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ORIGINAL PAPER

A call to rethink archival creation: exploring types of creation in personal archives

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Abstract The concept of creatorship is central to archival theory, as evidenced in archival description, which focuses on the relation of the material described to a single, named creator. Despite its centrality to the discipline and profession, the concept of archival creation is under-theorized and oversimplified. This article builds on recent discussion in the archival discipline regarding the need to expand the principle of provenance by exploring methods of archival creation in the archives of Canadian and American writers. It argues for a broader understanding of the types of agents and processes that create an archive over time and suggests that despite being centered on the concept of creation, the archival discipline has only begun to scratch the surface of the possibilities contained in it.

Keywords Provenance · Archival description · Personal archives

Introduction

What does it mean to create a record? To be a record creator? The concept of creatorship is central to archival theory (Ardern 2015; Nesmith 2015). Archives are acquired because of who creates them, arranged and described based on archivists' understanding of that creator's activities, and made available to researchers in record groups, fonds or collections identified by relation to the creator. In archival descriptions, the importance of creatorship is evident in the weight given to the administrative history or biographical sketch and in the choice of title and primary

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access point for the fonds, which typically correspond to the name of a single creator. And while it is recognized that documents within a fonds may be *authored* by individuals other than the named creator, in interpreting, organizing and representing records for future use, the archivist—in accordance with the principle of provenance—tends to embrace a view that emphasizes the primary role and perspective of a single, named creator.

In the last few decades, however, archivists have questioned the traditional view of creatorship, considering it to focus too narrowly on a single creator and to thereby obscure the creative roles of other individuals, communities and groups. In this article, I explore evolving ideas about archival creatorship in the context of personal archives, and more specifically, in relation to a number of Canadian and American writers' archives. Although the article draws on research conducted in personal archives, it will begin with a brief overview of how creatorship is understood and discussed in the archival literature generally, focusing in particular on how archival theorists have sought to challenge traditional understanding of what it means to create a record or archive. Next, the article looks at a variety of different types of creatorship identified as part of a research study of writers' archives; the article will show how in the archives of the writers studied, creative activities were carried out not only by the named creators of the different fonds, but also by a variety of other individuals and groups, including communities to which the writers belonged, family members and literary executors, other custodians, archivists and—eventually—end users. In its concluding sections, the article considers the extent to which these types of archival creation are recognized by archival theory and in archival descriptive standards, including emerging standards such as RiC-CM (EGAD 2016), that claim to allow the representation of expanded record context. The article will argue that although it is a concept central to archival theory and methodology, archival creatorship remains under-theorized and poorly defined. While this article does not aim to be exhaustive in its examination of the concept of creatorship, it does aim to open up a line of inquiry, encourage discussion and suggest some ways in which that discussion might evolve.

What is archival creatorship?

The ICA's General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) (2000) defines "creator" as "the corporate body, family or person that created, accumulated and/or maintained records in the conduct of personal or corporate activity." The definition adds that "creator" is "not to be confused with collector." The standard defines "provenance" as "the relationship between records and the organizations or individuals that created, accumulated and/or maintained and used them in the conduct of personal or corporate activity." Although these definitions might seem straightforward at first glance, there is in fact little in them that truly defines creation. The definition of "creator" tells us that a creator is someone who creates records—a circular explanation that does not actually explain anything; similarly, the definition of "provenance" relies on an understanding of creation, but does nothing to explain what creation looks like or to characterize the "relationship" that defines provenance. In both definitions, to "create" is differentiated from

to "accumulate," "maintain," or "use," and yet, a "creator" can be someone who "accumulates" or "maintains" and "provenance" includes relationships between records and those who "accumulate," "maintain" and/or "use" them. No definitions are provided in the standard for "create," "accumulate," "maintain" or "use," and nor is there a definition for "collector," a term used to distinguish activities that are *not* undertaken by a record creator.

The lack of nuance, precision and description in the definitions included in ISAD(G)—and in other descriptive standards—belies the depth of the discussion that has occurred regarding creatorship in the archival literature, much of which has taken place in association with calls for expanded understanding of the principle of provenance beginning in the mid- to late-1980s. Very shortly after the publication in English, in 1983, of Michel Duchein's article "Theoretical principles and practical problems of respect des fonds in archival science" (Duchein 1983) and the Canadian archival community's "re-discovery" of the concept of provenance (Nesmith 1993), discussion about the shortcomings of both the concept of the fonds and ideas of creatorship associated with it began to circulate. In the late 1980s, Debra Barr critiqued the Canadian Working Group on Descriptive Standards' emerging definition of a fonds, arguing that it focused too completely on the formation of a body of records by its creator (i.e., the individual or corporate body named in the title of the fonds), and not enough on its ongoing accumulation and use (Barr 1987–1988, 1989). Barr suggested that the definition of the fonds adopted by the group was "inadequate" because it did not take into account the "entire history of a [body of records'] origin, use and custody" (Barr 1989, p. 141). Laura Millar advanced a similar argument several years later, calling for "an expanded concept of provenance" to include: "the story of who created, accumulated, and used the records over time;" "the story of the physical management and movement of records over time;" and the "explanation of the transfer of ownership or custody of the records from the creator or custodian to the archival institution and the subsequent care of those records" (Millar 2002, pp. 12–13).

