 2018). There is also power in a community’s decision to be silent or eschew a GLAM institutional archive altogether. At the Association of Canadian Archivist conference in 2004, archivist and scholar Rodney G. S. Carter complicates notions of power between an institution and communities it has marginalized. Carter argues that archivists must be sensitive to the fact that “certain groups may choose

¹ Although “Queer” is a term many self-identify with and take pride in as a means to uplift the LGBTQIA+ community, those with intersectional identities, and those who have been, and continue to be, marginalized, I will continue to use the term “LGBTQIA+” for the duration of this paper (except when explicitly acknowledging Queer theorists and theory, when discussing the term directly, or quoting study participants who use the term). This is because, although I support the Queer/LGBTQIA+ community, I am not a member of it and want to respect any who may feel uncomfortable with an “outsider” using that term.

silence” and “offers a wider definition of power...how invoking silence can be a strategy used by the marginalized *against* the powerful” (Carter 2006).

Not that all silences are a function of a group asserting itself against an institution that has maligned it. But this does underscore that silence, much like power, is very complex. In “Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence,” Carter puts the onus on archivists to “not further marginalize the marginalized” by resisting the urge to “speak for others” and if all communities trust or want to be part of a GLAM institution because of past abuses of power (Carter 2006). By being sensitive to this, an archivist can empower a community by actively creating opportunities for individuals to engage with a collection. This can be through making injustices known, creating finding aids, curating exhibits, and giving individuals a voice by “participat[ing] in the contextualization of documents through the use of “liberatory descriptive standards” and giving members of a community the opportunity to describe themselves (Carter 2006).

Oral Histories and Collection Participation

The practice of community archival collections in GLAM institutions and the inherent power-dynamics that have traditionally silenced critical groups make an interesting argument for incorporating participatory practices. Increasing avenues for community and individual participation is vital, especially when those collections include oral histories or recorded audio stories. Ana Roeschley and Jeonghyun Kim, both library and archival science scholars and practitioners, use a case study of a community-based archival collection affiliated with a GLAM institution to advance the argument that community participation is critical to properly contextualizing the archive and that it

plays an important role in communal memory making. In ““Something that feels like a community””: the role of personal stories in building community-based participatory archives”, Roeschley and Kim conduct semi-structured interviews with contributors to the Massachusetts Memories Road Show, a community archival collection incorporated into the University of Massachusetts Boston’s Joseph P. Healey Library’s Open Archives Digital Collections, to understand how the sharing of oral histories and personal objects shapes the community records and collective memory (Roeschley and Kim, 2019).

Through their interviews with contributors and analysis of oral histories, Roeschley and Kim found that four critical themes emerged: personal connections, participation in the community, community history, and community belonging. These findings reinforce how community participation brings records and memory making together in a way that traditional institutionalized practices cannot by providing “detailed and holistic descriptions of the collection and the community itself” (Roeschley and Kim, 2019).

Participation is a way for a community to holistically describe itself on its own terms and it can also be used as a method to decolonize methodological approaches to description in archives. Lauren Haberstock, an archival science scholar and practitioner, uses case studies of community archival collections to examine how subject headings, classification schemas, and categorization can push against, or reinforce, colonization in the archives. In “Participatory description: decolonizing descriptive methodologies in archives,” Haberstock argues for embracing community contributors as co-creators of the archive as well as creating participatory opportunities to decolonize categorization “through the exploration of relationships” between that record and the community (Haberstock 2020).

This research picks up at this last point: the examination and exploration of an individual's relationship between their community and the records they contributed to the UNC Story Archive.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Why do contributors to a student and alumni-focused archival collection of recorded audio stories select specific self-identifying descriptors and subject headings (metadata) to describe their submissions?

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Methods of Previous Literature

The study of participatory archival practices has been receiving increased scholarly inquiry, especially with the prevalence of digital archival collections that can increase the number of people who can contribute. However, the dominant methodological frameworks have been a combination of semi-structured interviews and surveys of archival workers who engage with participatory archival collections as well as mixed-method content analysis of metadata in participatory archival collections. Archive staff who worked at community archives whose collections house materials of “marginalized communities documented by those communities themselves” are often interviewed to understand how their archival practices have shifted (Zavala et al. 2017). This body of work has contributed significantly to the understanding of the processes used by archivists working with community collections but ignores the critical role contributors have in the collection.

However, recent scholars are taking notice of this and the contributors themselves are beginning to be at the center of more studies. Community members who contributed history interviews and photographs to the University of Massachusetts Boston’s Digital Collections’ Boston Harbor Islands Massachusetts Memories Road Show were randomly selected to be interviewed for a study. The interview transcripts were iteratively coded

“to categorize the photographs contributed by archives contributors and... identified themes from the memories and sentiments evoked from the stories behind the photographs” (Roeschley and Kim 2019). In another study, the metadata for this same collection “was analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis” and “an inductive open coding approach” (Roeschley, Kim, and Zavalina 2020). Yet, a dearth of “literature on contributor-created metadata in participatory archives” remains (Roeschley, Kim, and Zavalina 2020, 646). The semi-structured qualitative methods used by this study will begin to fill this identified gap.

