Processing Blackness: More Product, Less Process at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

by Haley Bryant

A.A. in Liberal Arts, May 2011, Oxford College of Emory University
B.S. in Anthropology and Human Biology, May 2013, Emory University

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of the George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

January 31, 2016

Thesis directed by

Joshua A. Bell D. Phil
Curator of Globalization, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Thesis co-directed by

Sarah Wagner D. Phil
Associate Professor of Anthropology, George Washington University

© Copyright 2016 by Haley Bryant
All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

It is safe to say that this thesis is the result of the efforts of many people. I must acknowledge John Fleckner, Jennifer King and the staff of the George Washington University Special Collections, and Joel Kuipers for deeply enriching my scholarship on the topic of archival practice and reading early versions of this research. I must also recognize my colleagues and friends in the Department of Anthropology at GWU who served at various times as sounding boards, confidants, and motivators. I also cannot go without recognizing the immense support offered by William, Susan, and Jessica Bryant without whom this paper would never have come to fruition.

I will be forever grateful for the careful guidance of my research advisors who took the time to considerately, intelligently, and thoroughly review my ideas and writing despite enormous personal and professional hurdles and obligations. Dr. Sarah Wagner introduced me to a constellation of theory and thinking which took my analysis to an important and valuable level, and in fact helped me start down the path of archival studies. Dr. Joshua Bell pushed me to think outside of the box and helped situate my analysis in an already-ongoing discourse surrounding documents and archives. His willingness and enthusiasm in taking on my project was very important and motivating for me. The crux of this thesis emerged from our extended conversations.

Most importantly, I must extend my deepest thanks to both the full time and student staffs of Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. I have been permitted to pursue my own research interests on top of my work for DCAAP, my questions have generously been answered, and numerous individuals have aided me in

exploring the important, rich history of Howard University and Moorland-Spingarn. I have felt motivated and challenged in equal measure by the staff at Moorland, which has proven immeasurably important to my thinking and analysis. I am also in debt to the staff of DCAAP who were not only permissive of my research but also enthusiastic about my efforts, engaged with my process, and curious about my findings. Without this wholehearted support, many doors would have remained closed to me. In particular, I have had numerous, invaluable opportunities to share my research with others and gain valuable insight and feedback thanks to my supervisors at DCAAP. I have also found a large source of encouragement in my DCAAP student coworkers, whose opinions and suggestions have proven enlightening.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... **ii**

List of Figures ..... **iii**

Introduction **3**

Defining History and Truth

Chapter One **20**

The Archive and the Archivist

Chapter Two **33**

Ideology and Practice

Chapter 3 ..... **61**

Beyond Archival Ideologies

Chapter 4 ..... **77**

Conclusion **83**

Appendix A **105**

Appendix B **109**

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Processing space at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center 1

Fig. 2: Example of appropriate labeling procedure under DCAAP MPLP 2

Fig. 3: Unidentified, undated film reel from the papers of Walter E. Washington 20

Fig. 4: Non-DCAAP collection being sorted into series on desk-top.....41

Fig. 5: Box from Lovell papers before processing 51

Fig. 6: Papers on desk-top being sorted according to MPLP standards:
no series or sub-series established 52

Introduction

Fig. 1

Arthur Davis' Hat

Before becoming a part of the D.C. Africana Archives Project (DCAAP) and joining the team at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center I had never raised my voice to a supervisor—as they say, there is a first time for everything. The Interim Chief Librarian and Curator of the Manuscripts Division of Moorland-Spingarn, who I refer to throughout this thesis as Susan, simply stared at me as my voice gained in pitch and volume. What could possibly be the impetus for me—a part-time, amateur processing assistant from a different university—to raise my voice at my supervisor—a noted and respected archivist who just last year received acclaim for locating the lost cremains of Father of the Harlem Renaissance, Alain Locke, in her collections? I was losing my temper over a hat.

The hat in question was not physically before us, but depicted in a lone news clipping dated ca. 1935. The clipping, situated in a browned, crumbling folder simply labeled "Hat," was part of the papers of civil rights activist and former Howard Professor Arthur Davis (1904-1996). It was my second week of work at Howard and I was still

relying heavily on both the archival processing manual written for and provided by DCAAP and the short hands-on training I had received before beginning work at Howard. The DCAAP manual clearly states that, "When possible, you will be transcribing existing folder titles into the container list. Only create new folder titles if you are foldering previously unlabeled material," (Krensky & Williams 2014: 10). I felt justified in simply transferring the label "Hat" from one folder to the next. Susan, on the other hand, could not fathom how such a labeling decision would be remotely useful for researchers. "It doesn't even indicate the publication," she insisted, and, "how will anyone even know why this 'Hat' was important to Arthur Davis?" This method of sorting and labeling archival documents in her opinion detrimentally eschews vital

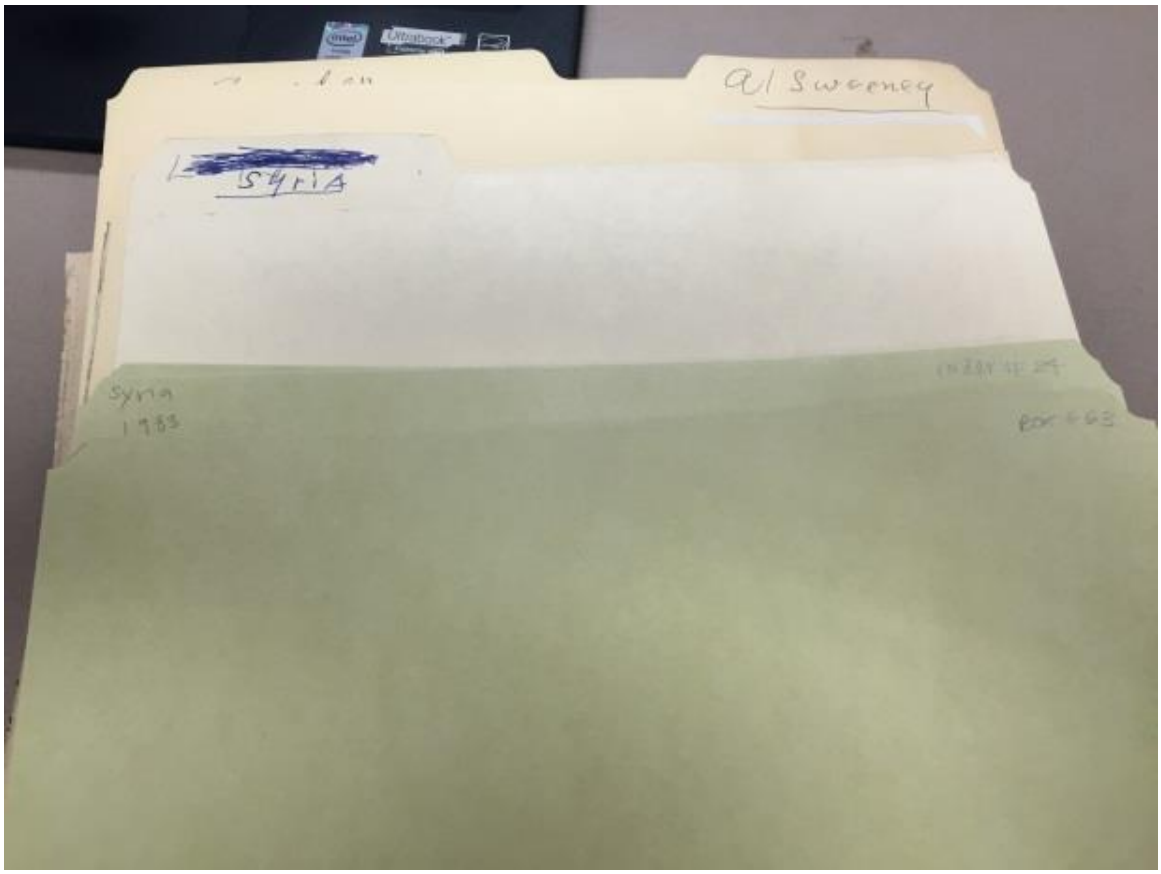

Fig. 2

context. This was my first experience with the friction between what I assert in the course of this study to be alternate archival ideologies: micro-level processing choices rooted in a history of evolving archival paradigms and temporally specific, subjective assessments of the place of each document or object within a network of valuation[i].

In the end, I insisted that I had to adhere to the guidelines provided in the DCAAP processing manual and Susan removed herself from the situation to consult with the DCAAP project managers. I retained the label "Hat" on the new folder into which the news clipping was placed, although—in a concession to Susan and as a kind of apology for my poor attitude—I added the title of the publication from which the news clipping was taken and the word "news clipping" to the folder label.

This early, contentious encounter led to continuous and multi-layered negotiations on my part between the processing methodologies traditionally preferred by Susan and the techniques that I was being asked to implement in the context of DCAAP. I also began to suspect that the processing of archival materials was not as cut-and-dry as processing manuals portray it—each collection, each box, and each folder become subject to its own evaluation in the context of both the DCAAP processing technique, More Product, Less Process (MPLP) *and* Howard's procedural framework. MPLP technique stipulates a large degree of flexibility on the part of the processor during the actions of arrangement and description of collections, which is, importantly and explicitly, not afforded by traditional processing techniques[ii].

[i] Ch. 3
[ii] Ch. 2

This encounter also raised a number of questions about the practice of archival processing more generally. At the heart of the tension between Susan and me (as well as between traditional and minimal processing techniques) are unstable and progressively shifting conceptions of "for whom" and "why" materials are archived[iii]. Furthermore, emerging from this general shift in professional archival practice are the individual, subjective, and closely held ideologies about how archival materials *should* be managed and by whom, which lead to the contextually situated enactment of the broad shift in paradigms through practice[iv]. Additionally, the resolution of this misunderstanding—the moment when Susan chose to clarify proper procedures with the DCAAP project managers—points to differential understandings of the value and deployment of "true" expertise within the archive which is also bound up with conceptions of why and for whom we archive, as well as who has the right to the control of narrative construction[v].

A document is something which has been "preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon," (Briet 2006: 10). Similarly, Brian Cantwell Smith (1996) asserts that documents are "*about* or *oriented toward* some other entity, structure, or patch of the world." In the course of my observations it has become clear that archives—taken together as powerful entities upon which forces act and which enact force upon individuals, communities, and society at large—are also *about* and *oriented toward* some other entity or patch of the world. The archival manuscript collections at Moorland-Spingarn have been methodically constructed across time with specific notions about and hopes for their efficacy in the

[iii] Ibid
[iv] Ch. 3
[v] Ch. 4

world. Therefore, the level of flexibility called for by MPLP and the role of the processor as a linguistic mediator[vi] has important implications for the construction of archival "truth" and the coproduction of narrative histories.

The actions of the archivist or processor are meaningful and intentional due to their operation within a web of valuation (Derrida 1996; Stoler 2002; Knapp 2003). Matthew Hull's (2012) concept of the document as "graphic artifact," that which is not just a technical reflection of institutional functioning but a material product of subjective *and* environmental circumstances, illustrates this notion. Additionally, the archivist achieves the status of "expert" predominately through indoctrination into specific archival paradigms. Therefore the archivist or processor plays a large part in the production of knowledge and the categorization of that knowledge as "truth" (Bowker & Starr 1999; Duff & Harris 2002; Riles 2006; Hull 2012) Importantly, the web of valuation which the archivist or processor is situated in is subject to the forces of inequality and the unequal wielding of power and control over documents and records before, during, and after their accessioning into archival repositories. One major focus of this study is to examine how individuals, working at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University—many who are members of a historically marginalized population—perceive, understand, and respond to this unequal web of signification and execution of control over archival materials.

Within the act of processing, individuals are required to translate pieces of knowledge across a number of different written forms, which differentially imbues the physical material with value. Take Davis' hat as an example: information is gleaned from

[vi] Ch. 3

the news clipping in the folder, i.e. the article is about a particular kind of men's hat, seems to have a particularly sartorial focus, and appears to be part of an ad placed by a men's fashion company, in a particular publication. The processing archivist who previously processed this collection chose one specific piece of data ("Hat") out of everything the clipping offered and inscribed it onto the archival folder. That process of translatory inscription is taken one step further when the folder label is added to a container list or a finding aid that directs a researcher when he or she attempts to navigate the collection (Shankar & Cavanaugh 2012).

In order to critically analyze these theories I have observed the deployment of the MPLP technique in practice by archival processors currently working within the manuscripts department of Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center under the auspices of DCAAP, which I explicate further in chapter four. Inherent to all aspects of this study is a consideration of the ways in which systems of power, and specifically in the context of DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn, racial power structures, shape and inform the practice of the processors and consequentially the collections themselves following such thinkers as Trask (1991), Buckley (2005) and Michel Rolph-Trouillot (1995).

Collecting Blackness, Constructing History

Howard University was founded during the Reconstruction era, a time when the country was attempting to redefine and re-establish its identity as a unified whole and to reconcile the violence and injustices perpetrated during the period of institutionalized slavery. Importantly, during this unstable period political and social leaders were

attempting to map out and put into action a plan to weave hundreds of thousands of freed slaves into the fabric of this new "American" life, for better or worse (Logan 1969).

Howard University, first conceived as The Howard Theological Seminary in 1866, became a reality at a time when the educability of Black individuals was highly debated by those in power. At this time, the City of Washington and the neighboring City of Georgetown had statistically high populations of "Colored" students advocating for and demanding an education equivalent to that of white students. In his history of the first century of the University's existence, historian Rayford Logan (1969) asserts that the founding of an institution of higher learning primarily by freed Black individuals and with the express purpose of educating freed Black individuals who would return to the Black community to spread their knowledge was a bold statement against those who would claim that former slaves could not be educated, and especially those who claimed that they were not fit to remain in America.

The history of collecting at Howard University begins long before The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center manifests as such in the University's broader historical narrative. In 1867, the same year the university was founded, a committee of university staff and faculty convened to identify those books appropriate for the school's library. Among those first publications admitted into the institution's collections were titles on Africa and Blacks donated by the University's founder, O. O. Howard[vii] (1830-1909), and supplemented by titles on abolitionist movements and the Civil War.