Both Millar and Barr acknowledge, in other words, that a variety of agents might affect fonds in any number of ways throughout both the "active" and "inactive" phases of its life cycle. Barr argued against traditional physical and hierarchical ideas about the fonds to suggest that, depending on circumstances related to its custody and use, a series could be described as belonging to more than one fonds (Barr 1987–8). Australian archivists had by this time already developed a descriptive system premised on the idea that series could not easily be identified with a single creator and intended to manage and represent the variety of relationships that can exist between records and records agents (Hurley 1994; Scott 1966; Yeo 2010). Chris Hurley clearly explained that the Australian "series system" was primarily significant in the way that it separated description of records from description of the administrative bodies involved in their creation, accumulation and use; Hurley introduced the concepts of "parallel provenance" and "multiple simultaneous provenance" (Hurley 1995, 2005a, b) to explain the way that records could be associated with multiple agents of provenance at the same time and over periods of time. However, despite some local adaptations of the series system (Krawczyk 1999), it has not been widely adopted in North America, and nor has

there been, in North American descriptive standards, a sustained effort to operationalize concepts such as "multiple provenance" (Cunningham 2008).

North American archivists have certainly continued to *think about* how the principle of provenance (actuated through the creation of fonds, record groups and collections) might accommodate different types of creation. An early stage in this discussion involved archivists recognizing their own complicity in the making of archives. The postmodern turn in archival theory, which arrived later to this discipline than to many others, brought with it awareness of the fallacy of the traditional archival paradigm of neutrality and objectivity and a concomitant interest in the subjectivity of the archivist and her impact on the shaping of archives. Nesmith (2002), for example, specifically characterized the act of archival selection as an act of creation: archives are *created* when they are selected for preservation by archivists. This act, Nesmith explains, places "records on the pedestal of national progress, sacred memory, civilization, history, [and/or] culture," and as result, "raises records which were once thought quite ordinary to this new special status as 'archives' or, for some records, even higher yet, as archival 'treasures.'" Selection, therefore, in changing records' status, changes also "what they *are*," creates them as something new (Nesmith 2002, pp. 33–34). Further, once archives are selected, new relationships form between them and other archives in a repository; these relationships, which "did not necessarily exist before *archivists created them* [emphasis added]," can "foster particular interpretive possibilities … and diminish others." As such, the nature and meaning(s) of archives are significantly impacted by the archivist's work during the appraisal stage (Nesmith 2002, pp. 33–34).

Archivists also began to see arrangement and description as creative processes. Heather MacNeil asserts that archival description "involves conscious and deliberate decisions about the representation of archival documents" that inevitably impact the shape and meaning of a body of records (MacNeil 2005, p. 269). During record processing, archivists make decisions about how to structure both the physical materials in the archive and the representation of these in finding aids. Archival description provides a "frame of reference that shapes the meaning and significance" of the archival body—and the individual records within it—as encountered by a researcher (MacNeil 2005, p. 272); accordingly, some archivists contend that "each story we tell about our records, each description we compile, changes the meaning of records and *re-creates* them [emphasis added]" (Duff and Harris 2002, p. 272).

In the late 1990s and 2000s, several archival theorists began to advocate for a still broader view of how archives are created. In 1999, Nesmith suggested a new definition of provenance:

> The provenance of a given record or body of records consists of the social and technical processes of the records' inscription, transmission, contextualization and interpretation which account for its existence, characteristics, and continuing history (Nesmith 1999, p. 146).

Archivists have since characterized different types of provenance to reflect the different phases of creation Nesmith identifies in his definition. For example, Nesmith himself, feeling that the "societal dimensions of record creation and

archiving" have been neglected in description, coined the term "societal provenance," to account for the fact that records are made "in social settings and for social purposes" and these will have an effect on how and what types of records are made and kept (Nesmith 2006, p. 352).

Jeannette Bastian has written extensively about the relationships between certain types of communities and archives, describing a kind of feedback loop that operates whereby a community functions "both as a record-creating entity and as a memory frame that contextualizes the records it creates." Using the term "community of records" to characterize the "dynamic synergy between a community and its records" (Bastian 2001, 2003, pp. 3–4, 2006), Bastian argues that records are not created only by their author and/or inscriber, but also by the community in which the authoring and inscribing of the record occurs.

More recently, there has been a move—influenced in particular by concerns for social justice and reconciliation—to recognize the subjects of records as rightful co-creators. For example, Livia Iacovino endorses a "participant model" of provenance that would "expan[d] the definition of record creators to include everyone who has contributed to the record and has been affected by its action." This definition, she argues, "would support the enforcement of a broader spectrum of rights and obligations" and, most importantly, would give control and oversight to Indigenous peoples who are currently treated as subjects of colonial government records with lesser claims to and rights over those records than the government (Iacovino 2010, pp. 362, 367). Michelle Caswell argues similarly that in records documenting human rights abuses, "survivor status" must be understood as a "form of provenance:" record subjects need to be viewed as co-creators with particular privileges and rights owed to them (Caswell 2014a, pp. 113–114, b, p. 309).