Qualitative Semi-structured Interviews

The focus of this study- the contributor's decision-making process when participating in metadata creation- was ideally situated to be explored via semi-structured interviews. The research area of focus touches on “emotionally sensitive issues” and the semi-structured interview format allows the contributor’s approaches to be developed and explained in their words (Astedt-Kurki and Heikkinen 1994). Additionally, the participants in this study were recruited due to their involvement in a collection that specifically sought those with intersectional identities and/or belonging to a community that has been traditionally marginalized by archives. The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews means “it was possible to focus on the issues that were meaningful for the participant, allowing diverse perceptions to be expressed” (Kallio et al. 2016).

Semi-structured interviews lead to an understanding of “why people act in particular ways, by exploring participants' perceptions, experiences and attitudes” and to “generate ideas to develop or change practice” (Harvey-Jordan and Long 2001). Because participatory archival collections and community archives seek to critically re-center

communities, understanding the processes behind their participation based upon data reflective of their experiences is key. Semi-structured interviews use theory-driven and hypotheses-driven questions to “mak[e] the interviewees’ implicit knowledge more explicit” (Flick 2009, 153).

Content Analysis

Transcripts of the semi-structured interviews were analyzed through an iterative latent content analysis process via emergent coding. Specifically, this study followed Strauss and Corbin’s Grounded Theory process for emergent coding. First, transcripts underwent open coding, which is the “process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 61). Second, the open coded transcript data underwent axial coding. During this process, the coded data were related to one another to create linkages and subthemes between participant’s processes. The axially coded data were then “put back together in new ways...by making connections between categories” through using a coding paradigm that involved “conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 96). Finally, the axially coded data underwent selective coding, where “core categor[ies]” were selected after “systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need[ed] further refinement and development” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 116).

By carefully reading and analyzing the transcripts, themes and contextual information that addressed the central research question began to emerge. This level of latent thematic coding for content analysis was highly effective because the “research issue is the social distribution of perspectives on a phenomenon or a process” and data is

collected with a method that “seeks to guarantee comparability by defining topics, and at the same time remaining open to the views related to them” (Flick 2009, 318).

RESEARCH APPROACH

Overview

The researcher conducted participatory archival research through semi-structured interviews of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill students and alumni who have contributed to the UNC Story Archive collection in the University Archives at Wilson Special Collections library. Using a qualitative framework, I analyzed the transcript data thematically using inductive latent coding and have suggested a participatory archival practice based upon the concepts and ideas that emerged.

The interviews explored the thought process, motivations, sense of community, or other factors that led the participant to assign the metadata tags for their contribution to the UNC Story Archive. When invited to participate in the metadata process, the contributors were instructed to provide keywords and phrases that they felt best described them, the subject of their stories, and might help others find their story. The contributor's rationale on this last point received particular focus during the interviews because it offered insight into how interaction with information is perceived by the individual and that individual's relationship to their self-identified communities. This study used a qualitative methodology to gather, analyze, and make meaning from the data. Interview transcript data underwent inductive coding for latent themes then analyzed for trends that emerged. This work expands on critical archival practices that seek to ““maximiz[e]

human rights through participatory archiving” (Evans, McKemmish, and Rolan 2017, 25).

Due to COVID-19, this study and all interviews proceeded remotely.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the pool of UNC Story Archive contributors who met two specific requirements. First, the contributor provided descriptive keywords and subject headings (metadata) to describe their contribution to the UNC Story Archive. Filling out the “Story Description Form” is not mandatory, so some contributors opted out of providing keywords and subject headings. While this in no way detracts from the importance of their story, it does mean that these contributors were ineligible to be recruited in this study given the narrow focus. Second, the contributor’s story and keywords and subject headings (metadata) must have been fully available in the Digital Collections Repository, where the UNC Story Archive collection is housed, to have been eligible for recruitment. The purpose for this requirement is to ensure that those who specified that their story and related materials *not* be made available for a number of years do not have their identity or information compromised before that agreed date.

Contributors to the UNC Story Archive who met the two stipulations above were sent a recruitment email (Appendix 14.1, “Recruitment Email”) with an attachment that detailed the IRB study information, the risks of participation, and the security measures that would be employed with their data if they consented to participating (Appendix 14.2, “Consent Information Attachment”).

Of the twenty-one eligible UNC Story Archive contributors, seven consented to participating in the study. Those who consented to participating in the study were then

sent a confirmation email (Appendix 14.3, “Confirmation Email”) which contained information about the remote interview and a URL for the remote interview. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, all interviews were conducted remotely using the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Each participant received a unique meeting URL that required a specific password and the “waiting room” feature was enabled so that I had an additional layer of control over access into the Zoom “room.”

Data Collection

Data for this study is derived entirely from the anonymized transcripts of the semi-structured interviews of participants. Though participants were encouraged to speak as freely and candidly as they felt comfortable with- and they often did- the interviews were steered by specific questions (Appendix 14.4, “Guiding Questions”) and a guide (Appendix 14.5, “Interview Guide”). Seven participants in total were interviewed over the course of one month. The interviews averaged twenty-two minutes long, not including the discussion of study participation and consent to record (See “Interview Guide,” Appendix 14.5) or the salutations after the recorded interview concluded.