[vii] Known as "the Christian General" throughout the Civil War, Oliver Otis Howard invested his time after the war as the first and only commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, appointed by President Andrew Johnson. Despite overwhelming corruption, resistance from oppositional forces, and a lack of managerial experience Howard managed to broker thousands of labor contracts for recently freed slaves and took a

Those early years were a boon for Howard in regards to collecting, as the university received several large and valuable donations of materials such as the papers of noted abolitionist Lewis Tappan (1788-1873), numbering over 1,600 books, newspapers, pictures, periodicals, letters, clippings, and pamphlets. The university's collections of Africana and Black Americana grew and were shaped by the shifting landscape of Black scholarship and social activism during the early twentieth century (Battle 1988). During the same period that Howard sought to increase its holdings, important organizations such as the American Negro Historical Society (1897), the Negro Society for Historical Research (1911), and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (1915) were growing and flourishing, reflecting the elaboration of the subject of Black History as an academic discipline. The confluence of these circumstances: temporal, material, and social, positioned Howard University at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century as one of the premier incubators of the study of African and American Black history and culture. This is due firstly to the University's early position as a legitimating force behind the institutionalized social advancement of freedmen. Secondly, it is due to a circular process of legitimation by which the University's rich holdings gave weight to a historical narrative which had long been excluded from the popular consciousness, i.e. the Black American narrative. This as coupled with a broadening and deepening of said Black American narrative which elevated and prioritized specific and particular materials.

---

particular interest in the infrastructure of education. To that end, he aided in the founding of Howard University in 1867 and served as its third president from 1869-1874 (Baker & Taylor, 1908).

It was in the midst of these colliding circumstances that Reverend Dr. Jesse E. Moorland[viii] was persuaded to donate his highly regarded private collection of Black-related materials to the University's expanding library, spurring the creation of "The Moorland Foundation, a Library of Negro Life", which was incorporated into the university system (*MSRC History* 2015). In bequeathing over 3,000 books, pamphlets and other important materials to the University Rev. Dr. Moorland felt he was entrusting his collection to "…the one place in America where the largest and best library on this subject [of the Negro and slavery] should be constructively established" (Battle 1988: 2). With the designation in 1932 of the University library as a 'research library' and the appointment of Dorothy Porter Wesley, the first Black woman to earn a degree in Library Science from Columbia University, as librarian and curator the Foundation began to devise and implement systematic schema for organizing, labeling, and making available its holdings. Wesley's attention to the utility of classification schema for scholars and development of research tools resulted in numerous bibliographies and finding aids, which in turn allowed researchers to more easily navigate and interpret the library's collections (Sims 2014). In this way, a research collection of the Black African and African American experience born out of dynamic, historically situated social movements grew, adapted, and became a site from which said social movements were defined, staged, and enacted.

In 1946, the Moorland Foundation acquired the private library of Arthur Barnette Spingarn (1878-1971), an attorney who served as chair of the National Association for

[viii] Rev. Jesse E. Moorland was a public educator, ordained & practicing Congressional minister, and administrator of the Washington, D.C. & National branches of the Young Men's Christian Association. Later in his life, he became active with Black political organizations and helped to found the Association for the Study of American Negro Life with Dr. Carter G. Woodson in 1915 (Grimm 2002).

the Advancement of Colored People's legal committee and the association's president for twenty-five years. Spingarn invested a great deal of time and money in amassing valuable written works by Black authors. Thomas Battle, Moorland-Spingarn's former director, notes that in conjunction with the Moorland acquisition, "The [Spingarn collection] presents evidence that should have made notions of Black intellectual inferiority and pseudoscientific racism clearly unfounded" (1988: 3). Battle is articulating one way in which the archival collections amassed by the library at Howard University passively (by virtue of their very existence) and actively (via their activation by researchers and scholars) illustrate, narrate, and validate "true" Black experiences.

Processing Moorland-Spingarn

"It's [Moorland-Spingarn] picture after picture, book after book, it's notes after notes (sic) of day-to-day people putting themselves together. Coming out of slavery, coming through Jim Crow, and then coming out into what we now see in the twenty first century…if we lose that we'll think we never did anything. We'll think we have to start all over again."

-Dr. John H. Bracey on Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
Moorland Spingarn fundraising video (Dawne Langford 2012)

"Especially working with Black materials, Black materials are under-valued, if not devalued, you know…on a good day. So, I don't know it just seems like MPLP is just under-valuing what we have sought so long to collect and preserve."

Susan
Interview: October 15th, 2015

This first quote in this epigraph from Dr. John H. Bracey of the University of Massachusetts Amherst illuminates the depth of importance that the material existence of these archives hold today for not only the community at Howard University, but also the

Black community at large. He alludes to the power of archival materials in generating legitimated narrative histories which have long gone unheard or doubted (Trouillot 1995; Derrida 1995). His statement indicates that the progress of the Black community in the United States—out of enslavement, through the equally oppressive machinations of Jim Crow, and into today is both made material by and emerges from the archives housed at Moorland-Spingarn via the activation of the materials by archivists and processors, researchers, and other materials.

His claim, which seems to be that if all that archival material was to suddenly be made non-existent then so too would the collective memory and repercussion of the aforementioned progress, appears hyperbolic on the surface. Certainly, the destruction of a stack of papers or a box of books does not negate more than a century of historical happenings—the events did not necessarily occur because those physical artifacts were wrought. However, his concern for the validation of a collective historical narrative, a justification of specific histories which is not cultivated as explicitly anywhere outside of the collections at Moorland-Spingarn, and the implicit concern for ownership of 'appropriate' forms of evidence undergird his statement. Instead of writing his claim off as an overstatement in the service of garnering financial support for the Center (as is the aim of the video from which this quote is pulled), we may instead consider the very tangible implications for history and knowledge production of improper, insufficient, or even unequal stewardship of such community-specific archival collections.

Susan stated the second quote in the epigraph for this section to me during an interview. Her sentiments echo those of Dr. Bracey—she feels strongly that the archives at Moorland-Spingarn stand as material evidence for a history, one that has gone

traditionally unacknowledged. She points to the power of the processing technique to imbue the materials with value and impact the narrative generated from the archive. She perceives the devaluing of Black materials as current and ongoing. In contrast to the staff of DCAAP, for whom the backlogs of archival materials is a problem in the present that has resulted from preferential actions grounded in unequal power structures in the past, the staff at Moorland-Spingarn continue to confront preferential practices—of which MPLP is one—which implicitly or explicitly call for different, and often neglectful, treatment of the materials of marginalized communities. This misalignment of temporalities is something that I delve into further in chapter four.

The year 1973 saw a reorganization of the research library at Howard University: the creation of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and the development of distinct materials management divisions, including the Manuscripts Division. The goal of establishing a separate Manuscripts Division was to provide scholars with a cache of primary source documents to permit a deeper and more analytical exploration of Black history and culture. However, in its early years the Manuscripts Division had no staff to process its already-growing collections and a backlog of materials began to build. Although both staffing and funding issues were addressed as scholarly demand for manuscripts increased, Moorland-Spingarn continued to face backlogs of unprocessed materials (Sims 2012).

This massive and still growing backlog of unprocessed collections is the point at which DCAAP enters onto the scene at Moorland-Spingarn. The project is based out of the GW Libraries Special Collections Research Center and operates with a budget of $495,900 furnished by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).

DCAAP seeks, over the course of 33 months, to increase access[ix] to nearly 125 "hidden" [x] collections documenting African American and African diasporic culture, history, and politics in Washington, D.C. DCAAP seeks to achieve this via an archival processing technique called More Product, Less Process (MPLP), first described and defined by archivists Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner in 2005 (Greene & Meissner 2005). This controversial method falls under the category of 'minimal processing' and diverges in significant and important ways from traditional methodologies. Primarily, DCAAP seeks to create a digitized database for researchers to access information about collections across six different institutions[xi]: the District of Columbia Archives, the National Museum of American History's Archives Center, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (Jules & James 2013).

In addition to a full time project director and a full time processing archivist, DCAAP employs between eight and ten novice, graduate-level students from George

[ix] Access here refers to both the find-ability and use-ability of archival materials. Historically, when a collection goes unprocessed the archivist has only a preliminary knowledge of what the collection contains, therefore researchers often have little to no knowledge of what the collection contains—if they are aware of the collection's existence at all. Many repositories restrict user access to only processed collections. This is due to the fact that the management of an unprocessed collection requires more staff effort and resources. The researcher will request to see far more of an unprocessed collection in order to locate their items of interest, whereas they would only need to request a few boxes from a processed collection in which they know exactly how their items of interest have been sorted (Greene & Meissner 2005; Yakel 2005).

[x] Ch. 2

xi The vision statement of the DCAAP project reads: "The site partners affiliated with the D.C. Africana Archives Project envision a consortium of institutions building research bridges and bringing together scholars, teachers, cultural centers, and communities to examine Africana life and culture" (DCAAP Partner Site Training Presentation, 2014). These six institutions were selected due to both their large holdings of Africana related to D.C. life and history and the large amount of collections they house which fall under the category "hidden" (Williford, 2015).

Washington University and Howard University as archival processors[xii] whose training in archival processing is comprised solely of that acquired in the context of DCAAP. This ranges from a one day to two week intensive training period in which processors are briefed on the DCAAP processing manual, go through a crash course on Black history in D.C. with particular emphasis on major collections under DCAAP's purview, and includes one or two days of hands-on processing training. This is the context in which I found myself processing archival collections at Howard University and becoming increasingly fascinated by the intersections of archival practice, history, narrative and truth.

Processing MPLP

This study explores the interpretation and application of the MPLP archival processing technique in the face of critical claims that this method of processing archival materials is explicitly neglectful of the physical integrity of the materials and tacitly, the specific narrative histories which they contain, convey, and construct (Greene & Meissner 2010; Crowe & Spilman 2010; Anchor 2013). In the course of this exploration I argue that while professional archival practitioners articulate the predominant critique of MPLP in particularly techno-centric language there are specific, historically and socially contingent motivations for an archivist or processor to either adopt or push back against the MPLP technique, which are often unaddressed. Specifically, in the case of Moorland-Spingarn and the valuable Black materials it houses the processing technique

[xii] The individual engaged in the work of processing archival materials is not referred to as "the archivist" but as "the processor". This is primarily due to the fact that an archivist has received formal training in archival practices, most often attaining a master's degree in library and information sciences supplemented by numerous years of archival work.

deployed is seen as a direct reflection of the expertise of the archivists working there and their right and ability to control the production of a truthful Black historical narrative within prevailing paradigms of proper archival practice.

Specifically, a close reading of the critiques reveals that they are born out of and signal a shifting definition of "the archive" as well as both the purpose and definition of processing practice in the 20th century American context. As I discovered in the course of my observations, the tangible practice which is shaped by professional critique is equally impacted by historicized and site-specific systems of power and inequality. These systems of inequality have led to collections of Black materials to go unprocessed for decades, if they are located and accessioned in the first place. Therefore, the practice of the archivist in the present is in large part a response to this historical process of obscurement. Furthermore, these mutually structuring sets of forces shape the modes and forms of "history" and "truth" which are performed and generated within archives, and which ultimately impact the historical truths which get folded into larger narratives of social identity (i.e. Black American) and geographical embededness (i.e. Washington D.C.-specific histories).

Importantly, my analysis has been unavoibdably shaped by the racially-fueled events occurring across America over the course of 2014 and 2015 which are but a small part of a deep and complex history. These include such headline-news as the rampant, ongoing, unjustifiable killing of Black men and women by police officers, pursuant riots and protests from Ferguson, Missouri to Baltimore, Maryland, and wide-spread discussion about such hot-button issues as gun control and welfare programs which more often than not return to a discussion of race and ethnicity. While racial discrimination and

the marginalization of populations on the basis of skin color is by no means new in any anylitical sphere or on the horizon of history, the fact that these events are at the forefront of public consciousness, that Howard University is a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), and that Moorland-Spingarn was established explicitly to collect and preserve material artifacts of African and African American history by and for the Black community means that race and racial inequality necessarily remain in the forefront of my examination of archival practice. A critical examination of how race is deployed as a tool of control in the case of archival materials and cultural heritage will prove valuable and fruitful.

Thesis Outline

In chapter one I analyze classic and contemporary literature on archives and documents in order to understand how the concepts "history" and "truth" come to be defined and enacted specifically within the context of both traditional and minimal archival practices. This analysis is useful in attempting to understand theoretically how archives come to be regarded as sites of "truthful" knowledge production and how the actions of the archivist impact that process. In chapter two I provide a diachronic examination of archival theory and practice, which serves as an explanation for the development and theoretical implementation of the MPLP technique. I also offer an analysis of the critical claims levied against MPLP to demonstrate both the understanding and use of the technique in practice as opposed to the ideal use of the technique proffered by its designers, Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner. In chapter three I define and elaborate on the concept of archival ideologies as one primary point of origin for the friction being generated between DCAAP processors, including myself, and the full time

staff at Moorland-Spingarn. I also examine the metalinguistic negotiations undertaken by DCAAP processors while processing as a way of illustrating how archival ideologies are made tangible through practice.

Finally, chapter four offers reflections on how the situated practice of DCAAP MPLP collides with theoretical constructions of "truth" and "history". This chapter also challenges the professional critiques of the technique, arguing against the elision of power inequalities within said critiques. In this chapter I also suggest that relying on colliding archival ideologies does not do the full work of explaining the friction that I perceived in the processing space at Moorland-Spingarn, and that the friction emerges more fundamentally from a historically embedded system of racial and social inequalities, which is being enacted within the technical implementation of MPLP. I explore this assertion via the analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews[xiii] conducted at Moorland-Spingarn over the course of one month with both DCAAP and non-DCAAP processors the chief curator of the MSRC manuscripts division, and the DCAAP project supervisors.

Importantly, my analysis will delve into the shifting role of both the archive and the archivist in constructing and interpreting narrativized histories in the face of overwhelming material backlogs and the mounting pressure to increase access to said materials. This shift has emerged as a foundational issue to many of the questions I am asking.

[xiii] Appendix B

No Unbiased Process

This project is itself a sort of processing. In the course of my research I am attempting to sort, describe, and label a number of archival methodologies and their subsequent products which are shaped by and which shape subjective, epistemological practice. Scholars maintain that the processing of archival materials, regardless of the technique employed, is fraught and driven by differential power structures (Trouillot 1995; Derrida 1996; Foucault 2002; Cook & Schwartz 2002; Stoler 2002). I must acknowledge, then, that my own 'archival' endeavor here is similarly fraught. In relaying the stories of the employees at Moorland-Spingarn, describing MPLP and traditional methodologies, and defining such categories as "truth" and "history" I commit the same metaphorical violence that Jacques Derrida (1996) locates within the archive[xiv].