The ability to create records has also been extended beyond the stage of inscription and active use to their interpretation. Eric Ketelaar refers to a record's "activation," arguing "every interaction, intervention, interrogation, and interruption" by a user "leaves fingerprints which are attributes to the archive's infinite meaning." In this view, each interpretation affects the next and is affected by previous interpretations: each activation creates new meaning around the record with the result that "we can no longer read the record as our predecessors have read [it]" (Ketelaar 2001, pp. 137–138).

Through this brief review, it is clear that the traditional view of a single creator has been reimagined in a variety of ways: archives have complex histories that affect how they accumulate and are arranged, re-arranged, interpreted and communicated over time. In the next sections of this article, I look at the how these roles—creator, accumulator, maintainer and user—are evident in the specific context of a number of writers' archives. I propose five types of archival creation that emerged from my examination of these writers' archives, my conversations with archivists and librarians expert in literary collections and from my understanding of the archival literature reviewed above. These types of creation include: (1) creation by the individual traditionally named as the creator of a fonds; (2) creation by communities to which creators belong; (3) creation by custodians (here excluding archivists) of the archive; (4) creation by archivists; and (5) creation by subsequent "activators" of the archives.

The research context

My analysis of these five types of creation was part of my doctoral dissertation, which explored the nature of writers' archives and the ways they are represented through archival description (Douglas 2013). For my doctoral research, I studied the archives of eight Canadian and American writers (see "Appendix" for a list of archives consulted) and conducted expert interviews with thirteen Canadian archivists and librarians who work with literary archives. In the archives I studied, I focused on finding evidence of how bodies of records were accumulated and shaped over time. I studied the contents, organization and descriptions of each archive to determine what could be discovered about the processes by which they accumulated—both prior to and following their transfer to archival repositories. I looked for evidence of the creator's attitude toward making and keeping a record of her life or career and of the decisions and actions that resulted in the accumulation of the archive. I also looked for evidence related to the archivist's acts of appraisal and selection and of arrangement and description, as well as of any other type of intervention that might have affected the final shape of the archive as it exists and is presented to researchers today.

For the semi-structured, expert interviews, I asked questions about what interviewees consider to be inside or outside the boundaries of the archive; what types of negotiations and decisions are involved in the acquisition of writers' archives; how decisions about archival arrangement and description are made and documented; and how traditional archival principles are interpreted. Although a wide range of topics and ideas were broached during the interviews, in this article, I focus specifically on how interviewees spoke about the ways archives are created over time.

Exploring notions of creatorship in writers' archives

Type 1: Creation by the individual traditionally named as the creator

It seems obvious to state that the named creator of an archival aggregation *creates* it—but one of the contentions of this article is that even this type of creation is poorly conceptualized in the archival literature. Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil introduce the concept of the "archiving I" (Douglas 2015; Douglas and MacNeil 2009), a concept influenced by Smith and Watson's discussion about the number of selves involved in the production of autobiographical texts; Smith and Watson's aim in outlining that taxonomy of selves was to show that autobiographical writing—like all writing—is a performative act where the writer does not merely reflect herself in the text, but also creates, through writing, a version of the self that exists only in the text. The archiving I—as a concept—similarly calls attention to how the creation of archives does not result from a passive, natural and/or unselfconscious accumulation of records, but instead involves deliberate

decision-making and archiving activities associated with a range of motivations on the part of the person who creates, uses, organizes and keeps records.

In the archives I studied, different individuals treated their own archives with varying degrees of deliberation, and the archivists and librarians I interviewed referred also to a range of archiving activities in which writers may or may not engage; for example, when packing their records to transfer them to an archival institution, some writers will simply toss materials into any handy box as they move around a room. On the other hand, some writers are extremely careful not to include personal information in their fonds; some will reorder files and material within files, or file material that had never previously been filed prior to transfer to a repository. Some writers grow interested enough in the archival process to learn how to create a finding aid for each new accrual they donate (T. Power, interview with author, July 29, 2010); others are content to allow the archivist to organize documents and files as they see fit.

Of the writers whose archives I studied, L.M. Montgomery displayed strong archiving I tendencies; she very carefully crafted a record of her life in her journals, taking pains to present them in a particular way and preserve them over time (Douglas 2015). Margaret Laurence, who initially balked at the idea of placing records of her writing and personal life in a public repository, later sought to make sure that when she did donate her papers, she would do so on her own terms; her correspondence includes references that almost seem directed to the future reader and that let that reader know that what she has left us is a *version* of her life and self, and not necessarily the "true" version (Douglas 2015, pp. 68–69). The archiving I is sometimes more practically motivated: for example, Dorothy Livesay was a shrewd donor, who sought to place her archives at whichever university would offer her the best price, selling pieces of the archive at a time and to different repositories (Dorothy Livesay fonds, MSS 37, Box 50, Folder 37). Sometimes, not all of the material authored by a writer in her archive was intended to be placed there by the archiving I. Marian Engel, for example, intentionally excluded most of her personal records from the donations she made before her death. However, following her death, a number of different individuals donated accruals to her fonds that included personal correspondence and journals. One of these donors was an individual who bought Engel's house and found in it a garbage bag filled with correspondence to and from a number of well-known Canadian writers; these were added to the archives at McMaster, even though it seems possible—and even likely—that Engel, as archiving I, wished them to be excluded (Douglas 2016, pp. 36–37).