Data Analysis

The interview data, in the form of anonymized transcripts, underwent an iterative axial coding process that allowed emergent concepts and themes to be identified. Each anonymized transcript underwent independent latent coding where the participants' insight, underlying thought processes, motivations, and self-identified positionality were identified and labeled. After this, the codes that emerged from this independent review process were axially analyzed to begin to understand the intersections and similarities

between each participant's data. The transcripts were then reviewed simultaneously as a whole, rather than as independent "pieces," multiple times to identify and understand the primary themes of the data. Through this iterative process, the concepts discussed by each participant were brought together and thematically grouped.

FINDINGS

Three dominant themes emerged from the data- relationships, identity, and information seeking. Each of these themes is, in turn, made whole by nuanced subthemes.

Relationships

The data revealed how participants used their keywords and subject headings to both navigate and reflect intricate relationships. Particularly, participants selected metadata that negotiated relationships with the UNC campus, relationships with the “in group,” and relationships with the “out group.” This is especially important and revealing. The purpose of the UNC Story Archive is to uplift and facilitate space in the historical record for the experiences of those in the Carolina community who belong to historically marginalized communities, and all the participants in this study are no exception. As such, their process for selecting keywords and subject headings (metadata) often includes negotiating problematic, sometimes even threatening, relationships.

Relationships with the UNC Campus

A primary relationship that participants considered in the process of selecting keywords and subject headings (metadata) was their relationship with UNC. Some participants selected the names of faculty and other key individuals who had a positive impact on their time on the UNC campus who they hoped to uplift through inclusion as a metadata term or create an entry point for users into exploration of that individual's work

and meaning to Carolina. Participant 002 said, “the people I listed, they're the professors...and that's a very specific point that somebody might be interested in the history of, either they heard something about him, and they want to find out more about”. Similarly, Participant 003 explained how “the names of some of the people that [I include]- the two union directors I list, both of whom were very instrumental not just in establishing CGA [Carolina Gay Association] but also...creat[ing] a space for a Black cultural center in [the] student union and doing so in a manner that he didn't have to go through what could have been a politically fraught approval process by the board of directors of the union”.

However, the data revealed that participants were strategic when considering the terms they would ultimately select and how they carefully navigated relationships with UNC. Participant 006 said “I picked those [terms] because those were both true to my experience and who I am, but they also were sort of like a loving middle finger to my privacy within the [UNC] archive”. Further, Participant 006 elaborated by saying “looking back at the narrative I presented and the way I described myself, I'm thinking a lot about the discomfort I felt at UNC”. Participant 002 also negotiated their² relationship to Carolina by deciding to *not* include particular keywords. Participant 002 explained that “in general, I had a phenomenal experience in that group [discussed in the recording], so I didn't want it "permanently tarnished" by the one incident I mentioned, because that represented just a handful of people, a few who actually apologized later to some of the

² The themes and subthemes are supported by quotes from the participants. However, it should be noted that the singular “they” is often used when referring to the participant being quoted. This is not an indication of the participant’s pronouns, though that is applicable for some, but as a way to support anonymization by referring to all in the same way.

key players”. Further, Participant 002 explains that “while it is a significant moment in my story...I don't want somebody searching for [the name and/or acronym of that group] to encounter this and decide that the group was or is homophobic”.

Similarly, Participant 004 considered the relationship with UNC during the process of selecting keywords and subject headings. Like Participant 002, Participant 004 used their understanding of this relationship to intentionally *not* include certain keywords and subject headings. Though, this exclusion was due to a desire to avoid association with a problematic right-wing campus organization that is still active which the perpetrators of the incident established. Participant 004 explains that “there were descriptors that I considered listing and then I said *man I don't really want to draw attention to myself via those people* [and what they did to the campus LGBTQIA+ student organization]. I thought *well you know I could always say to Cassie, I could say the name of the people of the organization that did this*; and then I thought *you know what, I don't want to open it up to those people finding us in the archives and causing trouble 30 years later*”.

Relationship with the “In Group”

The sometimes-complicated relationship between the contributor’s UNC Story Archive contribution metadata and those who are part of the “in group” played a significant role in the participant’s selection process. Participant 001 explained the process they used in selecting metadata to describe their UNC Story Archive contribution and the role of the “in group”. Participant 001 said “I had talked in my previous stuff [UNC Story Archive audio recording] about coming out at a time that I had marvelous

support from the human sexuality counseling at UNC and... the Carolina Gay Association, so it was like *I've been waiting for a very long time to get in touch with my real self*".

When it came a particularly thorny terms, specifically the word Queer, participants considered how or if it would be used. Even though Queer is being reclaimed and becoming more accepted despite so recently being used as a pejorative slur, participants explained the careful and intentional thought that went into their selection process.

Participant 004 said that, even though "Queer is my favorite word in the English language...I also listed Gay because generally speaking, very broadly, my experience was that, at the time that I was at UNC, people were uncomfortable with Queer as a reclaimed word". Participant 007 also revealed how the selection process took into account the politics of the "in group" and the word "Queer", saying, "it's not something I use, I don't even use that in formal writing, I just don't use it at all; I don't like the term "Queer studies"", for example, I understand the reasons, I intellectually agree, but I don't use it" because of its pejorative origins.