However, throughout the course of this thesis I attempt to remain cognizant of these violent activities. In doing so, I seek to elevate the voices of those actors in this scenario that have gone heretofore unheard and examine the friction I have perceived at Moorland-Spingarn from a multitude of angles. I seek to avoid the trap that Haunani-Kay Trask so vehemently warns against—the claim that those involved with the creation of the archives at Moorland-Spingarn, "…idealize their pasts for the purpose of political mythmaking in the present," (1991: 159) for to, "…take away from [them] the power to define who and what [they] are, and how [they] should behave politically and culturally," would be to commit the same violence that the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, and Howard University, was founded in part to resist in 1862.

[xiv] Ch. 1

My employment with DCAAP has given me a privileged opportunity to learn the MPLP technique and observe how it is practiced at Moorland-Spingarn. This opportunity has also allowed me ongoing and intimate access to both the collections and the staff of the research center. By being present for *and* participating in the processing being done by DCAAP I not only have been able to observe the thoughts, opinions, and choices which my interlocutors negotiated on a daily basis but I have been able to put the professional critiques of MPLP to the test, so to speak. The most important portion of my methodology, however, is the set of interviews I conducted with DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn staff. Discussing my research, the MPLP technique, and the research center with the staff of both DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn was particularly enlightening both because of what my interlocutors stated explicitly and because of the ways in which they chose to express themselves and what they chose not to express.

Chapter One

Defining History and Truth

Fig. 3:

In this chapter I engage with a number of classical and contemporary scholars who grapple with the concepts “history” and “truth”. Given that many professional archivists invoke history and truth in judging the efficacy and utility of the MPLP technique, it is useful to determine exactly what is meant by these terms in the context of archives and archival practice across time. This examination allows me to then further

analyze the responses of my interlocutors at both DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn, who also speak in terms of history and truth.

The Work of the Archive: 'Truth'

The work done by the archive is multilayered and nuanced. In excavating the etymology of the word "archive," Jacques Derrida (1996) illuminates the dual perception of the work done by the archive in its classical sense, which is made possible due to the "archive" being located in both space and time. These perceptions persist throughout early archival literature. "*Arkhē*…this name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological principal—but also the principle according the law, *there* where authority, social order, are exercised" (emphasis added, Derrida 1996: 1). Derrida is identifying the archive as both an emplaced and temporalized site of history making and the brokering of power.

Furthermore, Derrida locates these processes of history and power-making within the action of archival processing, juxtaposing *sequential* and *jussive* "orders of order" and their differential deployment of control (Derrida, 1996: 1). The archive formulates and enacts the law by recalling, calling upon on, and imposing the law via its existence within a "privileged topology" and a particular sphere of collective consciousness (Derrida, 1996: 3). *Archontic* power, or the power inherent in the translational actions of the archivist, originates not only from the unification, identification, and classification of documents, but also, and more fundamentally, from the process of consignation.

Consignation, or the gathering together of potentially disparate signs, generates a notion of synchrony and systematism which telegraphs the existence of an "ideal unity" (Derrida, 1996: 3). This process is not made visible to the user or the archivist, as the archive shelters itself not only from the memory of its origins as *arkheion*, but also from the memory of that which it shelters. In other words, the archive as a place and an active entity does not explicitly acknowledge or make known its own power. Within MPLP, unification, identification, and categorization take the form of minimal arrangement and description of materials by processors, forming a network of valuation—or the interrelations between archival objects which imbues each one with value and telegraphs a value of the archival collection as a whole—founded on original order as opposed to a respect for the *fonds*[xv].

MPLP practice and critical archiving theory demonstrate that documents, as a part of a network of valuation, are subject to a constant and dynamic process of meaning-making. In direct opposition to the early Dutch and British processing manuals, archivists Wendy Duff and Verne Harris assert that "…records are always in the process of being made, and that the stories of their making are parts of bigger stories understandable only in the ever-changing broader contexts of society" (Duff & Harris 2002: 263). The notion of the "archive" set forth by traditional manuals generates a static, synchronic concept of history. Under this paradigm, once documents have been incorporated into the archival collection the "truth" that they provide is not subject to qualification or re-interpretation across time. Within the traditional framework of archival practices the document is a de-temporalized entity which points only to a bounded event or piece of information

[xv] Ch. 2

(Cantwell Smith 1996; Briet 2006). When taken together these documents, which are removed from the flow of time, generate a single, comprehensible narrative arc: "[T]he assumptions informing these questions remain rooted in…Enlightenment origins. The boundary between text and context is hard and stable. A record's context is bounded and readily knowable" (Duff & Harris 2002: 264).

Document-based ethnography is situated at the boundary between text and context, exploring the document's social power and society's power in constructing the document. (Riles 2006) "From bus tickets to courtroom transcripts, employment applications to temple donation records, election ballots to archived letters, documents appear at every turn in the construction of modern bodies, institutions, states, and culture," (2006: 5). Annelise Riles points to the relatively recent definition of the practice of *documentation,* first undertaken by the American Documentation Institute in 1937, as both a modernizing and technocratic pursuit. Early claims that *documentation* practices—notably situated within Western bureaucratic hegemonies—offered new forms of globalized transparency and communication were immediately challenged by such thinkers as Benjamin and Heidegger who recognized the limitations of a "universalist" project entrenched in capitalist doctrine (2006: 6).

"…producing things is one of the most effective means for the realization of the person, for seeing one's own capacity in the evidence of the things we have ourselves created" (Miller 2011). Riles is suggesting that documents specifically are an even more effective means for the realization of the self—standing apart from other 'objects' of human design in both an epistemological and ontological fashion. However, I argue that the self-making capacity of the document lies not in the design and execution of an

individual article—for this process takes place in much larger epistemological and ontological systems. I do not, furthermore, believe that documents become technologies of the self when they accumulate to such a mass as to take on the identity of an 'archive,' although this may generate a great deal of potential energy for self-fashioning (Foucault 1988). I assert that it is the manipulation, re-interpretation, and prolonged engagement with archived documents which shifts the potential energy of self-making to a kinetic, diachronic, and dynamic process of identity formation on the scale of society.

Riles' assessment of the making and re-making of documents as a technocratic pursuit applies also to the ongoing making and re-making of archives. As Susan states, "I would never consider myself a historian, not at all, I'm just more of a technician with two Master's degrees and so, you know, I know how to organize the collection and organize it well so that researchers appreciate what I do. To me, organizing a collection and making it accessible really doesn't have a lot to do with your knowledge of the subject and that again is where the common sense comes in" (Interview: Oct. 15th, 2015).

Echoing Duff & Harris and responding in part to Derrida's claims on the bounded and limiting nature of the archive, anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot advocates for a theoretical approach to archives, and particularly to the history which is performed by archives, situated somewhere between positivist and constructivist conceptions of history (1995: 4). Trouillot asserts that positivist views of history necessarily separate "what happened" from "what is said to have happened" in an effort to isolate the true facts of history—establishing a tradition of doing history vs. knowing history premised on narration. Constructivism, on the other hand, diminishes the value of historical knowledge on the grounds that the diachronic process of history and the synchronic

historical narrative it produces are always bound-up and co-constructing. Importantly, positivism obfuscates systems of power by privileging factual knowledge over the fact-generating process while constructivism obfuscates systems of power by insisting that all historical knowledge is equally valuable and true due to its emergence from the same sociohistorical process(es) (Trouillot 1995: 13). "The search for the nature of history has led us to deny ambiguity and either to demarcate precisely and at all times the dividing line between historical processes and historical knowledge or to conflate at all times historical process and historical narrative." (Trouillot 1995: 25).

In order to counter these diametrically opposed denials of the influence of structural power inequalities in the construction of historical truths via archival materials, Trouillot urges us to focus our attention on the process and conditions of narrative production. It is within this process that "what history is," a temporally and spatially situated product he reminds us, will be revealed. By focusing on the process of narrative construction, and with a careful consideration of its end result, we can begin to consider how differential power structures over time form and influence what become synchronic narratives and how some narratives become privileged over others (Trouillot 1995: 25).

Martin Heidegger's (1962) concept of Dasein, literally translated as "Being-There" and used by the philosopher to designate the particular existential conditions of human beings, is a useful tool in this analysis of the interactions between people and archival materials. For Heidegger, historical knowledge does not take the form of a projection—the elaboration of the goals of Dasein via ready-to-hand tools. Historical knowledge is particularly object-centric. According to philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, historical knowledge "…receives its justification from the fore-structure of Dasein,"

(Gadamer 1975 in Knapp 2003: 710). Gadamer underscores that within Heidegger's conceptualization of historical truth, preconceptions—stemming from the fact that Dasein is "always already"—inherently shape the "truth".

This shaping-by-preconceptions applies not only in the case of those individuals who come into contact with archival materials in the role of researcher but also in the case of those who process archival materials. However, the historical thing is not itself a ready-to-hand tool that has definable boundaries and an identifiable position in both space and time—the historically embedded object from which historical knowledge is gleaned has the same mode of being-in as that of Dasein. The archive reflects, or materializes, the archivist's consciousness molded by the collective which is due to the 'always-already' nature of the Being of the historical document and the processor. The preconceptions of the processor will undoubtedly become bound up with the historical narrative that emerges from the actions of processing. Within MPLP, which affords processors great discretion in the arrangement and description of collections, the co-temporal and co-spatial being-in of both the historical knowledge embedded within the archive and the processor make for differential and temporally situated constructions of both "truth" and historical narratives.

The coordination of knowing-activity and knowledge, while grounded in simultaneous being-in, is specifically achieved through both the archival document and the processor being-in a *mode of historicity*. The archival document's "…status as a thing suggests precisely that it is present in an ontic way, while its status as a thing-seen suggests that it possesses the mode of being of historicity" (Knapp 2003: 712). If we accept the assertion that the materiality of the archive is integral in its authorization of

truth and the assertion that a thing-seen co-exists with Dasein in a mode of historicity we can logically conclude that there is no neutral materiality and therefore no neutral document, confirming Derrida's assertions.

Finally, following Heidegger's notion of Dasein further, there is a particular being-in-with-others of the archival document. The document is thrown into the world that consists of other documents, the originator of the documents, and subsequent holders and processors of the collection. It is in this state of being-in-with-others that the narrative history embedded in the collection is manipulated, influenced, constructed, and illuminated. As Merleau-Ponty states, "Being is the 'place' where the 'modes of consciousness' are inscribed as structurations of Being, and where the structurations of Being are modes of consciousness" (1968: 253). The subjective construction of "truth" and the enfolding of historical narratives into present consciousness result from an oscillation by the processor between material perception and ideological conception.

The Work of the Archive: Historical Narratives

"How do language and narrative shape the work of archival description? Is archival description simply a form of narration?"

(Duff & Harris, 2002: 265)

Within Derrida's (1995) notion of 'archive fever' lies the notion of the violence done by the archive through the processes of silencing and the differential extrapolation of potentials. As a result of these processes there is a generation of "historical narrative" as a category along side the particular historical narratives constructed around the subject embedded within archival materials. These generations depend upon "perceptual faith" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), or belief in the material world inherent within the work of

individuals utilizing archival materials. "[I]t is precisely the aesthetic qualities of stories, supported by the rhetorical (and imaginative) power of the 'real,' rather than the 'certitudes of critical objectivity,' that have led to the renewed trust in the archive as a container of historical truth" (Knapp, 2003: 704). The power and violence of the archive is a direct result of its materiality and its status as ocular proof "…we see the things themselves, the world is what we see" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 3). James Knapp invokes Titian's painting *Man with a Ripped Glove* in which, "…the marks of identity have been transferred from the anonymous and unwrinkled face to the torn glove that he wears" (2003: 701). Knapp asserts that the artist's choices on this account are a form of mediation which "…direct[s] our attention away from the thing…to the discursive web in which an idea…accumulates meaning" (203: 701).

In a similar way, through arrangement and description the archivist intentionally *and* unconsciously situates the material document at a certain location within a network of historicized valuation. The act of labeling folders of materials with language not merely rife with visual cues such as "photograph" or "plaque," but intentionally so, anchors the web of signs generated by the archive to the material world, essentially bridging the gap between the narrative history embedded within the archive and the physical archive itself (Knapp 2003).

The tendency to reduce the action of the archive solely to a network of valuation elides the circular process that generates and authorizes narrative histories from archival documents: the very authority of the archive emerges in large part from the materiality of the labeled surface at the same time that the materiality of the surface is denied within its transformation to a relation of signs. In other words, returning to Derrida, the materials

contained within the archive are made meaningful by the process of inscription carried out by the processor—the "truth" that they convey emerges from the translation of their contents to a textual finding aid which embeds the archival materials in a web of signs. This process of entextualization, wherein concepts, subjects, and relationships among the archival material is translated to a text which can be read, subsequently elides the materiality of the signifiers and the "truth" that is telegraphed by the finding aid[xvi]. The authority of the historical narrative attributed to the archive is no longer located within the materials themselves, but within the finding aid making it more complicated for individuals to interrogate the validity or authority of that narrative in the future.

According to early, non-minimal archival processing manuals the fact that an archival collection remains in the custody of the producing institution or body is fundamental to its status as an archive[xvii]. Narratives, which emerge from archives processed in the traditional manner, emerge distinctly from categories determined by the specific institution in which they are physically created and housed. There is a notably different form of emplacement, which occurs within the archive through contemporary, minimal practices that stands opposed to more traditional methods such as those defined by Müller, Feith, and Fruin (1898) and Jenkinson (1922). With the becoming-public of the act of records-keeping over the last century there has been a proliferation of institutions which exist either solely or primarily for the housing and preservation of historical documents—the archive is no longer just an organized assortment documents;

[xvi] A finding aid is a document produced after a collection has been processed, and its purpose is to serve as a summary or the processed collection and help the user navigate the series, subseries, boxes and/or folders. Some finding aids are more complex than others and depend on the level of organization being done to the collection. See chapter three for an in-depth discussion of DCAAP's finding aids.

[xvii] Ch. 2

it is a place in which documents, and therefore history, are preserved and made accessible to the public. This shift has altered both the tone and the practice of archival processing—no longer is the archive tended to exclusively for the sake of maintaining institutional legibility as it was conceived of traditionally[xviii]. My interlocutors assert that other forms of legibility are being maintained, i.e. that of historic and community identity and that the archive allows for the generation and re-generation of historical narratives.