Traditional archival theory emphasizes the role of the named creator in the formation of an archive, but—importantly—also portrays this creator as a passive accumulator of records. Classical theory stresses that archives are impartial, which means that they have not been created in the interest of posterity and therefore are created without intention to deceive or to control a future account; archivists like Muller, Feith and Fruin and Jenkinson stress the natural accumulation of archives and protest that conscious curation of the archive by its creator (or anyone else) destroys its ability to reliably attest to the acts and facts it preserves as evidence (Eastwood 2017). Although notions of impartiality and naturalness are now regularly critiqued, there is still relatively little attention paid to the creator's active

role in fashioning her archive. Cunningham (1996) argued that rather than try to maintain a myth of archival purity by hiding such fashioning or by treating it as corruption, archivists should aim to uncover and explain it, to give the researcher the full context of a body of records and allow them to make more informed interpretations of it. The research conducted for this project supports Cunningham's arguments regarding the significance of an awareness of posterity—or at least the eyes of others—in the creation of writers' archives and suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the creator's active archiving role.

Type 2: Creation by communities to which creators belong

In the archival literature, there has been an increasing focus on communities as creators of archives, beginning with Bastian's work on the concept of "communities of records" and continuing through to the growing interest in community archives. The influence of communities on the development of archives was also evident in several of the writers' archives I examined. A particular example involves writers like Margaret Laurence, Marian Engel and Margaret Atwood who were active in the Writers' Union of Canada during the 1970s and 1980s. The Writers' Union was formed in the early 1970s by a group of Canadian authors to help writers understand and negotiate the professional world of publishing. In its early years especially, the Union was a tight-knit group, active in the promotion of Canadian literature, the development of cultural organizations such as the Book and Periodical Development Council and the Writers' Development Trust, and the professional education of emerging and established writers (Moore 2007).

In the late 1970s, Engel worked with Robin Skelton on the Union's Archives Committee. The committee surveyed Canadian writers, asking about their awareness of their archives and the possibilities of placing them with repositories; the committee also surveyed Canadian archivists and librarians, asking about their collection and treatment of archives. In Engel's fonds, a draft of the report written by Engel and Skelton notes that most authors responding to the survey appeared "ill informed as to the value of their archival material and the best way to turn it to their advantage."

In the report, Engel and Skelton suggested the need for guidelines for writers and for "people who inherit the personal archives of writers" (Marian Engel fonds, Second accrual, Box 32, File 2) and shortly thereafter, Skelton drafted "Authors and Archives: A Short Guide," which provided information about the material that should be included in a writer's archives (anything "that can shed light, however obliquely, upon the subject of the archive," i.e., the writer); advised writers to keep copies of correspondence to publishers and/or to request that originals be returned to them; outlined the process of assigning value to literary archives; described how to "make some financial profit" from an archive; and outlined how copyright works in archives (Marian Engel fonds, Second accrual, Box 32, File 2). Correspondence in the Engel fonds suggests that the Archives Committee's report and guidelines were presented at the 1979 annual meeting of the Writers' Union. They may also have been distributed to members unable to attend the meeting. In this way, members of the Writers' Union gained awareness of the potential value of their draft

manuscripts, correspondence, and other personal and professional materials. From Skelton's guidelines, they might also have learned how to use their archives to their financial advantage.

Writers also gained awareness of the value of their archives by talking with other writers who had already sold or donated their papers, and there were frequent mentions in the correspondence of the writers I studied regarding the disposition of their archives. For example, Al Purdy suggested to Patrick Lane that selling some of his papers might help to support him as he wrote (Purdy 2004, p. 265; original letter dated April 11, 1976), and in Margaret Laurence's correspondence there is frequent reference made by her and her correspondents to the negotiations they and other writers they knew were making regarding the placement of their archives. Some writers were surprised that archivists would want what they considered to be junk, and some were even offended by the interest in anything beyond the finished work, but often, writers were in need of financial support and they learned from their colleagues in and out of the Writers' Union what types of material they could sell to archives and special collections.

Although the market has changed drastically since the 1980s, it can be argued that over time, with the accrual of large collections of writers' archives in institutions worldwide, writers have grown increasingly aware of the value of the materials they generate as part of their creative process and as part of their personal and professional lives. Jennifer Toews, Modern Manuscripts and Reference Librarian at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, noted in her interview with me that while in the past many writers "would've thought, 'oh, why would anyone want to collect my old scribblings,'" writers in general are "becoming much more aware that their work is valuable—in a monetary sense, but also that researchers would like to look into their lives" (Toews, interview with author, May 10, 2010). Knowledge of other writers' archives may contribute to writers' understanding of their own archives, and awareness of the market for literary archives can affect the archiving practices of individual authors.

Communities of writers might work in other ways, as well, to create archives. Christine Faunch, an archivist at the University of Exeter, explains how because the library at Exeter collects the archives of writers working in a relatively small region, many of them know each other well and correspond regularly, "sharing ideas, comment and encouragement; forming a network of authors, reviewers, agents and friends all involved in shaping a final product." In this way, the authors' participation in a community of writers affects not only the shape of each of their individual archives, but also the collective shape of all of their archives in the repository at Exeter (Faunch 2010, p. 30). In other words, the community of practice plays a creative role in the making and keeping of individual writers' archives.