The nuanced understandings of the "in group" that participants considered when selecting their keywords and subject headings (metadata) was not constrained to the LGBTQIA+ "in group." Participants also considered other communities they identified with and/or felt a connection to. Participant 006 explained their thought process around selecting a keyword that spoke to their experiences before attending UNC and the community they connected with as a result. Participant 006 said, "[that] was the term where I was the most like, *oh can I use this label for myself?*... I picked it because...unpacking [my experiences before attending UNC] is still really confusing for

me because I don't know a lot of people who share that particular experience...[so] there were ways in which I feel a commonality with international students who come to UNC...so I picked that [keyword]”. Further, Participant 006 discussed how their process in selecting metadata included “calling out” and holding accountable the “in group” of a community to which they identify with, saying “I said white just because I’m a white person and I don't like it when white people don't describe their race...for a bunch of reasons”.

Relationship with the “Out Group”

The data revealed that participants had a perceptive awareness of the “out group,” those who are not a part of their identified communities, but who may interact with their UNC Story Archive contribution. When discussing why they selected “LGBTQ”, Participant 004 said, “LGBTQ specifically is a term that I almost never use unless I'm using it in the context of discussing Queer communities with people outside of those Queer communities” and “I would be a little surprised if a totally just a standard cis-het [cisgender heteronormative] person looking into Queer history were to search on the word Queer”.

Further, Participant 006 revealed how the process used to select keywords and subject headings (metadata) was protective and helped them control how their identity is communicated. Participant 006 said, “neither of those [selected terms] are the closest term to my heart, but they allow me to keep more privacy about how I exactly conceptualize myself...I feel like happens a lot for Queer people, and marginalized people all over, we're expected to have, like, thesis statements to our identity in the way that cisgender [heteronormative people] are not”.

Participants also used their metadata to communicate and connect with “out groups.” Participant 002 said, “I want to get more stories out there about the other places especially the southeast, especially for somewhere like UNC which is sort of liberal, people think of the southeast and they have one certain stereotype and so just showing that you know, *Yes it was in North Carolina but Chapel Hill was actually a pretty liberal place* and probably my experience was not horribly different than [others from different regions]” during that era. Similarly, Participant 004 said “[I thought about] ways that people who may not be coming at this from the angle of having been a Queer person at UNC at that time but are looking for weird ways that parts of UNC history might intersect”.

Identity

The decision to include, or specifically avoid, specific keywords and subject headings (metadata) enabled participants to solidify their identity as individuals and agents of history in the UNC University Archives. Participant 006 said, “I specifically wanted to, like, complicate my identity and also keep it private [so] saying Queer felt like a statement; as to, like, *this is the perspective my narrative is coming from, but you don't get any more than that from me*”. They also said, “I wanted to show my positionality relative to the institution that I often feel like I'm working against without compromising my privacy.” Through the keywords and subject headings (metadata) they chose, participants were able create meaningful data that represented their standpoint and did not attempt to feign neutrality in the archives, as traditional archival practices have erroneously led archivists to believe exists.

All participants explained how their selected keywords and subject headings (metadata) were assertions of their identity. Further, participants revealed how selecting the words to describe their identity spoke to the deeper complexities that shaped their stories and where they see their stories positioned within the larger Carolina community. Because all the participants identified with the LGBTQIA+ community, sexual and gender identity received much discussion. When describing the process and meaning behind selecting “Gay” as an identity, Participant 001 said “it's part of who I am, and it provides insight and a way through some situations... so being Gay is a big part of who I am”. Similarly, Participant 005 explored how the decision to include certain identity keywords and subject headings (metadata) reflected an ability to articulate the identity that they felt while at UNC but did not have the language at the time to describe. Participant 005 said, “I didn't have the terminology at the time” but now do. Participant 003 discussed how identity was important in their story, but through the untethering to identity labels. Participant 003 said “I realize[d] that in promoting [or foregrounding] my identities I could be stopping others from presenting theirs” and being untied to specific “identities, to me, that opens up other people to present their identities, particularly for those who are marginalized traditionally by society, by culture”.

Many participants also discussed the importance of articulating their self-identity with their contribution to the archival record. Participant 006 shared that “I felt a great deal of trust in the institutional process of the Story Archive because it still let me self-identify as Queer even if my narrative was not like *oh I was a sad young Queer person who experienced like many traumas at UNC*” and that “it was really refreshing to get to talk about my experience as a Queer person at UNC and not frame that around that part

of my identity”. Similarly, Participant 007 shared how their chosen identity metadata helped frame their contribution but, unlike other participants, this individual found power in rejecting identities that are now being embraced. Many people “use Queer a lot” said Participant 007, but “it's not a term that I personally use, probably because you know I was called Queer, it was a pejorative term...it's not something I use...I just don't use it all...it's based on personal self-identification”. “I use [as a keyword] GLBTQ+, even though that's not a thing that existed during most of my being a Gay male that is a very recent,” said Participant 007, “so while I use it in formal ways, I don't think about it when I'm thinking about myself”.