The Work of the Archivist: Coproducing 'truthful' narratives

"Because nothing escapes, there's not a single word that can't be taken, by ruse or force. Which does not mean that all translations are equally faithful or captivating. There are inevitably trade-offs along the way and never an end in sight. Set in motion, the mutational process stops for no one…at some point one simply has to give up. Period."

Eric Prenowitz, Translator's Note
Archive Fever (1996: 105)

In discussing the "terminal relationship of metonymy" of death and the grave Engseng Ho states "The person and the grave and the engraving on the tombstone point to each other in a silent spatial relationship of proximity that exists independently of visitors and reciters" (2006: 24). A similar metonymic relationship exists between the subject that is embedded within the archive and the entextualized description of the collection. This metonymic relationship is the foundation on which potentials—for control and silencing—are generated. By way of the combination of place, individual, labels, archival trappings (boxes, folders, etc.), and entextualization performed by both archivists and the originator of the documents, the archive "enacts a passage from silence to vocalization" (2006: 25). For Ho, and in the case of archival processing, "Writing is a

[xviii] ibid

foundational step in the creation and realization of potentials for signification" (2006: 25).

Eric Prenowitz, the translator of Derrida's *Archive Fever,* comments on the relationship between the translation of texts and the archiving of the "moment." Prenowitz asks, "What is [im]printed here, is it the archive or the printed content, i.e. what is archived?" (Derrida 1996: 111). Prenowitz is nodding to the entextualization that occurs during archival processing, one that obscures previous contexts and provides new context to both the archive as an organic whole and to the materials or components contained within. The very moment of archiving, in other words the translative moment of arrangement and description, *produces* as much as it is *produced by* the event—in this case the historical event. Additionally, acknowledging the archive's active power over the structuring of narrative histories, Prenowitz asserts that the *event* is always archiving.

The recording (read: entextualization), conglomeration, and proliferation of events generates a "novel spatiotemporal event situated along a continuum of place" (Meek 1440). David Meeks' assessment reflects the experience of the archival user who, within his or her own "novel spatiotemporal event", must navigate the archivist's translations of the relationships and narratives embedded within archival materials into series arrangements, folder labels, and a finding aid. In this way there is a coproduction of narrative that occurs post-processing: the researcher's extracted narrative is unique and particular to the engagement he or she has with the previous actions of the processor.

Narrative comprehension—both integral to and the result of archival engagement—relies on the relationships generated from the temporal sequence of items

(Knapp 2003). The narrative history embedded within the archive, which in its most fundamental state is the network of valuation constructed by the processor, is realized through emplotment. The arrangement and description of a collection of personal papers structures the narrative of that person's life. Although the arrangement of the collection, even according to more traditional definitions, does not tend to follow a strictly chronological order, there is a general, progressive narrative arc that emerges from the whole of a processed collection.

The notion of a beginning, middle, and end to a narrative cannot be located *a priori* but arises from the very act of arrangement (Ricouer 1984). Recalling Derrida, Paul Ricoeur also asserts that within a narrative, episodes exist one-because-of-the-other and not simply one-after-the-other, thus bringing about a sense of wholeness or completion. Importantly, it must be noted that the processor—particularly when working under MPLP—is not gathering together disparate signs arbitrarily: "to make up a plot is already to make the intelligent spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic" (Ricoeur, 1984: 41). Keeping in mind the directive from the DCAAP processing manual for processors to rely primarily on information that is readily available within the collection while arranging and describing, there is a sense that the historical narratives constructed through MPLP processing are motivated more by the conversation ongoing with the subject embedded within the materials than by the categories imposed by the processor. Although the flexibility in technique stipulated by MPLP allows for the processor to engage more directly with the embedded subject of a collection, it also requires processors to engage in a system of

metalinguistic negotiations which, imposes order onto the collection's narrative (Ricoeur 1984: 40-41)[xix].

This process recalls Foucault's (1972) assertion that the facticity of archival discourse is the result of a *historical a priori*. There is *already* a body of history which "frees the condition of emerging statements," (1972: 143) allowing for the elaboration of potentials from both the physicality and the subjectivity of the archive. In the case of the materials at Moorland-Spingarn, however, there exist two distinct but co-dependent *historical a priori*: that of the archival methodological discourse and that of the Black historical discourse constructed by the archival documents themselves. In the specific case of DCAAP at Moorland-Spingarn the potentialities generated and capitalized upon by actors affiliated with the project stem from both decisions made regarding processing techniques and deeply-rooted concern for the preservation and proliferation of "truthful" Black historical narrative, though not necessarily in equal measure.

The processing of a collection is a form of mimetic refiguration, specifically the enactment of Ricoeur's $Mimesis_2$ or the process of emplotment (Ricoeur, 1984). When a processor first reviews a collection they already possess a prefigured notion of the archive, the embedded subject, and the system of archival processing. In fact, it is because the actions entextualized within the archive exist within this global web of signification that they *can* be narrated. The processor utilizes these prefigured notions to enact a mimetic structuring of the past and the future within the present via emplotment due to the fact that, "…everyday praxis structures the present of the past, the present of the present, and the present of the future" (Ricoeur, 1984: 60). The actions of the

[xix] Ch. 3

processor—arranging, describing, and inscribing—rely upon the prefigured world to emplot the historical narrative embedded within the collection which emerges in the present, and which projects toward a future of interpretation and re-interpretation.

One way in which the historical document connects experiential calendar time with narrative time is via the trace of the past that it brings into the present. The trace of the document is in some sense a husk of a former event, object, or subject, which no longer exists, but by which we can intuit that which occurred or existed. The trace also acts as a passage, allowing both the processor and researcher handling an historical document to transport between the "now" and the "then." Beyond just conceptualizing the archival document as Being-in a mode of historicity, Heidegger offers a conceptualization of the trace as the possible "…concrete disclosure of the Dasein which has-been-there" (Heidegger 1962 in Ricoeur 1985: 122). Furthermore, the archival repository in its entirety can stand as a trace between a past and a present, something which my interlocutors feel very strongly about and which I go into detail about in chapter four. The very fact that the archive exists materially, and is therefore capable of generating meaning and holding value, allows it to also stand as the husk of a former event, object, or subject. This is precisely what Dr. Bracey—quoted in the introduction—refers to. It is the work of following a trace, undertaken first and foremost by the processor of a collection, which translates historical traces into a material being-which-has-been-there.

The actions of the processor, within the present of the present, configure a heterogeneous, synthetic, and syntagmatic plot which semantically unites all separate documents within a collection and accounts for all circumstances, events, subjectivities,

and goals embedded within the collection. Not only do the actions of the processor string together an episodic, legible, linear series of events but they also emplot said events into a story, or narrative. In essence, the processor's very existence is stipulated by the need to enforce a "followability" among the disparate episodes presented by the documents (Ricoeur, 1984: 67).

This is evidenced by the creation of a finding aid, or document that relays a collection's contents per the processor's labeling, as the ultimate goal of all processing actions. The result of this mimetic emplotment of the embedded narrative within the collection is that the processor, for themselves and the researcher, facilitates the transition from a prefigured notion of the world to a refigured, narrativized understanding of the archival material at hand. By undergoing a personal process of refiguration through the inscription of arrangement categories into the form of a finding aid, the processor is shaping and directing the mimetic refiguration undertaken by the researcher.

Chapter Two

The Archive and the Archivist

Chapter one explored the ways in which the archive constructs "histories" and "truth" and began to delve into the many various ways in which the archivist constructs the archive. In this chapter I expand my examination even further to explore how "the archivist" is and has been constructed by society at large over time. The evolution of the role and perception of the archivist as an actor within archival spaces has generated important repercussions for the valuation, use, and treatment of archival materials across history: the frameworks of archival practice established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have had lasting implications for archivists working today. As I discuss, processing techniques such as those developed by Müller, Feith, and Fruin (1898) and Jenkinson (1922) are still referenced today and the material result of those processing plans—traditionally processed archival collections—are still visible and accessible throughout repositories across the country.

Archiving Practice Across Time

Archivist Terry Cook (2012) argues that the last century and a half has seen four broad phases of archival paradigmatic evolution, which he refers to as juridical legacy, cultural memory, societal engagement, and community archiving. In discussing these different paradigms Cook also demonstrates how the role of the archivist has evolved from that of a passive curator to today's vision of the archivist as a community facilitator. The model he sets forth is not wholly unlike an Aristotelian model of biological evolution in which the archiving profession is evolving *toward* some final, better state: the dark days of early archival practice were dominated by limiting regulations and a wholesale

divorce of the archive and the archivist from the needs, desires, and (importantly) identity of the archival user. Gradually, and beneficially according to Cook, the archiving profession has emerged from that misguided way of thinking, taken a good look in the mirror, and has become much more engaged with individuals, communities, and "identities" such as "queer," "woman," etc.

Cook's general assessment of the development of the profession rings true—the evolution he tracks being entangled with the changing material nature of archival holdings across the late 19th and early 20th century and a reflexive awareness of practice which arose generally as a part of cultural and history studies in the 1970s. In this chapter I will discuss the important reflexive turn that archival practice underwent in the mid-to-late twentieth century and situate DCAAP and MPLP, as well as the larger response to collections backlogs, as part and parcel of Cook's most recent stage of evolution. However, Cook's timeline of change is presented in a narrowly linear way that paints the handling of archival materials across time with broad strokes: for Cook it seems that the best choice an archivist today could make would be to engage in practices that fall squarely in the category of "community archiving," with an emphasis on community engagement and attunement to the needs and desires of the community from which records and documents originated.

"Community archiving and digital realities offer possibilities for healing…disruptive and sometimes conflicting discourses within our profession" (Cook 2012: 1). The conflict Cook refers to essentially boils down to *why and for whom the archive exists,* the answers to which are by no means universally agreed upon. For Cook, opening up and making available are solutions to a century-and-a-half-long problem that

has arisen in archives—massive backlogs of inaccessible, unprocessed collections. However, my observations and conversations with employees at Moorland-Spingarn demonstrate that archivists may choose pragmatic approaches to processing archival materials which both unintentionally *and* intentionally defy Cook's progressive assessment of the profession: there are contextually situated and internally validated reasons for the archivist to inhabit the role of "passive curator" or "active appraiser" as opposed to "community facilitator" and why this approach may be more appropriate for particular collections than the contemporary paradigm.

In order to illuminate this claim I go deeper into Cook's four-part structure, focusing heavily on stage one (Evidence) and stage three (Identity) as these are the two of Cook's categories which I see being invoked most forcefully by my interlocutors. I argue that DCAAP, and programs like it, is a natural product of the development of stage four (Community) which carries with it its own host of benefits and potential pitfalls. I also provide examples of professional criticisms of MPLP, which illustrate the real-world effects of the shifting role of the archivist across time, and conclude by putting all of this into the context of Moorland-Spingarn.

The Archive as Evidence

Archives emerged as public institutions of the nation state after the French Revolution in the late 18th century and took on the role of evidence of actions and events, ratifying public discourse surrounding political action. Archival practice accordingly assumed an aura of "descriptive science" (Cook 2012: 12). Representative of this era in archiving practice are two still-widely referenced processing manuals: *The Manual of Arrangement and Description of Archives* first published in 1898 by Dutch archivists

Müller, Feith, and Fruin and *A Manual of Archive Administration* by British archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson (1922).

In the early pages of their *Manual,* Müller, Feith, and Fruin provide a definition of the archive, which includes:

> …the whole of the written documents, drawings, and printed matter, officially received or produced *by an administrative body or one of its officials*, in so far as these documents were intended to remain in the custody of that body or official (1898: 1).

Following the *Manual* and ruminating on the proper management of growing, large governmental holdings of printed materials post-World War I, Jenkinson further narrowed the definition of an archival document to that which

> …was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or person's responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors (1922: 11).

The circumstances within which both the Dutch archivists and Jenkinson were writing were intentionally institutionally constrained, and the archive was nearly ubiquitously subsumed under the auspices of government functioning--a prime early example of which is William the Conqueror's 1085 Domesday Book[xx]. These

[xx] In 1085 William the Conqueror set out to conduct a comprehensive census of much of England and parts of Wales in an effort to assess the extent and worth of property owned by citizens. The Domesday (or

circumstances led both to pen processing manuals that call for high levels of arrangement, and description, which adheres strictly to departmentally, constructed categorizations within organizations. Importantly, the selective destruction of records was seen as "un-archival" (Cook 2012: 12). This would allow room for subjectivity and, as Jenkinson in particular recognized, would undermine the true purpose of the archivist: guarding "Truth." This "Jenkinsonian Truth," which as indicated in chapter one is but one form of truth still at play today in many archival repositories, is predicated on the notion that archives strictly reflect the context of their creation and perform an informative function.

Both early manuals propose processing techniques that recall the conceptualization of the archive in its classical form: "the domicile (*arkheion*) of the *archon* or superior magistrate in which place official documents were filed" (Derrida, 1996: 2). Furthermore, while both manuals provide extensive lists of contingencies and exceptional circumstances the processor may encounter, the archivist is expected to function strictly within the framework provided. Many archivists writing and thinking critically about archival practices still reference these manuals today (Cook 1997; Cook 2002; Blouin 2007; Meehan 2010).

An important distinction must be made at this point in the discussion. Within minimal processing technique generally, one can note a shift in the unit of archival inscription from the item, with a particular emphasis on *l'respect du fonds*, to the folder, with a particular emphasis on original order. This has important implications for how the

---

Doomsday) book served as the official record of this census. The name refers to the finality of the judgments rendered on paper by the census takers. (Jimerson)

authority of a collection is established: *l'respect du fonds*, while treating the collection as an organic, bounded whole (the *fonds*), in practice calls for strict adherence to institutionally determined categories in building a series. On the other hand, attention to original order directs the archivist both to respect the collection as an organic, bounded whole *and* to pay attention to all pre-existing categorizations and document arrangements imposed by either the owner of the materials or the original organizer.