Type 3: Creation by custodians

Custodial shaping of archives has, in the last decade or so, begun to receive more attention in the archival literature (MacNeil 2008; Yeo 2009). Several of the archives I studied showed clear evidence of shaping by custodians other than their named creators. The most obvious and extensive custodial shaping was evidenced in

the Sylvia Plath collections at the Mortimer Rare Book Room at Smith College and the Lilly Library at Indiana University. During her lifetime, Plath was a conscientious recordkeeper, keeping diaries and scrapbooks and carefully preserving drafts of her poems as she composed them (Brain 2007). It is not Plath's recordkeeping habits alone that have led to the formation of the collections at Smith College and Indiana University, however (Douglas 2015). Both Plath's mother, Aurelia Shober Plath, and her estranged husband, Ted Hughes, played significant roles in determining which materials ended up in which repository. Aurelia Shober Plath's habit of annotating her daughter's letters—and thereby inserting her own voice into the writer's archive—is well documented (Brain 2006), and Hughes added his voice, too, through the inclusion, for example, of notes about some of the poems included in Plath's most well-known book of poems, *Ariel*. Both Aurelia Shober Plath and Hughes also included in the archive letters sent to them after Plath's death and other posthumous materials. Literary scholars have viewed the efforts of Aurelia Shober Plath and Hughes to shape and control the Plath archives as also an attempt to shape and control Plath's posthumous reputation and reception (Rose 1991; Malcolm 1994). Whatever their motives, it is abundantly clear that Plath's mother and husband are *co-creators* of the collections that have grown at Smith College and the Lilly Library.

Similar efforts by a family member to control reception of a writer's work can be seen in the L.M. Montgomery Collection at Guelph University, though on a smaller scale. Montgomery appointed her son, Stuart Macdonald, as her literary executor and willed him her journals, which make up the bulk of the Montgomery-authored material in the collection and which Macdonald donated to Guelph in 1981. Following Macdonald's death, his widow donated additional "Montgomery memorabilia" and some material created by Macdonald to the collection. In some of this material, now included with his mother's, one can see how Macdonald tried at times to alter certain perceptions about his mother's work, particularly where he felt these displayed a lack of respect for her literary legacy. In both the Plath and Montgomery collections, relatives act as what Hamilton (1994) calls "keepers of the flame," striving to keep alive particular memories of the writer and her work; this can involve exerting control over the writer's archival remains, including by determining where they will be placed, what will be donated, sold or destroyed, how materials will be organized, and sometimes even through the addition of new materials or the alteration of existing documents.

Custodians may act in different ways, too, of course. For example, in "Archivalterity," MacNeil (2008, pp. 14–17) explains the custodial history of the Bakunin family archive, which was organized first by the Bakunin family women who numbered each document and then sewed them into notebooks, but subsequently re-arranged by a succession of scholars and archivists, each of whom organized the archive to suit their particular research needs. Geoffrey Yeo outlines the "long process of gradual depletion" of Sir Richard Fanshawe's archive: letters and other papers were given away and sold by family members and then by collectors and antiquarians, then recollected by another family member, annotated and mixed with papers related to Fanshawe but not created by him before they were donated to a museum (Yeo 2009, p. 50). In both the Fanshawe and the Bakunin

archives, as in the Montgomery and Plath archives, custodians create and recreate new versions of the archive for their own particular purposes and ends.

Type 4: Creation by archivists

As explained in the brief literature review above, the effect of archivists on the archives they care for is explored in an increasingly wide range of writing (Light and Hyry 2002; Brothman 1991; MacNeil 2005; Yakel 2003; etc.). As might be expected, numerous acts of creation by archivists were evident in the archives I studied. For example, in the Alice Munro fonds and the Marian Engel fonds the writers' records were reorganized during processing to better reflect what was believed to be the creative process of each writer. In each case, the materials had become disordered over time, and the archivists responsible for their arrangement and description determined to arrange them into series that reflected how the writer worked. Both archivists admit that the processing of these fonds was a creative activity: the arrangement of each fonds represents each archivist's best guess at a lost order and is unlikely to exactly replicate that order, if it ever existed (Douglas and MacNeil 2009; A. Steele, J. Tener, interview with author, July 9, 2010; K. Garay, interview with author, October 31, 2010).

Although it might seem that the archivist's effect on the shape of an archive would not be as extreme in cases where the physical order of material as received is retained, even the archivist's *intellectual* ordering can be seen as a creative act. Archivists identify intellectual order for two primary reasons: first, because it helps researchers locate and retrieve what they are looking for, and second, because archivists believe that the intellectual ordering of archives—or the identification of fonds and the division of fonds into series—provides the context necessary to understand any smaller components of the archive. Ultimately, the intellectual order of an archive can determine how researchers approach it by imposing a particular organizational structure on it (see also Duff et al. 2012, p. 85).