When contributing keywords and subject headings (metadata), contributors also seized the opportunity to assert their identity outside of more obvious labels. Participant 001 selected terms that reflected an identity beyond LGBTQIA+, saying “I am a very different person, or evolved into a very different person”. The terms this participant selected reflect this identity with growth and being a catalyst in people’s lives because “[my career and experiences] expanded my awareness of all kinds of things but in particular the experience of being human.” Similarly, Participant 003 explained how the contributed metadata reflected a complex identity, saying “being Gay is a part of me but it's not the only part of me, there are so many other parts of me that shape who I am how I function how to relate to other people” and “I was trying to help people have signposts [with the metadata], if you will, that they would recognize as an agency or an individual who had an impact on things- and that includes me-which is why I chose key words and phrases”.

Information Seeking

Five of the seven participants explicitly said a variation of, “[I asked myself] if somebody were looking for this, what might they search by?” (Participant 002).

However, this does not reveal the depth of their engagement with that process.

Participants in this study revealed complex awareness of information seeking processes that they personally engaged with and that others, both within and without their self-identified community, may use as well. Though participants did not use the specific phrase “information seeking”- a jargon term that is relatively specific to library and information science and its related fields- each exhibited an awareness of this intricate process.

Users and Researchers

There is a keen awareness by participants in this study of who the users and researchers of the UNC Story Archive might be, how they may be seeking information in the collection, and the role that their selected keywords and subject headings (metadata) may have in that process. Coupled with the awareness of how their selected terms reflect and are part of their standpoint within the Carolina community, participants revealed how they used their selected terms to interject marginalized histories into the dominant traditional narratives. Participant 004 explains how “I was thinking for somebody to go looking for in the archives and then I thought, *man, you know, if somebody wants to hear all the stories that they've already heard about the Student Union, well we're part of that story...that is part of the complete picture that somebody might not anticipate being tied to some of these [metadata] words. But it's part of a full accounting and somebody who's looking into I want to write a hunky-dory happy story about the Daily Tar Heel history*

may not want to include” their controversies with the treatment of LGBTQIA+ columnists “but that's going to be on them [users and researchers]- that's the choice they have to make”.

This understanding of the archival information seeking process of users and researchers is corroborated by Participant 005. When discussing the process of selecting keywords and subjects headings (metadata), Participant 005 said “I did want to make sure that someone who's just looking for, you know, stories of student[s]... or reading stories of other Queer students” aware that they may encounter something “that might be upsetting for them to read or... bring up something that they were not prepared for”. This participant wanted to make sure that “someone looking for general stories of students at that time” knows “that sensitive content is in there.”

Participant 002 also directly addressed the role that information seeking practices of archival users and researchers played in the selection of keywords and subject headings (metadata). When addressing the decision to include multiple terms related to the LGBTQIA+ community, Participant 002 said “I did put LGBT and GLBT in there” because “ somebody using this, maybe they wouldn't even think of Gay, and that's unfortunate if it's true” but “I was trying to keep myself in the time frame and how we would have described it at the time... although that may be not the best thing if you're talking about future historians”. Further exhibiting an awareness of future users and researchers, Participant 002 went on to say “Gay is still kind of the catch-all word that people use for, you know- maybe Queer now- but it didn't seem right [to include as metadata] at the time because it was really pejorative...when this [the stories contributed to the UNC Story Archive] took place, I would never have used that word back

then...even though now it probably would be more useful now and going forward for somebody looking for stories [in the archive]”.

Historical Accuracy

Participants revealed how they negotiated between selecting what they determined to be historically accurate keywords and subject headings (metadata), how information is sought in archives, and compromises made with selecting anachronistic terms. Participant 002 explains how the selected metadata captured “a specific slice of time” so that people could understand “stor[ies] about being Gay at Carolina in the [19]80s”. This participant goes on to say that some of the more specific terms might be remembered by only “an extremely tiny group, that probably like 12 people would ever even think of and probably nobody would ever search, but maybe if somebody saw it, they're like *I remember hearing about that*” and be encouraged to seek further information. Participant 002 goes on to say, “I hope nobody would only use the word Queer [a term the user did not select due to anachronism] and miss me”.

Exhibiting a similar consideration of how historically accurate language can shape information seeking in archives, Participant 003 explains the importance of including the early names of LGBTQIA+ student organizations on the UNC campus. Participant 003 said, “I used the term CGA, Carolina Gay Association which again, if I remember correctly, it was the very first name of the LGBT Club, what would now be the LGBTQ Student Organization on campus”. Participant 003’s decision to use that phrase “reaches a particular set of students who were at UNC Chapel Hill and anybody who was at UNC during the late [19]60s, early [19]70s”. Similarly, Participant 004 explains that the decision to select “words or terms or names that I felt like somebody who had been from

my era would potentially also give” might reach someone “who had had some of the same experiences [as me] or had just experienced UNC at the same time”. Further, Participant 004 specifically sought to capture “very specifically literally *time* or sort of that point culturally” by including terms “that they [users and researchers of a particular era] might themselves use, might go looking for”.

The consideration of historical accuracy by participants did not only look “backwards” at the era which their story is a part of but also forwards at how their story may affect the future. Participant 005 explains why certain keywords and subject headings (metadata) were selected, saying “my experience at [a UNC campus site for student well-being] was not a positive one and I wanted to make sure that that's also accessible...and maybe it's 20 years later- maybe it's better now- but that people can look back and see where there's room for change”.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that the process UNC Story Archive contributors used to select keywords and subject headings (metadata) to accompany their collection contribution results in more accurate, authentic, and nuanced information. Transcript data derived from the semi-structured interviews with study participants indicates that a process of considering relationships, identity, and information seeking practices influenced why contributors to the collection selected specific self-identifying descriptors and subject headings (metadata) to describe their submissions.