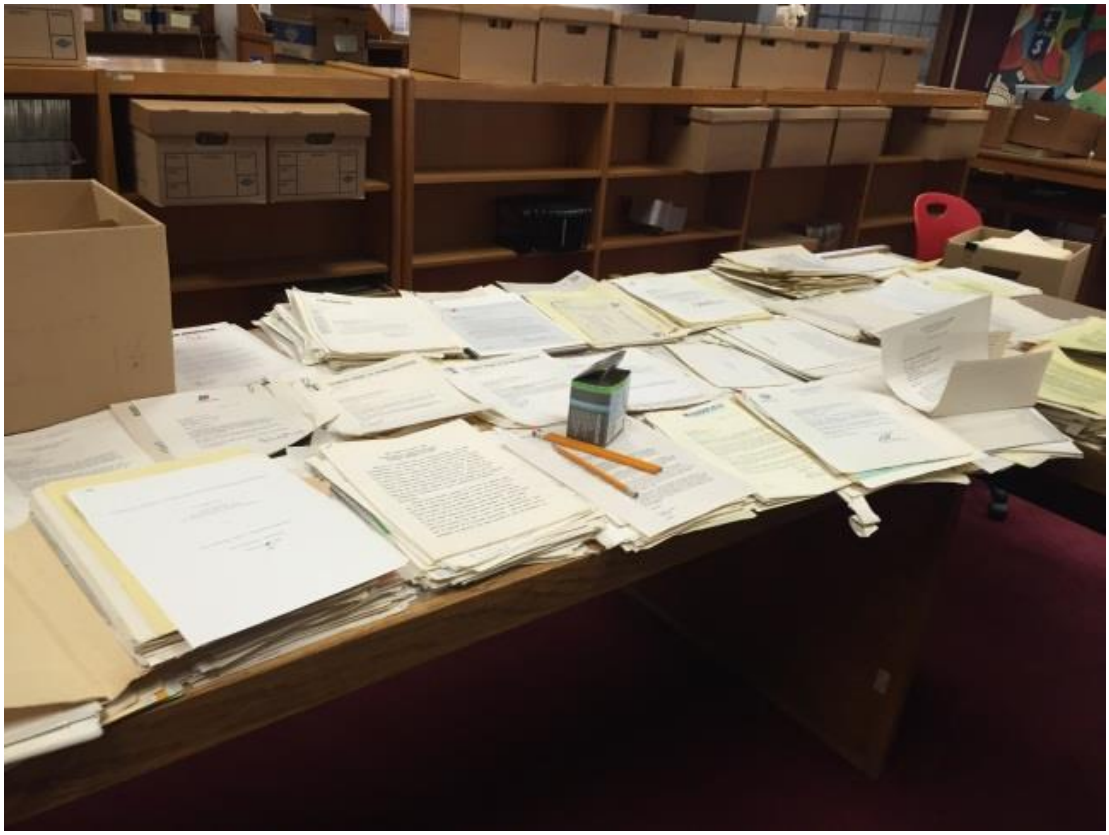

Fig. 4

Though the two methodologies may seem to be dictating a similar treatment of the archive, a subtle difference lies in the fact that a respect for the *fonds* generally calls for a significant amount of re-organization into numerous series and sub-series according

to the institutional divisions[xxi]. Respect for original order, on the other hand, calls for a different approach: taking processing cues from the collection itself which may not organically fit into series and sub-series. The contrast in the unit of processing between these two approaches is evidenced in MPLP by a consideration of the interior of the folder as a "grisly and dangerous environment" the processing of which is a "burden," (Greene and Meissner 2005: 205).

According to traditional methods the authority of the archive—its ability to produce some statement or evidence that is "true"—stems from its *a priori* existence as a *fonds*. Müller, Feith, and Fruin take care to justify each word chosen to comprise the definition from which their processing manual arises (a definition which was adopted by both the Association of Archivists and State Archivists in Haarlem after its publication). The choice of the word 'were' over the word 'are' in the phrase "…in so far as these documents were intended to remain in the custody of that body or official," (Müller et al. 1898: 17) indicates that the archival character of a collection of documents, even should they later be transferred from the institutional entity of their origin, is embedded in their creation and maintenance by said institutional entity. Although the authors conceded that each archival collection must be treated in its own way, they assert that, "…an archival collection is an organic, a living organism, which grows, takes shape…in accordance with *fixed rules*," (emphasis added; 1898: 19).

[xxi] At Moorland-Spingarn the definition of series and subseries is a part of processing—undertaken as documents are sorted and before labels or the finding aid are created. Within DCAAP series and subseries are determined after all sorting and labeling has been done and are conceived of as a way to organize the finding aid post-processing. See appendix for example finding aids.

It is clear from the definition of "archive" established by Müller, Feith, and Fruin that the fixed rules they conceived of are institutionally determined and enforced. This frame of thinking implies that an archive is essentially an entextualized snapshot of the complete status and functioning of a corporate entity, and there is no room provided in this manual for the choices of organization, storage, or description made by "administrative bodies" or "officials". The "truth" of the archival collection emerges from the documents that it contains. My examination considers the application of arranging and description techniques to collections almost exclusively of personal or biographical materials. As stated, the majority of early archiving manuals deal explicitly with the papers of institutional bodies, corporations, or other governmental offices. This appears to be a direct result of, and consequently constitutive of, early conceptualizations of the purpose and function of archives. Müller, Feith, and Fruin insist "The documents of a family archival collection do not form 'a whole'…they have been gathered together in the strangest manner and lack the organic bond of an archival collection" (1898: 20). In fact, Cook states plainly that personal archives, due to the fact that they become inert much like their creators upon death, could never become "real" archives as the potentiality for "truth" that they possess is seemingly bound by time and subject to a large degree of appraisal (Cook 2012: 13).

Jenkinson (1922) speaks directly to—as opposed to about—the archivist when discussing how the archive manifests a historical "truth" in the form of a 100-point list of directives. For Jenkinson, the truth of the archive also resides within the power of the historical document as visual proof. He argues that if a student (archivist or researcher) "…understands [the documents'] administrative significance they cannot tell him

anything but the truth" (Jenkinson, 1922: 12). Here again the emphasis is on the document as a faithful, material reflection of institutional status and functioning due to its production and maintenance by said institutional entity. It is not the document's significance to history in general, to broader socioeconomic or social happenings, or to the individual performing the arrangement or research from which the "truth" of the document emerges.

Nor is the document's place in a multilayered system of power differentials acknowledged as a contributing factor to its valuation. Jenkinson, while tacitly acknowledging the actions of the archivist to a greater extent than Muller et al., insists that, "…the possibility of forgery in the literary or historical interest may be practically ruled out…it means that custody has been broken with the deliberate intention of falsification" (Jenkinson, 1922: 13). For Jenkinson, then, any power that the archivist holds over manipulating and generating differential historical narratives is only exercised in the case of willful obfuscation.

The Archive as Memory

The post-WWI period saw a proliferation of state records, which required increased attention. No longer could the archivist eschew the appraisal of collections lest materials overwhelm them (Jenkinson 1922; Jimerson 2009). This meant that archives' status as evidentiary proof of an organization's status and operation was sacrificed as archivists began to consciously and deliberately manage collections. This techno-centric paradigm shift is something that archivists are still struggling with today—amounts and types of records continued to grow exponentially through the 20th century and contributed significantly to the current backlog of unprocessed collections in many repositories. In

response, Cook (2012) claims that the archivist was forced to transform from Jenkinson's "guardian of truth" to an "active appraiser" of materials.

For both Müller et al. and Jenkinson the archivist was not an active part of the system of meaning making that takes place in the archive, which impacts and is impacted by their actions (Cantwell Smith 1996; Briet 2006). The archivist, by adhering to the rules and regulations laid out in both manuals, is essentially a functioning cog in the machinery of records management and preservation—a bureaucrat or civil servant. According to this framework the archivist's primary work is to maintain and perhaps make available the records in his or her custody. "In the first place [the archivist] has to take all possible precautions for the safeguarding of his Archives...which is the safeguarding of their essential qualities…he has in the second place to provide to the best of his ability for the needs of historians and other research workers. But *the position of primary and secondary must not be reversed,"* (emphasis original; Jenkinson, 1922: 15).

American archivist T.R. Schellenberg (1956), speaking strictly of organizational collections, directly addressed the need for stricter appraisal practices and drafted a set of guidelines for more efficiently appraising materials. His framework represents a sort of bridge between the rigid edicts of the Dutch and British archivists and American archivists who did and would later find themselves grappling with overwhelming amounts of large collections consisting primarily of personal papers. Here still referring strictly to organizational collections he stated, "By a judicious selection of various groups and series an archivist can capture in a relatively small body of records all significant facts on how the agency was created, how it is organized, how it functions, and what are the consequences of its activities" (1956: 140). Schellenberg proposes that in approaching

institutional records the archivist adheres to a predetermined set of organizational categories in constructing series and subseries which include: policy records (including organizational documents, procedural documents, and reportorial documents), operating records, housekeeping records, and publications and publicity records (1956: 144-147). This system—thorough appraisal resulting in the establishment of categorical series and subseries—was picked up by the majority of repositories at the time and is used widely and continuously to this day.

In the case of non-organizational records, however, it fell to the archivist to make an informed decision on the breakdown of each series. "Trained in academic history, the archivist tried…to reflect in the records chosen as archives their actual or anticipated use for academic research primarily by historians," (Cook 2012; 13). This identifies a shift in the perceived temporality of the archive and archival practice. When considering the archive as evidence, the archivist was primarily concerned with generating in the present a true representation of activities in the past. When forced to selectively cull large amounts of archival materials for preservation, the archivist must keep an eye particularly attuned to the future: who will use these archives? How will they use them? What will they need? It is for this imaginary future that the archive was organized under this paradigm.

The Archive as Identity

The processing archivist with DCAAP, who I refer to throughout this thesis as "Andrea," repeatedly discussed her motivation to process the materials of "under-documented" populations: "I think history is taught from a very white perspective…in the U.S. it's very Eurocentric, it doesn't always include the stories of people who maybe

weren't generating records or weren't…whose stories weren't thought of as being important" (Interview: October 16th, 2015). This category of the "undocumented" is very compelling in the context of archival materials. "Under-documented" populations were defined very explicitly for the first time by historian Howard Zinn at the 1970 meetings of the Society for American Archivists (SAA) as: "…the working class, women, African Americans and other minority groups" (Zinn, 1977). It is more than likely that these communities generated as many, and as many types of, documents as the majority group. What this category elides is the preferential collecting practices of archives and archivists across history—the "under-documenting" happened not within communities or organizations of origin, but within document repositories which both explicitly and tacitly acquired only those documents generated by the majority group in an effort to "accurately" represent history.

Andrea acknowledges this when she points out that Eurocentric history chooses not to include stories which in fact *existed* but were deemed unimportant for preservation, as they were seen to add little or nothing to the historical narrative. The makers, preservers, collectors, and proliferators of documents all belonged to the same hegemonic power structures and therefore documents which did not fit into this framework were easily excluded. She emphasizes:

> …the barriers to enter the field I think, inform a lot of this because, you know, to become an academic librarian you need an MLS degree and to get that you have to either be working to support yourself or have family wealth that can support you…you need recommendations from professors and employers. I think this has created a lot of barriers for a working class person or person of color who didn't

> grow up in a community where you were taught to work all these angles
>
> (Interview: October 16th, 2015)

This process of selective categorization is how certain collections have come to be deemed as "hidden," as well—the same structural forces which led to the initial exclusion of very specific materials from archival collections have also historically shifted them aside during the acts of processing and becoming-available should they have somehow been preserved.

This pattern has long persisted in the professional world of archiving. However, Zinn's address at the SAA meetings in 1970 has come to serve as the cornerstone of the critical, reflexive turn in archival practices. Famously, Zinn stated "The existence, preservation, and availability of archives, documents, and records in our society are very much determined by the distribution of wealth and power. That is, the most powerful, richest elements in society have the greatest capacity to find documents, preserve them, and decide what is or is not available to the public. This means government, business, and the military are dominant," (Zinn 1977). His words are particularly Foucauldian—situating the archive as one mechanism among many—or perhaps the ultimate mechanism coordinating many—in forming docile bodies (Foucault 1977). He challenges the idea that the archivist is a neutral actor and that the actions of the archivist have no bearing on the construction of history or truth. In fact, he goes one step further and urges archivists to become activists—not in the pursuit of their own political agenda, per se, though this of course can never be factored out of the equation—in the critical examination of extant collections. He called for archivists to identify historical gaps in collections and to fill those gaps however possible.

There is another side to the "identity" coin, however. In pursuing a more reflexive practice archivists began consciously examining and elaborating their own identities as stewards of cultural heritage. These identities often become intimately tied to the repositories and collections with which they work (Cook 2012: 15). This manifested as a growing number of higher education opportunities for those seeking to become librarians and archivists, the establishment of academic journals regarding archival practice and records management, and the founding and flourishing of professional societies such as the SAA. With this shift in the identity of the archivist again a palpable shift in temporalities can be identified. Instead of a focus on the present with an eye affixed to future research needs archivists became more concerned with the present and identifying what elements of current society must be collected to present an accurate image of today's world. "The focus in appraisal shifted to documenting citizens as much as the state, margins as much as the center, dissenting voices as much as mainstream ones, cultural expression as much as state policy, the inner life of human motivations as much as their external manifestations in actions and deeds." (Cook 2012: 16).

The need to be attuned to present society and develop specific and targeted collecting goals meant that archivists were often regarded as records experts—the archivist is quite often as much of a resource as the records themselves due to their guidance in navigating collections. While the archivist had been regarded as an expert across the history of formal archival practice, in the early stages archival expertise often manifested itself as a knowledge and facility with pragmatic operations such as organization and preservation. In this iteration of archival practice the archivist's expertise extends past his or her technical capacity and into their ability to master the

subject of their holdings. Furthermore, the archivist possesses specialized, proprietary knowledge regarding processing and organization. This proprietary knowledge allows and motivates the archivist to serve as a facilitator for and translator of archival materials. By way of this expert status the archivist gains control of what is collected, how it is organized, and how it is rendered accessible.

Here the first three paradigms of archival practice begin to become entangled in intractable ways. The archivist must still be trained and skilled at preserving records, for they continue to stand as evidence of *something*—their authority continues to lie in their existence as things-seen which stand in a similar mode of Being with those who interact with them (Knapp 2003)—but a great deal of appraisal must continue to occur in the face of overwhelming amounts of material. Now, however, the appraisal process is rooted in the archivist's own identity as expert, professional, community member, and community facilitator.