An example of how identifying intellectual order *creates* a new structure for the archive is found in the Douglas Coupland fonds at the University of British Columbia, where the archivist who processed the fonds created series loosely based on genres of production (e.g., dramatic projects, visual projects, literary projects, digital projects, journalism), despite the physical order of materials as received reflecting a more chronological organization. Regarding this chronological organization, David Weir, Coupland's partner at the time of the records' donation, sent a note with the shipment of boxes which explained that although the boxes were not numbered in any particular order, most of them contained materials created during a particular timeframe.[1] While the intellectual order identified by the archivist places materials in the context of other similar types of materials (i.e., material related to Coupland's writing of the novel *Generation X* is found in the literary projects series along with material related to the writing of each of his other novels), the physical order of materials in boxes suggests that Coupland did not as clearly distinguish

[1] [David Weir], note to Rare Books and Special Collections staff. This note is in the accession file for the Douglas Coupland fonds and is made available to researchers upon request.

between generic categories, and a researcher approaching his archives from the chronological "box-order" perspective might consider more carefully how projects Coupland worked on simultaneously relate to each other. The archivist's intellectual order therefore creates a new context for the materials, one that is more attuned to traditional archival ideas about how records result from the pursuit of clearly defined functions.

At a higher level, decisions about what materials to acquire and to which aggregation to assign them to establish the boundaries of the fonds and at the same time, create a new kind of relationship between materials. Robert McGill (2006, p. 103) notes that

> The archive arranges a chaotic and disparate range of materials into a single, homogenous text under the auspices of a single authorial name, reifying and delineating a textual corpus that substitutes for the living body, making autobiography both a pretext and effect of bibliography.

McGill means that, once acquired and described under the name of the creator, all of the materials in a fonds acquire a common bond; by virtue of being included in the fonds, all materials will now necessarily be read as potentially indicative of some aspect of the creator's life and work and become significant to an understanding of both.

As these examples and recent archival literature attest, there are numerous ways archivists play a creative role in the formation of archives. By determining what material to keep, how kept materials relate to each other and how to represent materials in finding aids, archivists create a particular version of the archival body—viz the archival fonds—and affect how it will be encountered and understood in future. While traditional archival theory stressed the objectivity of the archivist and her "moral defence" (Jenkinson 1937, p. 97) of the archive, the examples of writers' archives examined in this research clearly demonstrate that the more recent critiques of this position are justified: the archivist cannot escape her influence on the nature of the archive and must be viewed as one of its creators.

Type 5: Creation by "activators"

As mentioned above, Ketelaar suggests that an archive is recreated each time it is activated by a user. Creation by activators relates to the effect of previous interpretations of an archive's content and meaning on subsequent interpretations of the same archive. The struggle between Aurelia Shober Plath and Ted Hughes for authority over the Sylvia Plath collections results in part from different readings of her archives. Plath's mother wishes to see in the materials Plath left behind evidence of her daughter as she remembers her—as a talented writer, and devoted daughter, wife and mother—and wishes also that the archive might counterbalance the fascination that her death by suicide, after being left by her husband with two small children, invoked. Hughes' reading of the materials Plath left behind is in part a reaction to her mother's interpretation of and motives for the archive, and perhaps, as some argue, also in part a reaction to many literary critics' desire to blame him for Plath's death (Bundtzen 2001; Hughes 1982, 1985; Rose 1991).

Each of their interpretations of these high-profile collections impacts the way subsequent readers encounter and understand the Plath archives. In "The unraveling archive: essays on Sylvia Plath," editor Anita Helle and chapter contributors aim to re-read the Plath archives, hoping they can expand the contexts in which Plath's work is read and interpreted, especially beyond the "totalizing narratives of suicidal extremity." Helle (2007, p. 2) proposes that the essays might "mark a second stage of debate around Plath's canonicity" by breaking out of the constraints imposed by Aurelia Shober Plath's and Hughes' readings. Still, although each author seeks to create space for new readings of Plath's archives and work, the essays are deliberately positioned as an effort to counter the perceived narrowness of past readings; in this way, the new interpretations are inevitably influenced by the older ones.

In a similar fashion, McCaig's (2002) reading of the Alice Munro fonds at the University of Calgary will potentially impact how subsequent researchers approach Munro's archives. McCaig focuses on how Munro exerts control over her fonds, including by making decisions to withhold personal material, employing a contract with the institution that "obliges the removal or restriction of any financial or extremely personal information unearthed in the cataloguing process," and by refusing to grant permission to quote from materials (2002, p. xiii). McCaig presents Munro as using her archives to "construct and control her public persona to whatever degree she is able," resulting in the restriction of access and scholarship (2002, p. xvi).

McGill (2009) considers McCaig's reading of Munro's archives in a study of "biographical desire" in the archives of living authors; he describes McCaig's feelings of having been "spurned" by Munro after not receiving permission to publish excerpts of letters in the book she was writing based on her dissertation research (2009, p. 132). McGill characterizes the relationship between the researcher and the author as one where the author exists as an object of desire. In McCaig's book, the object of desire thwarts the critic and controls the story; Munro is portrayed as a daunting gatekeeper to her fonds, and researchers who come to the archives after reading McCaig's portrayal might form a different impression of it than those who have not read McCaig.

McGill finds that archival research has a further effect on the shaping of living writers' archives. He suggests that:

> Archival scholars…cannot study a living author without affecting the life and even the writing of that person. Living authors read criticism and respond to it, they give interviews or refuse to give them, they defend or relinquish their right to privacy, they create archives in anticipation of critical interest, they support themselves through selling archival materials in a market made buoyant by biographical desire, and they destroy materials they do not want critics to view (McGill 2009, p. 142).