Further, the iterative axial coding process used to analyze the interview transcript data revealed that each of the three main identified thematic influences on the metadata selection process- relationships, identity, and information seeking- are then in turn comprised of sub themes that are often intersecting, much like the lived experiences and identities of the contributors to the UNC Story Archive. The themes and subthemes are not discrete from each other but interrelated and indicative of how participants combined practical considerations, such as historical accuracy, with the abstract, such as relationships with the UNC campus and their identity.

The findings of this study are supportive of the work of Ana Roeschley and Jeonghyun Kim as well as Lauren Haberstock. Roeschley and Kim found that oral histories of, and archival participation by, community members wed critical community memory making with record contextualization through an understanding of “personal

connections, participation in the community, community history, and community belonging” (Roeschley and Kim, 2019). Haberstock’s research found that shifting archival practices towards participation and collaboration with community members advances decolonization and post-custodial practices because co-collaboration allows for the community’s relationship with the archival record to be authentically described. Like Roeschley and Kim, this study found that participation by community members contextualized the archival records through lenses that require “insider” or “in group” understanding of that community. Additionally, like Haberstock, this study’s data revealed that community members could authentically describe the relationship to archival records in ways that archive workers would be unable to and that advance critical post-custodial and decolonizing practices in meaningful ways.

Even so, the results of this study deviate from both studies in significant ways. Why each participant selected the keywords and subject headings (metadata) to accompany their oral history contribution to the UNC Story Archive is a result of a more macro need to authentically describe the relationship between themselves and the institution- both the archive collecting and preserving the collection and the larger institution of UNC- rather than with a record or series of records about themselves or their identified communities. Because each contributor to the UNC Story Archive is an author and active agent of the record being added to the community archival collection, they are then able to shift focus to using their selected metadata to interrupt dominant historical narratives and interject their story into the evolving historical narrative using intentional metadata.

Why did contributors to this student and alumni-focused archival collection of recorded audio stories select the specific self-identifying descriptors and subject headings (metadata) to describe their submissions that they did? This study reveals three primary reasons. First, to ensure that their story is interjected into the larger historical narrative of UNC that has historically maligned their communities authentically while also protecting themselves and their stories from ongoing problematic relationships with and within the UNC campus and extended community. Second, to represent their identity accurately and on their terms, while also being aware of how specific terms are understood by those within their community as well as those outside of it. Third, to situate their contribution within the institution and historical record of UNC as not just information *about* themselves and their community (custodial interpretation) to information by themselves and for their community (an inherent post-custodial practice). Based upon the processes that contributors used when invited to participate in the metadata process, it is reasonable to conclude that such a practice should be included in other community centered archives.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This initial investigation is the result of a case study of one community-based archive that utilizes participatory practices *and* where the community of the GLAM institution, UNC, is the focus. The findings of this study illuminate how community members approach metadata in a way that is critically different in its authenticity than how a traditional archivist would. Further, it supports an argument that such practices should be embedded into similar collections. But there are potential limitations in this study that can be addressed by future research- first is the scope of the study and second is the diversity of communities that participants identify with.

A similarly designed study with a wider scope that interviews contributors to community archives that are part of universities that are geographically, socio-economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse is needed. This future research has the potential to further generalize these findings and/or uncover additional processes that contributors to community archive collections with participatory practices undergo when selecting keywords and subject headings (metadata). Additionally, future studies with a similar scope could also yield comparative data that allows researchers to analyze what works at some institutions with what may not work at others and use that to refine best practices for the future.

Additionally, this study provides insight into the approaches of people who identify with a community that has been historically maligned by the very institution that

houses the collection and considers them as individuals to be a part of the larger community. All participants in this study identify as LGBTQIA+, so their experiences shed significant light on a community that has long been neglected at institutions, such as UNC, and in archives. Yet, this study does not reflect the numerous, and often intersectional, groups of people that GLAM institutions have mistreated as members of the larger institutional communities, in the historical narrative, and in the archives.

Participant 006 summarized this well when explaining why particular keywords and subject headings (metadata) were selected and how they considered their position within the Carolina community- “to me [my narrative] speaks a lot to the experience of white Queer people navigating historically white institutions, primarily white institutions, like UNC” and in retrospect “I’m thinking a lot about the discomfort felt at UNC and wondering...if I was part of like, not a majority, like sizable and influential minority at UNC”. Future research can specifically investigate Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other communities, or study institutions that are not predominantly white like UNC.

Finally, this research can be expanded upon with a study on how effectively the participatory metadata tags facilitate findability compared to traditional metadata tagging and what communities use the participatory metadata tags as information access points.

CONCLUSION

Community-based archival collections have the potential to uplift long buried histories as well as interject narratives and contributions of systemically marginalized groups into the historical narrative of GLAM institutions. However, these partnerships are often fraught. Universities and their archives, GLAM institutions that are often on the fore of creating and preserving community archival collections, have long histories of favoring white, wealthy, heteronormative men as both “agents” of history and arbiters of how that history is then preserved, classified, and described. As a result, marginalized communities are often misrepresented or outright silenced. This creates a schism between the historical narrative that the archival collection is purporting to preserve and the reality of the lived experiences of the communities it is claiming to represent. This results in a tension that is especially salient when an archive is attempting to create a community-based collection that is centered in the community of the institution itself. There have been attempts in the field to remediate this tension by building in participatory practices in which the community has more collaboration with the archive creating the collection about them.