Fig. 5

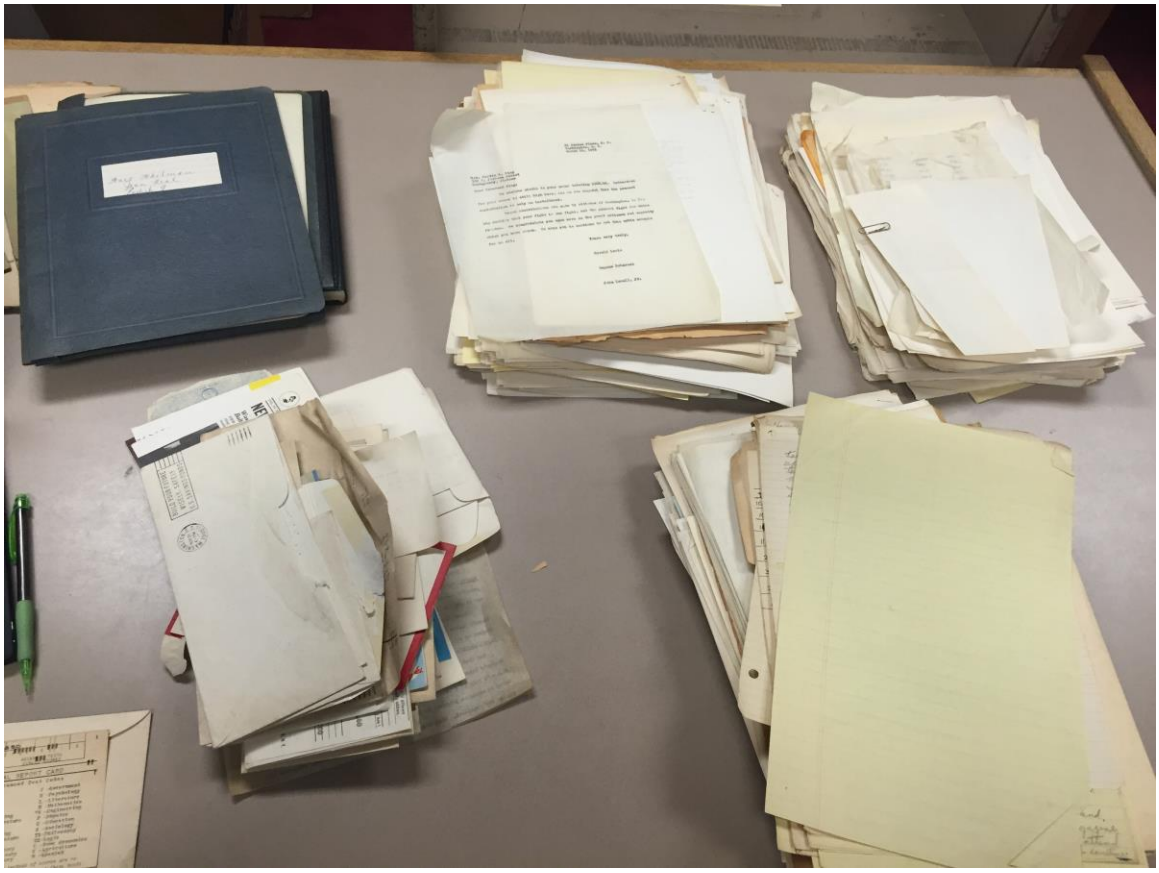

Fig. 6

Archive as Community

The identification of certain collections as "hidden," as the collections subsumed under the DCAAP grant are described, and in need of finding for the sake of researchers and the public has become a strong motivator in recent years in the development of minimal processing techniques. The term "hidden," in reference to archival collections, was made popular by the Council for Library and Information Resources (CLIR), a major provider of funding for archives-related projects, specifically those involving the development, processing, and maintenance of archival collections and repositories. Archivist Elizabeth Yakel defines the term as, "…materials that either have not been entered into an online catalog or if retrieved are only located by searching under a collective title. They are also un- or under-processed primary sources." (2005: 95). CLIR opted to include this term in title of their funding program "Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Enabling New Scholarship through Increasing Access to Unique Materials" as a way to encourage more specific and competitive proposals (Williford 2015). The idea here being that the term 'hidden' identifies very specific collections which have not only tacitly gone unprocessed across time but, by virtue of some combination of active and passive forces, been obscured from public view.

Hidden collections are one of the biggest issues to arise in the emerging archival paradigm which revolves around community-based practice, rooted in the reflexive turn of the 1970s. These collections strain repository resources and increase the risk for loss or theft of important materials, as documents and objects go un-cataloged. They also stand as particular barriers to scholarly research: only the most well-funded and mobile researchers can travel to repositories around the country and spend days, weeks, or

months combing through unprocessed collections. Additionally, knowledge of these un-cataloged collections often resides with long-term staff members who, should they leave the repository, take that organizational memory with them.

Archivists and librarians have a firm grasp on what their researchers ideally desire when they enter a repository to do research, primarily because it approximates their own wishes (Yakel 2005). This is something that was confirmed by my interlocutors from Moorland-Spingarn, who said such things as, "…I know researchers want to hold that original document," and "I've been taken aback when I would suggest something other than what they're [researchers] requesting because I know it would be valuable to their research and they don't take me up on my offer," (Interview October 15th, 2015). On the other hand, my interlocutors with DCAAP challenged this idea, one of whom said, "I want to push back on the idea that it would be ideal to have every single item listed perfectly, because it's the researcher's job to search" (Interview Oct. 16th, 2015).This illustrates an important and fundamental difference in the approaches to processing taken by DCAAP and the Moorland-Spingarn staff, which springs from this evolution of archival paradigms.

Despite the overwhelming amount of unprocessed collections most archivists are dealing with, most repositories have yet to determine what constitutes a minimal level of access that still serves most researchers. Yakel quotes archivist Carol Mandel, who asserts that "…specific solutions and decisions have to be local and determined through the result of self-studies and in keeping with local resources," while still advocating for standardized assessment tools (2005: 96). This neatly sums up the current state of the developing, new paradigm: Community.

Collections which have historically been hidden due in part to their creation by or affiliation with marginalized communities have also historically been inaccessible to both those communities and non-community members. As previously discussed, the organization and management of cultural heritage within the archive affords a level of legibility for histories and narratives contained in the materials (Ricoeur 1984). Although community or population histories may be generated and maintained through intangible means, Hull (2012) reminds us that documents operate as "graphic artifacts" and are both constructed by and construct everyday life and community memory. Engagement by community members with the community's records allows for the control of historical narratives to remain with that community, whereas historically the histories of marginalized communities have been controlled by those outside of the community. This process undergirds DCAAP's goal to increase access to hidden archival collections—however it is important to examine this process in the context of the work that processors do: who is in control of narrative construction during the act of processing?

Since Zinn's call to arms in the '70s, archivists and historians have continued to write and think critically, similar to my interlocutor above from DCAAP, about their role in constructing and interpreting archives (see Jimerson 2009 for a comprehensive synthesis). This push for more egalitarian representation among archival collections has led to initiatives such as CLIR's hidden collections grant and wide-scale collaborative processing-focused projects such as the Black Metropolis Research Consortium in Chicago, Illinois the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) in Pennsylvania, and now DCAAP. Minimal processing can easily be situated as a product of the critical turn in archival practice—in fact, most proposals to CLIR's

hidden collections program include some sort of minimal processing initiative (CLIR Website). By minimally processing a collection which has been relegated to a storage shelf for a century or more, so the reasoning goes, archivists can at least have a perfunctory idea of what the collection contains and the collection will be made accessible much more quickly through the creation of a perfunctory finding aid—perhaps allowing a more detailed description of its contents by researchers once they've been allowed to comb through it.

This fundamental shift in archival doctrine has not been uniformly acknowledged and accepted, nor has it manifested in identical forms across archival repositories in the United States—for compelling reasons. The criticisms offered by professional archivists, which I will discuss in the next section, point implicitly to an unease among long-time archival practitioners with the changing value of their own work or their own role in the creation of the archive, as well as their perception that the archive's value in society may also be changing—specifically decreasing. As they state, the knowledge and labor of the archive are no longer necessarily proprietary or rare—this lessens a seeming aura of sacredness surrounding the historical narratives which only archives can produce and which, until recently only archivists could bring forth for researchers.

Community engagement for DCAAP manifests in a number of ways. Primarily, the processing assistants funded by the grant function in six different repositories around the District of Columbia. DCAAP's program director explained to me that this is incredibly important because historical records have remained very segregated by type—for instance housing records, burial records, and other governmental documents have been housed at the D.C. Archives while the personal papers of notable D.C. figures have

been typically acquired by Moorland-Spingarn or the National Museum of American History's Archives Center. She asserts that this has contributed to the fragmentation of the Black historical narrative and local, historical knowledge in the city and by intellectually uniting these records whole swaths of history heretofore unrecognized may emerge. For example, examining housing records from the early to mid-twentieth century while simultaneously reading the correspondence of the first elected officials in the District of Columbia may provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of formal and informal segregation practices, economic growth and development, and most importantly, allow us to make connections to patterns of gentrification and development going on today. The project manager for DCAAP, "Michelle," articulated it thusly:

> …these little pieces become part of a larger narrative because it's like, actionable. There's action, there's thought. We have the public mason collection at the D.C. Public Library and then there's the Josephine Butler collection—they were all fighting for Home Rule, so that's a major narrative. The work that they did was very grand, but you know, segmented really builds to become this larger narrative. (Interview: October 16th, 2015)

Secondly, a portion of DCAAP's grant has specifically been allocated for the development and implementation of public programs related to processed collections. So far, DCAAP has partnered with Inspired Teaching, a non-profit which offers professional development opportunities to area teachers, for the design of online educational activities for public school students in grades K-12 which teach the history of D.C. through specific archival materials. DCAAP has partnered with area schools to integrate the newly processed archival materials into history and social studies curricula. DCAAP will also

host a handful of processing workshops for repositories, professionals, and laypeople not already subsumed under the grant's operations.

This systematic decentralization of knowledge—both content knowledge and practical knowledge—lies at the heart of this new phase of professional archiving—the archivist's primary role is to facilitate communities in preserving and engaging with their own materials. Although historical knowledge is being united and connected, communities are becoming more narrowly defined via archival materials. At the heart of the project, of course, is the drive to make available materials which have been previously unavailable to anyone who would like to see them. Many of the collections being processed under DCAAP have not been touched for decades, therefore even subject experts have little to no knowledge of what might be available. DCAAP staff have reported that since the start of the project, as word has spread of what the project is actually achieving, scholars have been calling in from across the country requesting access to specific collections which are on the list to be processed.

I would like to note here that I do not mean to imply that Moorland-Spingarn's accessioning or processing practices are necessarily less critical, analytical, or purposeful than DCAAP's because they are not pursuing the community model in the same manner. On the other hand, one can identify the same degree of reflexivity and care among Moorland=Spingarn archivists when considering their collections, however in the case of Moorland issues of control of narrative and history, vested interest, and discrimination come into play[xxii]. Reflexivity and critical practice may not necessarily manifest as equal

[xxii] Ch. 4

representation in all cases—by this I mean the archivists at Moorland critically choose the collections of Black materials that they accession.

It is safe to say that not everyone in the archiving community embraced Greene and Meissner's (2005) new methodology with open arms. In fact, MPLP became the topic of conference sessions, numerous response articles, and message threads on archival society websites. The discourse surrounding the technique has had important and tangible effects on the application and implementation of MPLP as evidenced by archivists' own testimonies on archiving forums, and an analysis of some of this criticism will serve to further illuminate how and why it may be so controversial in the context of Moorland-Spingarn.

Critical Reception

As previously mentioned, the development of MPLP, in line with other minimal processing techniques, is a product of the same forces which have driven the evolution of the role of the archivist. Changing records-making and management practices since the mid-twentieth century have led to huge backlogs of material which, for multilayered reasons including a dearth of funding and staff and previously mentioned inequalities in valuation, have gone unprocessed—meaning that they are often inaccessible to any public. Minimal processing represents a direct challenge to the continued invocation of traditional processing methods which operated neatly under the Evidence paradigm but which no longer serve the needs of archives, archivists, or archival users. In this section I explicate Greene and Meissner's MPLP technique and explain how it is deployed in the context of DCAAP. I also discuss how the method has been critically received among

professionals as a way of illustrating the shift in archival paradigm currently underway. This will allow me in the following chapters to better examine the case of Moorland-Spingarn in particular.

MPLP seeks to provide a "new set of arrangement, preservation, and description guidelines" that 1) facilitate user access, 2) ensure adequate arrangement of materials meeting user needs, 3) minimize processing steps in regards to physical preservation of materials, and 4) achieve a level of description sufficient to promote use (Greene & Meissner 2005: 212). Instead of providing the archival community with a set of explicit processing directives in the vein of classical processing manuals, Greene and Meissner structure MPLP as a set of generalizable goals. Throughout the body of the article, the authors expound upon both how traditional processing practices hinder the achievement of said goals and offer some practical alternatives for achieving such goals as: more cubic feet per year processed or higher levels of user access. They seek to "…ask a better set of questions, to better appreciate the consequences of certain choices that archivists make every day, to understand and apply real administrative economies to the continuum of processing tasks, and to distinguish what we really need to do from what we only believe we need to do" (Greene and Meissner 2005: 209).

The deployment of MPLP in the context of DCAAP adheres largely to the guidelines laid out by Greene and Meissner, particularly in the area of collection-specific flexible processing. In the DCAAP processing manual the first tip to processors is to "take advantage of information that is already available" followed by a reminder to "trust your instincts and the capabilities of future researchers," (Krensky & Williams 2014: 3). This marks a significant departure from the Dutch archivists' and Jenkinson's strict,

formulaic processing frameworks that operate around institutionally established categories. For example, the Dutch *Manual* consists of one hundred statements of proper archival practice that allow no room for improvisation such as: "In the arrangement of loose documents no arbitrary main divisions should be adopted, but only such as can be grouped around a series of volumes or files existing from of old" (Müller et al. 1968: 86).

The message conveyed throughout the DCAAP manual is that the processor should arrange and describe materials according to their subjective, or temporally, spatially, and historically situated and unique, assessments of how "truth" is generated. This subjective assessment, as indicated by the DCAAP manual, emerges primarily from the processor's direct engagement with the materials, the exact nature of which will be explored more thoroughly.