Here, McGill quotes American novelist Jonathan Franzen who declares that no author, knowing his archives will be picked over by biographers and critics, could "resist the temptation to select material that suggests the most flattering possible narratives. And not just select but actively create!" (2009, p. 142).

These examples demonstrate some ways in which "activations"—and even anticipated activations—of an archive can impact how it is subsequently encountered and interpreted; such impact can affect the archive's shape and/or researchers' understanding of its shape both before and after its acquisition by an archival repository and can, therefore, be seen to play a role in the archive's creation process.

Representing archival creation: standards in development

The examples of types of creation cited in the sections above demonstrate that the act of creation, even when carried out by the individual traditionally named as creator, cannot be easily and straightforwardly characterized. Archives are created in any variety of ways, for any variety of purposes, and with any variety of deliberation and intentionality. The principle of provenance, and its sub-principles, the principles of respect des fonds and respect for original order, dictate that the records of a single creator be kept separate from those of any other creator and in the order in which their creator kept them, but in fact, these principles offer little in the way of understanding the *concept* of creation, of how we decide, as archivists, what is a *creative* role and what is not, and they do not tell us what to do when creative acts are carried out by a variety of agents over a long period of time. Although there has been significant discussion in the archival literature on the need to expand our understanding of who creates records and how, this discussion has yet to significantly impact how archivists carry out their descriptive work. While the concept of creation—or more accurately, the principle of provenance—has been expanded in theory, in practice, that expansion remains difficult to operationalize.

In an article about how archival creatorship has been understood in Italy, Savoja and Vitali (2008) make an initial attempt to distinguish types of creation in description by drawing a distinction between custodianship and creatorship. They show that in some situations, custodians act only as custodians, maintaining archival material in the form it was passed onto them; in other situations, however, custodians take on a creative role, by re-arranging materials, adding to or subtracting from them, or mixing them with the materials of another creator. This distinction complicates description, Savoja and Vitali argue, because while many descriptive standards include an area to record a description of the creator of a fonds (e.g., the biographical sketch or administrative history) and an area to include a custodial history, these two options alone may be insufficient to allow for proper description of custodial *creation* of archives.[2] The difference between creators and custodians, they argue, is not always "clear-cut, especially for private records and personal papers," and "the problem needs to be debated, examples analyzed, and possible solutions tested" (2008, p. 142).

[2] For example, the Canadian descriptive standard Rules for Archival Description (*RAD*) instructs archivists to record in the custodial history field "the successive transfers of ownership and custody or control of the material, along with the dates, thereof, insofar as it can be ascertained," and includes a footnote advising archivists not to "confuse information given in the Administrative history/Biographical sketch of the creator of the unit with the history of its custody." *Rules for Archival Description*, Rule 1.7C.

The role of custodians as creators is not the only problem that needs to be debated, however; archivists must also think more carefully about how best to account for the other types of creation discussed in this article and in other works that argue for the expansion of the principle of provenance. We should be asking: what is the best way to describe community influence? How can we better represent the creative impact of archival intervention? And what is the role of archival description in documenting *ongoing* acts of creation through activation? It is also likely that still further types of archival creation exist to be documented. For example, in the Margaret Atwood fonds, it is hard not to understand the filing activities of Atwood's personal assistants, who organize many of her records and prepare them for transfer to the Fisher Rare Books Library, as a creative activity. The Atwood collection assumes a particular shape at least in part as a result of their decisions about what to keep and how to arrange it (J. Shoesmith, interview with author, August 27, 2010) and therefore reflects not only Atwood's work habits and organizational patterns, but also those of her assistants.

Current descriptive standards such as ISAD(G), the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description* (RAD) and the American *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS) allow for the description of some of the types of actions on records seen in the archives of the eight writers I studied. Custodial interventions can be described in the Custodial History element of RAD or in the Archival History element of ISAD(G). An archivist's processing decisions can be recorded in the Scope and Content element or the Note on Arrangement element in RAD and, in ISAD(G), in the System of Arrangement element. However, as Savoja and Vitali note, these elements are not intended to describe the *creation* of archives and may not be adequate to that task. Furthermore, some aspects of creation encountered in the archives of the writers studied are not easily transposed into current descriptive standards. The creative role of a community, for example, is not clearly aligned with a particular descriptive element, and nor are the creative roles of activators.

In 2016, a new descriptive model was circulated by the ICA's Experts Group on Archival Description (EGAD). *Records in Contexts—A Conceptual Model for Archival Description* (RiC-CM) was published as a consultation draft in September 2016 and includes an introduction that explains, in part, how the new model aims to "recognize a more expansive and dynamic understanding of provenance" than other ICA standards (EGAD 2016, p. 9). RiC-CM intends to provide a "multidimensional approach to description," where "Records and Sets of Records, their interrelations with one another, their interrelations with Agents, Functions, Activities, Mandates, etc., and each of these with one another, are represented as a network" (EGAD 2016, p. 10). RiC-CM appears to offer the ability to represent different types of creation by different types of record creators through the description of various relationships between descriptive entities; in RiC-CM, which uses triples to link entities through relations, archivists can describe records, record sets (i.e., groupings of records brought together for a particular purpose) and agents, and ostensibly, the relations between them. Records and record sets can be designated as having been "owned by," "held by," "authored by," "associated with," "collected by," "created by," or "written by" an agent or any number of agents. Unfortunately, RiC-CM does not yet include a full explanation of how each relation is

characterized or can be used, and it remains difficult, at this time, without such characterization, to assess how effective RiC-CM will be in allowing the representation of different types of creation. As in ISAD(G), there are not yet any definitions provided for terms like "created," "collected," "associated with," etc. It is also unclear how EGAD settled on this list of relationships or whether there is ongoing discussion about additional types of relationships. Should there be, for example, "culled by," "organized by," or "reorganized by" relations that could be used to describe creative actions taken by custodial agents? To what extent will the "associated with" relation become a catch-all relation required to link a variety of relations that RiC-CM does not include?