The findings of this study reveal that the keywords and phrases (metadata) selected by UNC Story Archive contributors to describe their archival contribution are a result of an intricate negotiation of relationships, identity, and information seeking practices. The study data illuminated how contributors navigated relationships with the

UNC campus as well as with those who are part of the “in group” and the “out group” of the communities each identified with. This resulted in metadata that reflected desires to ensure that their story is elevated as an important piece of the larger institutional historical discourse and to account for their safety, or to protect their community.

Additionally, participants in this study were able to articulate their identity in a way that is authentic to them and, again, protective of their safety. An archivist may have just assigned all these stories with the keyword “Queer” or “LGBTQIA+” but, as the data shows, neither is a universal term that all feel speaks their full truth. Finally, participants revealed a careful consideration of information seeking practices when selecting their keywords and subject headings (metadata). The terms selected by participants are a result of their lived experiences, proximity to the historical era in which their story is embedded in and understanding of how information about their communities is sought by people both in and outside of that community. Though this case study has limitations of scope and diversity of communities, future research can address both and expand upon its findings.

This study does build upon previous literature and advances a practical argument for the inclusion of participatory metadata practices, such as those utilized by the UNC Story Archive, in community archives and archival collections. The processes used by contributors to such collections are complicated, thoughtful, and nuanced in a way that an archivist cannot replicate with traditional, custodial-centric practices. The subject headings and keywords (metadata) provided by contributors reaffirms the commitment to considering them agents and experts in their own history, rather than as “subjects” or creators of records to be “stewarded” by institutional archives. As such, this case study

advances an argument that incorporating participatory metadata would be a valuable addition to community archive collections. It also reveals that post-custodial archival practices can, and should, extend into the metadata.

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APPENDICES

Recruitment Email

SUBJECT LINE: Invitation to participate in research on UNC Story Archive participatory keywords

SUBJECT LINE: Invitation to participate in research on UNC Story Archive participatory keywords

Hello [Participant name],

I hope you are doing well. I am an MSLS graduate student in UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. I am conducting research to better understand the importance of the keywords, subjects, and important phrases that contributors to the UNC Story Archive, such as yourself, chose. My goal is to understand why those phrases were chosen and examine how it may affect further work in similar collections. This research will be based upon interviews with individuals, like you, who have contributed to the UNC Story Archive collection.

I would like to invite you to be a part of this research by conducting an interview. What will I be asked?

You will also be asked general questions about your contribution to the UNC Story Archive, the keywords, phrases, and subject headings you chose, followed by a series of questions about your motivations and decisions making processes for choosing those words.

How long is a session?

The study will consist of a single interview that is between 30 – 45 minutes long.

When and where?

I will reach out to schedule a Zoom call with eligible participants. No traveling is required.

Interested in participating?

Please reply to this email with the days and times that you are available for an interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at ctanks@email.unc.edu.

Thank you for your interest in this study.

All the best,

Cassie Tanks
She|Her|Hers
Carolina Academic Library Associate
Master of Science in Library Science, 2020-2022
 University Archives & Records Management
 Wilson Library | The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 E: ctanks@email.unc.edu

Consent Information Attachment

The following was attached to the recruitment email.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Research Information Sheet
IRB Study #: 21-2319
Principal Investigator: Cassie Tanks

The purpose of this research study is to understand why contributors to a student and alumni focused archival collection of recorded audio stories selected specific self-identifying descriptors and subject headings (metadata) to describe their submissions. You are being asked to take part in a research study because you have contributed to the UNC Story Archive collection and provided self-identifying descriptors and subject headings (metadata) to describe your submission.

Being in a research study is completely voluntary. You can choose not to be in this research study. You can also say yes now and change your mind later.

Choosing not to participate in this research, or saying yes now and changing your mind later, will in no way affect your relationship with UNC.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured remote interview. Your participation in this study will take about thirty to forty-five minutes. We expect that five people will take part in this research study.

You can choose not to answer any question you do not wish to answer. You can also choose to stop the interview at any time. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you are younger than 18 years old, please stop now.

The possible risks to you in taking part in this research are:

Feeling uncomfortable

Having someone else find out that you were in a research study

Although efforts will be made to protect the data about your participation and keep your identity separate from that data through using an alias rather than your name and storing all interview data on an off-line password protected hard drive, there is a potential for loss of data.

Audio and/or Video Recordings:

This research will be conducted via semi-structured interviews over a remote meeting platform, Zoom. The Zoom interview session will be password protected and will be unique to each interview. At the beginning of the interview, you will have the opportunity to verbally give your consent to have the interview recorded. I will ask, “Do I have your consent to record this interview?.” While a recorded interview is preferred, it is not required for participation.

As a potential participant, are you willing to be recorded during the interview and do you give your consent to be recorded?