A Techno-Centric Critique

As archivists are quick to point out minimal processing approaches are not new on the landscape of critical archival theory (Van Ness 2010). The publishing of Greene and Meissner's MPLP treatise in 2005, however, spurred a new if not-so-fresh wave of debate about processing techniques and procedures in relation to materials backlogs

In his 2010 critique of MPLP archivist Carl Van Ness takes significant issue with the survey which Green and Meissner disseminated to members of the SAA in order to gain a snapshot of contemporary processing practices. In looking at the methodology used by the authors, the amount and type of data they were able to collect, and the form and depth of analysis which they carried out Van Ness concludes that Greene and Meissner were unable to get a truly representative image of how archivists processed

collections at the time, and particularly that their results were heavily skewed towards collections housed at colleges and universities. In fact, Van Ness seems to be distractingly mired down in the metrics of Greene and Meissner's survey data. After crunching some of Green and Meissner's numbers regarding full time employees at repositories, number of hours spent per one cubic foot, and average amount of collections held by repositories Van Ness concludes, "…even many of the larger repositories do not have sufficient processing staff to specialize in 'large 20th century archival collections'," (2010: 137). This calculation is one of many Van Ness performs to demonstrate the technical impracticality of the MPLP technique.

Furthermore, Van Ness proceeds to describe the functioning of unskilled university archive employees as "…similar to that found on an automobile assembly line," (2010: 139). This implies that, like an assembly line worker who executes the same task repeatedly and in ideally the same manner every time, an employee in Greene and Meissner's schema never deviates from his or her proscribed task and technique. Van Ness also flags the shift of responsibility that MPLP necessitates from the archivists in preparing detailed finding aids for collections to researchers, although he notes both Greene and Meissner's and archivist Christine Weideman's assertions that more of the burden of fulfilling reference requests should fall on the researchers, Van Ness insists that "…the institutional and collection based knowledge that processing archivists possess forms and integral part of the user-archivist relationship" (2010: 141).

One very vocal critic of MPLP is archivist Jeffrey Suchanek (2009). In a paper presented at the 2009 meetings of the SAA titled "More Product, Less Process: One Size Does Not Fit All", Suchanek states that he is so critical of the efficacy of MPLP that he

"…intend[s] to formally request that the SAA Standards Committee and the Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct review the concept of More Product – Less Processing and issue opinions on whether or not MP-LP meets generally accepts professional standards, and fulfills archivists' ethical and professional obligations as outlined in SAA's Code of Ethics for Archivists" (Suchanek 2009). Suchanek interrogates Greene and Meissner's assertion that MPLP increases user access more quickly, countering that more thorough processing in the present guarantees more user access into the future. Furthermore, he reverts to an argument for the material sanctity of archival objects stating, "If your repository has adopted MP-LP as your standard processing strategy, you are leaving ticking preservation time bombs for those archivists who follow you," and insisting that MPLP increases the likelihood of theft from archives (2009).

Suchanek tips his hand in regards to his archiving philosophy, though, with the following statement: "in a letter to the Midwest Archives Conference last year, Mark Greene wrote that in the future, 'We will rely on researchers to tell us (the archivists) what is in our collections.' This statement should be, in my opinion, anathema to the profession," (2009). Greene and Meissner themselves note a private email they received directly, criticizing MPLP: "…processing is what hooks many a young enthusiastic professional…I'm concerned that teaching the minimum methods will turn off people who might otherwise be drawn to the field," (Greene & Meissner 2005: 244).

The Society for American Archivists (SAA) currently offers a continuing education course entitled "Implementing 'More Product, Less Process.'" In order to assess the usefulness of this program to attendees, the SAA posed the question "What

aspect of the workshop was most valuable to you?" Responses revealed that participants were most swayed by case studies in which MPLP had been successfully applied to backlogged collections, and particularly if the attendee's repository was currently assessing processing workflow. One participant stated, "Learning that MPLP is not a strict process, but more of a genre of guidelines that can be adapted to a particular situation [was most valuable]" (SAA Course Catalog). These opinions are echoed when one peruses the email threads related to MPLP hosted on the SAA website. One archivist, in querying her peers on the SAA Archives and Archivists email list as to their application of MPLP, expresses concern that even though "…the opinions polarize and the debates get lively…we don't get any insight into the thinking that people applying to the backlogs before them" (Archives & Archivists List 2009). Another contributor added, "I was shocked to discover some really key and important records that we owned hidden by lack of description," (Archives & Archivist List 2009).

These examples stand as a snapshot of the critique that has been levied against MPLP and the varied responses voiced among archival professionals. The techno-centric claims that these critics are making point to an anxiety about the shift in archival paradigm currently underway. For instance, Van Ness' elaborate debunking of the practical realities of MPLP processing goals serves to bolster his statement about the "true" structure of the archive as an institution. For Van Ness, processing is an activity best delegated to a host of unskilled university students who necessarily follow strict processing rules. The role of the archivist remains as the steward of historical knowledge, which is reliant on the thorough and exhaustive processing completed by the unskilled laborers.

Suchanek (2009) echoes this concern for the nature and status of the archive. His concern for the preservation efforts of archivists and researchers of the future signifies a belief that the archive exists to protect and preserve materials. His blatant scorn for Greene's claim that one day, researchers will be the sole stewards of historical knowledge in the archive reveals a strong bias toward the notion that historical knowledge is not produced without the work of the archivist. There is an undercurrent of worry which echoes through archivists' message boards, surrounding the true purpose of the archive—for whom and why do we archive?

The comments collected from the SAA continuing education course are particularly revealing. In identifying the efficacy of case studies and the usefulness of personalized narratives of MPLP implementation, these respondents are flagging the lack of transparency in processing practices (both minimal and full). One cannot decipher simply by looking at either a processed collection or a completed finding aid what choices a processor made as the collection was being processed. There appears to be a great deal of concern and frustration latent in the gulf between MPLP guidelines on paper and a completely MPLP processed collection because the potential harm done to materials, history, and narrative are obscured by a lack of definition from beginning to end.

Chapter Three

Ideology and Practice

In the previous chapter I provided an overview of how archival collections, the archive as historical entity, and the role of the archivist have co-evolved across time. In this chapter I suggest a mechanism by which the archivist working today, and particularly the individuals processing materials in the contexts of DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn, make sense of, navigate, and actualize these various archival paradigms in practice. I will also begin to parse out the repercussions of this practice for the creation of truthful historical narratives.

Archival Ideologies

> Attention to materiality can allow scholars to ask: to what extent are scholars analyzing how people separate texts from the contexts for circulation and what ideas about authorship, authenticity, and circulation accompany these processes of producing intertextuality?
>
> Paul Manning and Ilana Gershon,
>
> *Language & Media* (2014: 561)

Paul Manning and Ilana Gershon's notion of media ideologies proves useful in attempting to understand how and why processors make particular choices in the act of processing and the ways in which the repercussions of these choices manifest. Manning and Gershon reject the notion that the semiotic value of language resides outside of the realm of materiality (2014: 559). As I elaborated on in chapter two, archival processing is a heavily materially mediated task. The flexibility that the processors are instructed to

exercise in the DCAAP manual is projected upon and emerges in large part from the physical materials themselves. Manning and Gershon, referencing Erving Goffman's participant framework, note that, "the materiality of the medium/channel of communication determines both the pragmatics of an interaction's participant structure or framework and how this framework or structure will be understood," (2014: 562).

An individual's choice of medium to convey a particular message across space and time results from contextually situated communication strategies. Similarly, the choice of processing technique when regarding archival material results from contextually situated processing strategies, what I am calling an archival ideology. Furthermore, within the bounds of one processing procedure, i.e. MPLP, micro-level choices reflect individual archival ideologies (produced in large part by the general archival paradigms discussed in the previous chapter), which drive the processor's actions as they sort, label, and describe archival materials. Manning and Gershon refer to Frederick Kittler's conceptualization of mediation in stating "…humans are one with the media they use to communicate, and thus ontologically different selves when new technologies are introduced," (2014: 560). Kittler's assertion bears more weight in the case of archival documents when one recalls the simultaneous being-in a mode of historicity of the archival document and the processor, which I previously discussed in chapter one. This simultaneous being-in a similar mode inherently means that as the processor shifts his or her ontological status in accordance with the processing practice he or she chooses within the bounds of a single moment, so too does the document's archival status shift—proportionally perhaps, but not necessarily identically.

The context-driven, momentary choices made by individuals during the act of processing emerge from the bundling of "archival properties" inherent to each archival object (discussed in detail in chapter one). In the case of Manning and Gershon's conception of the deployment of differential media ideologies what drives the shift in relative value across contexts is fundamentally a complex of material qualities (2014: 566). However, in the case of archival materials it is a bundled complex of material, historical, *and* narrative potentialities from which emerge the processor's choices re: sorting, labeling, and describing. Much like Wittgenstein's tailor who can better aesthetically judge the proper length of a coat once he has become familiar with the rules of tailoring—so too can the archivist or the processor better categorize, sort, and label materials once they have become familiar with the technique-specific rules of archival processing (1966: 5-7). Perceived value of the archival object is determined in relation to its material status, its place temporally, spatially, and ideologically next to the objects around it and its role in the generation of an over-arching narrative from the archival collection as a whole (see chapter one).

It is important to also recall Miller's (2011) claim that in producing objects we produce ourselves (chapter one). Particularly in the case of my interlocutors at Moorland-Spingarn, evidenced by the quote from the chief curator included in the introduction and expounded upon in chapter four regarding the systematic devaluing of Black materials, the conscious and subconscious negotiation of archival ideologies that I have just outlined produces an active and actionable object—the archive as a whole. As Knapp (2003) helps us to conclude, through this materially mediated and historicized process of

ideological negotiation it is not merely the archival materials which are being imbued with value and meaning but also individuals who the materials are by, for, and about.

The flurry of critical responses surrounding Greene and Meissner's (2005) original MPLP treatise beautifully illustrates the anxiety that Manning and Gershon identify as endemic to the introduction of new technologies. This anxiety, they state, stems from the knowledge that new technology promises change in the participant structures of communication (2014: 564). Much of the debate surrounding the efficacy and usefulness of the MPLP technique is coded speech concerned with the shifting role of the archive and the archivist in contemporary historical practice and both explicitly and implicitly interrogates both who is constructing and who is using archives as minimal processing continues to become more widespread. Although Susan focused her critique of my processing ability on the lack of entextualized context given to Arthur Davis' hat, her recourse to the DCAAP project managers and a concern for the legibility of the historical importance of the hat demonstrate that her concern is to some degree with who is controlling the narration of the collection.

Re-contextualization of a document alters its meaning—the intertextual gap generated by this process is contingent in part upon the material structure of the media in play (Manning and Gershon 2014: 562). Archival documents are similarly re-contextualized in the course of being processed—even under the most rigorous and attentive processing techniques which seek to maintain categorical distinctions (Duff & Harris 2002). The processor encounters a loose document and extracts it from the extant network of valuation (i.e. the collection, the box, and the folder in which the document is situated), categorizes that document, often sorts it by category, labels, it, and describes it

according to his or her processing ideology which places it in a new network. Critics of MPLP claim that the intertextual gap generated by this minimal processing technique is broader, and in some cases insurmountable, when compared to fuller, traditional processing (Suchanek 2009; Anchor 2013). This stems primarily from the fact that the network of valuation into which archival objects are placed during processing is *ostensibly* less structured (and therefore less recontextualizing) under MPLP than it would be under a traditional processing method. This concern articulates with the belief—voiced by critics of the MPLP technique—that one of the primary roles of the archivist is to both understand and bring to light the history and narrative embedded within the archive via archival.

Gershon helps us further situate the archiving community's anxiety over the elaboration of minimal processing techniques in explicating how "contemporary U.S. media ideologies of the "newness" of new media are shaped in part by the possibilities and practicalities of media switching" (2010: 390). She notes how a community-wide switch between media, such as that from orality to literacy, may "dramatically transform the epistemological foundations by which cultures constitute themselves," (2010: 392). What is at stake, then, for those debating the utility of MPLP is not just the integrity of the archival materials in question, but the very epistemological framework that bolsters and drives the archiving profession. However, I argue that in addition to this whole-sale community wide shift of archival ideologies one may witness individual, moment-based collisions of archival ideologies among archivists, in this case DCAAP processors and Moorland-Spingarn employees.

If we examine these ideological collisions in practice, I believe that the community-wide anxiety incited by this "new media" may begin to be parsed out and mediated. What is at stake in this case is not the generation or new media but the generation of new processing methods which push back against traditional practice and challenge the very definition of "archivist" and "archive" implicitly and explicitly, and which old methodologies have so deeply enmeshed with the broader practice of archiving. In fact, the hiring of Howard students as DCCAP processors is stipulated in the agreement for DCAAP's CLIR grant, due in large part to the importance of Moorland-Spingarn to the overall function and success of the project. Over the year that I was working at Moorland-Spingarn the number of Howard students hired by DCAAP increased. It seems that there is an active effort to maintain the sense and reality of the community which has been historically established at Moorland-Spingarn. This may be an effort to preserve some part of Moorland-Spingarn's archival ideology in the face of encroaching outsiders and outside methodologies.

Furthermore, as I will elaborate on more fully in the latter part of this chapter there is an active and historically rooted system of inequality in the production, collection, maintenance, and preservation of Black records which is one factor driving the staff at Moorland-Spingarn to deploy these archival ideologies strategically as a mode of resistance against what can be perceived as a re-colonization of the archival space. If Miller (2011) is correct in saying that the process of making objects also makes ourselves, then the making and re-making of the objects of others, which occurs routinely and unoften checked in archival practice, quickly becomes fraught and contentious. The authors included in the 2010 volume of Linguistic Anthropology dedicated to media

ideologies demonstrate that "when language ideologies and media ideologies do align, they often generate or support locally persuasive perspectives on what selves and social interactions should be" (Gershon 2010). However, it seems that when they obviously do not align, opportunities and spaces are created for historically disenfranchised populations to both vocalize and assert a preferred image of community and social interaction, or for those things to be vocalized and asserted for them.

The Metalanguage of Processing

In this section I will take a closer look at the ways in which processors engage with archival materials on a metalinguistic level—which leads to the translation and inscription of archival "truths" and "histories". This is an important examination to make for it is through these processes that archival ideologies are negotiated and deployed.

I argue that the interaction of the processor with the archival materials takes the form of speech, and specifically a conversation, as defined by linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin identified the functional unit of speech as the "utterance", which is mutually constituted by two or more participants, temporally and spatially situated, and historicized (Bakhtin, 1986). The Bakhtinian conceptualization of the utterance can be extrapolated to the acts of arrangement and description of archival materials under MPLP, specifically to aid in the understanding of how titles given to folders within an archival box, which are converted to a finding aid—an entextualization of processing practices—form a ground for the realization of potentials of narrative histories.