The term "creator" does not appear in RiC-CM; instead, *agents* create, collect, own, hold, etc. records or record sets in pursuit of activities that form part of mandated functions. In theory, the use of the term "Agent" rather than "Creator" may suggest more freedom in representing different types of relationships between a variety of individuals and records; however, the narrowly prescribed definitions of activities, functions and mandates could work to constrain the types of actions that can be described as creative and the types of individuals or groups who can be described as agents. This could be particularly true for personal archives where activities that result in archive creation and the individuals who carry them out are rarely officially mandated.

RiC-CM is a standard in development. One of its stated intentions is to allow archivists to represent the complex networks of relationships in which records are made, kept, circulated and used; the extent to which this is possible—and the extent to which there is significant change in our capacity to represent networks of relationships—will depend on how EGAD identifies, defines and characterizes the types of relations that can exist.

RAD, the Canadian descriptive standard, is also currently under revision. In 2015, a survey was issued to Canadian archivists requesting feedback about the standard with an eye to its revision. In February 2016, a Meeting on the Future of the Rules for Archival Description (RAD) was held at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, where invited participants discussed the results of the survey and made recommendations for the revision or replacement of RAD (Library and Archives Canada 2016). At that meeting, it was generally agreed that the Canadian descriptive standard should be revised in alignment with the international standards ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF), ISDF and ISDIAH. At the time, the draft version of RiC-CM had not been released. Since its release, the Canadian Committee on Archival Description (CCAD), which has responsibility for the maintenance and revision of RAD, issued a statement to explain that it would proceed with the recommendations to align RAD with international standards with caution as RiC-CM proceeds through consultation and revision phases. The statement noted that "the appearance of a new conceptual model for archival description presents a welcome opportunity to think through the entities involved in description and their relationships" (CCAD 2016). This article has suggested that archival creation—as a concept—remains poorly defined and under-theorized despite the recent interest in expanding the definition of provenance; as national and international descriptive standards undergo revision, it is especially necessary to ask ourselves to what extent new versions of

standards replicate the limited understanding and potential of the older versions and to what extent they incorporate a true rethinking of the many ways that archives are formed and reformed over time.

Conclusion

This article has made an initial attempt to identify and characterize some recognizable types of archival creation that could aid in the rethinking of archives and their relationships to a variety of creative agents. This research is focused on a small number of record groups, all belonging to a particular type of record creator and needs to be expanded through research in other writers' archives and in the archives of other types of creators, including in archives created by institutions and organizations, which are also generated by increasingly complex networks of creators acting in different ways upon records in and over time. Despite the limitations of this study, it suggests that in many cases community, custodial and archival interventions need to be viewed as creative acts, and while there has been high-level, theoretical discussion about the need to expand the principle of provenance in the archival literature, there has been little empirical research that directly shows how archives—personal or organizational—are created over time. As national and international descriptive standards evolve and attempt to incorporate broader understandings of who creates archives and how, more research of this type is needed; there needs to be an empirical basis for the articulation of record entities and their relationships if new standards are going to effect change in our representational practices. As mentioned at the outset of this article, it has not presumed to account for *all* types of creation or to speak for *all* types of records; there are doubtless multiple other types of creation that can be identified, as well as ways in which the types of creation identified here overlap and intermingle to suggest yet more types. My hope is that this article is seen as the beginning of a discussion and debate. What does it mean to be a record creator? To create a record? These are the questions with which this article began; they remain questions that must be seriously investigated and debated by the archival community if we truly want to transform description. In answering them, or at least trying to, we might be able to, as David Bearman and Richard Lytle put it in the mid-1980s, fully exploit the "power of provenance" (1985–1986), to finally extend it to its logical capacity in the preservation and communication of the myriad acts that account for the continuing existence of the records in our care.

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Appendix: List of archives consulted

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Douglas Coupland fonds. Rare Books and Special Collections. University of British Columbia Libraries. Vancouver, British Columbia.

Marian Engel fonds. The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections. McMaster University Libraries. Hamilton, Ontario.

Margaret Laurence fonds. Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections. York University Libraries. Toronto, Ontario.

Dorothy Livesay fonds. Archives and Special Collections. University of Manitoba Libraries. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

L.M. Montgomery collection. Archival and Special Collections. University of Guelph Libraries. Guelph, Ontario.

Alice Munro fonds. Archives and Special Collections. University of Calgary Libraries. Calgary, Alberta.

Sylvia Plath collection. Mortimer Rare Book Room. Smith College Libraries. Northampton, Massachusetts.

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