_____ OK to record me during the study
 _____ Not OK to record me during the study

Recording files will be downloaded directly onto an external hard drive device that is password protected and then be stored in folders on that device that are themselves password protected. Only the audio portion of the recording will be retained, and the video portion will be deleted immediately. Audio files and subsequent transcripts will be de-identified with a pseudonym, your name will not appear on the file or the transcript. Documents tracking the names of participants with pseudonyms will be stored in another password protected file separate from interview audio recording or transcript files. All files will only be retained on this device through the submission of this research and will be deleted as soon as the research is completed.

Additionally, participants may request to turn off audio or video recordings at any time for any reason and remain in the research. If a participant chooses to stop participation at any point for any reason, all files will be deleted permanently.

To protect your identity as a research subject, the research data will not be stored with your name, all data will be stored on an off-line password protected hard drive, and the researcher(s) will not share your information with anyone. All files will be permanently deleted as soon as the research is submitted. In any publication about this research, your name or other private information will not be used.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the Investigator named at the top of this form by calling (619) 733-7319 or emailing ctanks@email.unc.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UNC Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Confirmation Email

SUBJECT LINE: Confirmation: Your participation in a study about UNC Archive participatory keywords and subject headings

Dear [Participant name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study to examine participatory metadata practices. As I mentioned, you will be asked general questions about your contribution to the UNC Story Archive, the terms, and phrases you chose, followed by a series of questions about your thoughts and decision-making process. You won't need to prepare anything before the session.

You are scheduled to participate as follows:

DATE: [DAY, DATE]

TIME: [TIME]

PLACE: Zoom Conference Call- with a URL that is unique to that call only

**As soon as possible, please do the following:
Verify your ability to participate in a Zoom call**

The study will be conducted remotely over Zoom. Please verify that you can use Zoom and perform any necessary installations or updates before the time listed above. If you have never used Zoom before, please contact me and we can schedule a time to try it out together before the session.

Read the Understanding Your Participation document (attached)

With your permission, the audio and video of the Zoom session will be recorded. You will be asked to verbally consent to video recording at the beginning of your session. We will only use the recording for notetaking and transcript purposes. Your name will not be used for any purpose beyond this session.

Please review your keywords, subject headings, and other selected words

Attached is a document with the words and phrases you selected and submitted to accompany your UNC Story Archive contribution.

A few key reminders:

During the study, I will ask you to answer some interview questions about your contribution to the UNC Story Archive and the keywords that you chose.

Please reserve a quiet space where you will not be disturbed or interrupted during our session.

Also, if you find that you cannot participate on your scheduled day, please contact me as soon as possible so I can reschedule your interview.

Thanks again!

With much appreciation,

Cassie Tanks

She|Her|Hers

Carolina Academic Library Associate

Master of Science in Library Science, 2020-2022

University Archives & Records Management

Wilson Library | The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

E: ctanks@email.unc.edu

What's **YOUR** UNC Story? [Click here to learn how you can contribute to the UNC Story Archive](#)

Guiding Questions

- Why did you select these terms?
- What connections do you see between your larger story and these descriptors?
- Are there other descriptors that you considered and rejected?
- Why?
- Do you attach particular meaning to these particular words that you are hoping will be helpful to users?
- Do you attach particular meaning to these particular words that capture specific nuances of meaning or representation for you?

Interview Guide

This document describes the semi-structured interview guide. The interview goal is to understand the decision-making process behind, and motivations for, the self-selected keywords, phrases, subject headings, and other metadata that contributors to the UNC Story Archive made.

[Introduction]

Hello, my name is Cassie Tanks, and the purpose of this interview is to learn more about the subject headings that you chose to accompany your contribution to the UNC Story Archive. In particular, I'd like to know how and why you chose the words you did to

describe your collection contribution, yourself, and to help others in your community find or identify your story.

We'll do that by going through a series of questions, which will take approximately 30 minutes or so. During the interview, please feel free to speak freely and candidly.

Before we get started, there are a few things that you should know. First, when I write up my paper, I may want to quote some of the things that you have said, but I will not include your name or any other information that might identify who you are. If there is anything that you really don't want to be quoted, please let me know.

This interview is completely voluntary – if for any reason you want to stop, please just let me know. We can end the interview at that point with no negative consequences for you at all.

Also, if you would like, I can provide you with a copy of my final paper, once it is completed.

Finally, I would like your consent to record this interview. This is just so I don't miss anything – no one else will have access to the recording, I will store it on a password protected, external hard drive, and I will de-identify the transcripts so that your confidentiality should be preserved. You may request to stop the recording at any time for any reason and choose to remain in the study. You may also end your participation and withdraw at any time for any reason.

- Do I have your consent to record this interview?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Okay, let's get started.

- Why did you select these terms?

- What connections do you see between your larger story and these descriptors?
- Are there other descriptors that you considered and rejected? Why?
- Do you attach particular meaning to these particular words that you are hoping will be helpful to users?
- Do you attach particular meaning to these particular words that capture specific nuances of meaning or representation for you?

[Conclusion]

- Is there anything else that you think would be helpful to know regarding your information needs as a [role], that we haven't talked about yet?

[after any response they provide]

Thank you, that's all of my questions. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

[after their questions are answered]

Thank you again. If there's anything you'd like to follow up on down the road, you have my email address. Please don't hesitate to reach out.