Just as there is a "…complex and multifaceted process of active speech communication," there is also a complex and multifaceted process of active processing

communication that occurs as a collection is arranged and described which arises from dialectic relationships between documents, between processors and documents, and between processors and the historical narrative embedded in the collection (Bakhtin, 1986: 68). By interrogating original order, prior classifications, or details of the life and actions of the individual or organization to which the materials belonged, processors are "…taking an active role, [a] responsive attitude," toward a conversation that is already ongoing (Bakhtin, 1986: 68). In this instance one is also witnessing a change of speaking subjects which, as Bakhtin asserts, delimits the utterance. This process is temporally diffused in comparison to a spoken conversation with delimited utterances occurring not within seconds or minutes but across months, years, or decades. However, the structure is similar and the switches in respondent from the original owner to the donor or previous organizer to the processor can be located in space and time and rely on the historicity of the conversation.

DCAAP processors' metalinguistic commentary during the acts of processing illustrates that when arranging and describing materials in an archival box, the processor is in conversation with a number of interlocutors. These include the previous owner of the materials, the original organizer of the materials, the DCAAP processing plan, and the materials themselves. For instance, while processing the Walter E. Fauntroy papers located at George Washington University's Special Collections, processors would often talk directly to Fauntroy while deciding where to file a particular document. One processing assistant said this aloud to no one in particular: "Oh Walter, why did you keep this stack of blank voter registration forms? Should I throw them away or put them in a folder? What do I call them?" Alternately, processors would also address the documents

themselves. A processer said this upon coming across an unusual folder: “This folder is already labeled ‘Nut Mail’, what is inside you, ‘Nut Mail’? Are you correspondence?” Processors also frequently interrogated the donor of the collection as to why they organized things as they did when boxing up the materials. On a third occasion, when stumped about proper processing procedure a processor said: “This box is just full of loose papers. Why would someone do this? Why would you do this [Walter]?” (Observations: January-March, 2015)

In light of the flexibility inherent in MPLP, the utterances recorded in the context of DCAAP demonstrate the deployment of necessary metalinguistic negotiation stemming from generic mastery and historically embedded utterances, which precedes the inscription of categories. The fact that DCAAP processors—who always work with at least one other individual—continuously check in with their counterparts to affirm their processing choices, clarify proper procedure, and seek advice for difficult materials such as artifacts underscores that the processing of materials for DCAAP cannot successfully occur without continuous, metalinguistic negotiation. One processor, Delia, reported that, when uncertain of proper technique, “if it’s something I can ask about I do…and sometimes if something seems historically important I will put it in its own folder, and that’s my own personal discretion,” (Interview; Oct 13th, 2015).

It is important to note that across the time that I spent in the processing space at Moorland-Spingarn it was extremely rare for the non-DCAAP student processors sharing the space, who work under more traditional processing plans, to either talk aloud to themselves about processing or to consult one another about proper procedure in the way that DCAAP processors do. The non-DCAAP processors in the space, five in total falling

across a range of demographic categories, are all Howard students who are currently pursuing a PhD in a field relating to the disciplines of history, Black studies, or African studies. Often if they had a question about processing they would exit the space to locate a supervisor or head archivist who had devised the processing plan. What the non-DCAAP students spent a significant portion of every day talking about, however, was the subjects and content of the archival materials.

For example, one major collection that was processed by students in the space was the papers of H. Naylor Fitzhugh (1909-1992)[xxiii]. Due to Fitzhugh's deep engagement with the local Black business scene during the early to mid-twentieth century and a number of controversial beliefs he held regarding the place of Black citizens in predominately white economy, which came to light through the processing of his papers, extensive and on-going debate circulated through the processing space spurred by the non-DCAAP processors, but engaged in by everyone, touching on subjects ranging from the meaning and utility of Black socialism in history and today, the reality of neo-liberal politics, to feminism and infrastructure. The documents themselves often served as launch pads for conversations about historical and current socio-political events,

[xxiii] Fitzhugh was one the first African Americans to earn an MBA from Harvard Business School. He was one of the co-founders of the New Negro Alliance of Washington D.C. in the early 1930s. The NNA became a policy-making organization stressing fair employment and treatment within the business community in D.C. Fitzhugh was an activist who went to jail for his beliefs and participation in protests. He joined Howard University as a faculty member in the School of Business and remained there for close to 30 years, developing programs such as the Small Business Development center. Fitzhugh resigned from Howard in 1965 in order to serve as the Vice President of the Special Markets Division at Pepsi. Fitzhugh also served as a special consultant for the U.S. Census Bureau from 1975-1981. Fitzhugh was a prolific writer with an unbelievable bibliography of publications about business, marketing, teaching and demographics. (Biographical note from Papers of H. Naylor Fitzhugh, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center).

including events in popular culture. This conversation in particular, and conversations similar to it, often ended on the topics of contemporary civil rights movements, i.e. Black Lives Matter.

The differential enactments of authority—with DCAAP students metalinguistically negotiating solutions to problems and the Howard students referring to the expertise of the full-time archivists—may be due to the fact that the Howard students have been trained to react in such a way. However, these differing reactions and the marked differences in conversation among the DCAAP processors versus the Howard processors highlights the gap between Moorland-Spingarn's more traditional processing methodology and DCAAP's MPLP. These differences in practice also demonstrate how the archival ideology is not merely something which is constructed within and is manifested strictly in the action of processing—it involves a wider approach to how hierarchies of authority are created within the repository, who can talk about what and how, and who should have access to particular materials and narratives at all stages of records management.

The Final Product: Finding Aids

MARAC [Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference] do, like, a finding aid award every year which…a finding aid is not like, I think some people see a finding aid as like…you're writing an opus…that's the final product that we as archivists are putting out there, like I want this to be something that we can be proud of…I just think that is so missing the point

Andrea,

Interview: October 16th, 2015

10 years ago, I would have said, you know, a very detailed finding aid [is necessary] for a collection, whereby…the researcher could go to the container list and tell exactly what is in each folder in each box, but today what with MPLP, things are changing.

Susan,

Interview: October 15th, 2015

The metalinguistic negotiations of the DCAAP processors elaborate on categories, labels, and networks of value of the archival materials themselves and translate them through a process of mediation into something material—a finding aid—which then becomes actionable in the hands of a researcher. The finding aid serves as a road map for individuals attempting to navigate a collection whether they are looking for something specific or just generally browsing. Finding aids written by DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn employees are similar in that they follow a general set of universally agreed upon formal standards, however they diverge in subtle and important ways. Examples of a finding aid from each institution are provided in Appendix A (figures one and two). Although the finding aid does not finally limit the set of possibilities for a researcher within the collection, it does impact the choices a researcher will make, a process which will be explored thoroughly in this section.

The act of processing is necessarily material, not only in the sense that the goal of the processor is to bring order to a collection of material documents, but also in the sense that the ideological practices of arrangement, description, and inscription of categories into finding aids must be mediated by specific materials, and those materials dictate the outcomes of processing. The materiality of archival practices serves as a "…mediating

property of social life," (Cavanaugh & Shankar, 2012: 357). Additionally, there is a flow of linguistic forms from the processor—guided by MPLP—to the researcher who must decode and make meaning of the inscriptions made by the processor, to the work of the researcher which is consumed, decoded, and made meaningful by a wider network of people. One can trace a materialized transition of the narrative history of a collection from its embedded place within the archive, to the inscribed finding aid generated via processing, to the work of the researcher, which may ultimately inform future processing efforts. "…linguistic forms rely on and coproduce material contexts and…linguistic practices can involve processes of signification and valuation alongside objects," (Cavanaugh & Shankar, 2012: 364).

In order to gain access to the past, we naturally impose upon it systems of classification (Bowker and Star 1999). This retroactive imposition of categories, implicit in the work of the archivist, is vital in the mimetic refiguration of historical narratives in the present (Ricoeur, 1984). However, the retroactive application of categories does not simply allow us to access the past: technologies of classification are also technologies of control. Bowker and Star assert that archives, manuals, and texts of authority are evidence of the enactment of control as they inscribe the actions of the powerful and omit the actions of the weak. These texts also occupy the status of "object"—archives included—and in this capacity are equally subject to this cyclical process of differential inclusion and omission. Just as "…the system's description reality becomes true" through the process of inscription into texts such as the Diagnostic Statistical Manual or International Classification of Diseases, historical truth becomes codified through the

metapragmatic actions of the archival processor in the material of the archive (Bowker and Star, 1999: 49).

The entextualized product of processor's metapragmatic conversational negotiations, and the primary productive goal of MPLP processing, is the finding aid. This document is the first point of contact a researcher or historian has with an archival collection. The document is designed to serve as a condensed guide to the collection, locating for the researcher in which boxes and folders particular items can be found. Although they may vary aesthetically across repositories, finding aids typically include a very brief pragmatic summary of the collection (i.e. amount and type of materials, date ranges), a biographical note on the original owner of the collection, a scope note which gives more contextual detail on the contents of the collection, and the inventory of materials. In light of DCAAP and MPLP's commitment to increasing user access to unprocessed collections, the finding aids generated by DCAAP processors manifest solely as digital documents, and all finding aids for the six participating institutions will be aggregated and made available on the DCAAP project web page hosted by the George Washington University Gelman Library.

In order to streamline and expedite the creation of finding aids DCAAP processors rely on software called the Archivists' Toolkit (the AT). This software, launched in 2006 out of the University of California San Diego libraries, seeks to increase archival processing efficiencies and lower processing costs, including costs for specialized training; reduce the need for locally built tools; and promote standardization. The application supports collection accessioning and description, location tracking, and provenance registration, as well as outputs for Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and

Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS). In using the software, processors and archivists enter folder and series labels, date ranges, and collection notes into a standardized Excel template with metadata tags (see fig. 3, appendix A). This spreadsheet is subsequently uploaded into the AT software where it is encoded and configured as an EAD finding aid ("Introduction to the Archivists' Toolkit").

The AT software does not account for the mimetic process of emplotment engaged in by DCAAP processors through conversational negotiations, which occurs prior to the input and uploading of entextualized data. The example provided herein (fig. 4, appendix A), created during the processing of the papers of Sharon Pratt Kelly held at Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University in April of 2015, demonstrates that the labels given to folders under MPLP processing may or may not signify their contents in a uniformly iconographic manner. Folder number three (see fig. 4) labeled "Letters from SPK" has a higher degree of visual markedness, signifying the presence of correspondence, than does folder number one labeled "Polls '90" which ostensibly contains anything from news clippings to campaign buttons or voter registration information. However, when one considers the negotiated, metalinguistic system by which processors arrive at their final labels, "Polls '90" is ostensibly the label most indicative of not only the materiality of what the folder contains but also the relation of the totality of the materials within the folder to the totality of the materials arranged around them, the other materials in the collection as a whole, and the embedded narrative of former D.C. Mayor, Sharon Pratt Kelly.

This does not mean that minimal processing techniques entirely avoid the trap of the violence done by and to the archive[xxiv]. Despite citing increased standardization as a primary goal, the information included in the spreadsheet, and therefore uploaded into the AT and converted into a finding aid, remains at the discretion of the archivist. Therefore an archivist processing under a traditional methodology may include tags for series number, subseries number, relevant geographical location, accession information, information on provenance etc. The metadata tags, or non-visible information regarding format and function of the final, digital product, included in the DCAAP Excel template (fig. 3, appendix A) were chosen by the supervising processing archivist in the interest of expediency and facility, and with maximal user access as a top priority (Andrea Interview: October 16th, 2015). The only information included for the DCAAP finding aids is: box number, folder number, folder title, and date range for each folder. The other tags included in the spreadsheet are necessary only for formatting the final finding aid. Although there is one field designated as "note text", DCAAP processors have not been instructed to enter text into this field. The finding aids will retroactively be supplemented with a brief biographical note and scope note, as well as information about the project in general on the project website.

The lack of space within the Excel template and the lack of space and time within MPLP processing for further explication of labelling choices made by the processor obscure the subjective, historical being-in of their choices. This ultimately influences the historical narrative that is coproduced and emerges from the materials. The gathering together of signs performed by both the archivist and the processor which projects the

[xxiv] Ch. 1

synchronic notion of an ideal, unified, ideologically whole collection and is ultimately validated by the "…renewed trust in the archive," reliant on the perceptual faith of object-based work is neither addressed nor made visible in the finding aid (Knapp, 2003:704). What is also obscured is the fact that the gathering together of signs performed by the archivist, which is in the end the product of a selection of archival ideology (or ideologies), can be done very intentionally in order to impact the outcome of engagement with the archival materials while still adhering to previously established standards of practice.

In the next chapter I delve deeper into the opinions of my interlocutors at both DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn in order to contextualize the professional critiques offered in chapter two, explore the strategic deployment of archival ideologies offered previously in this chapter, and attempt to establish what sort of "truth" and "histories" are being created in the context of DCAAP at Moorland-Spingarn.

Chapter Four

Beyond Archival Ideologies

So what do the scholarly definitions of "truth" and "history", the evolution of archival practice through Cook's (2012) four paradigms, and the metalinguistic practice of translation and inscription mean in the context of the hat that Susan and I became so emotional about? The tension which manifested in that encounter over the lone news clipping which we could not see eye to eye on when it came to classification can very easily be attributed to a misalignment of archival ideologies. My insistence on processing collections strictly via MPLP meant that I would be forgoing a step in traditional processing which Susan believes fundamental to the stewardship of archival collections—sorting. Susan mentioned in conversation that the most valuable course she took as part of her Masters of Library Sciences (MLS) degree was The Organization of Knowledge in which students learned the process of determining hierarchies of categorization and asserted that her value as an archivist stems not from her knowledge of the subjects of each collection but from her technical sorting and organizing skill, being able to "process creatively...mak[ing] your own series or justify[ing] what type of material fits into a traditional series" (Interview: October 15th, 2015).

The Archival Ideologies of DCAAP and Moorland-Spingarn

Susan received her Masters of Library Science (MLS) degree in 1981 when critical, reflexive archival practice was just taking hold and well before minimal processing or MPLP would be codified. From my observations at Moorland-Spingarn and

my conversations with Susan, it appears that she operates under what Cook (2012) would call the Evidence paradigm of archival practice. She notes that she did not have a focus in archival management—that while she was being educated and trained formal programs for archival management were very few and far between. In addition to an MLS degree Susan also received an MA in history from Howard University in 1972 which, she states, enriched her understanding and appreciation of Black history. Prior to joining the staff at Moorland-Spingarn, her experience consisted of a short-term project for the National Archives, the management of an oral histories project for the state of Alabama, and a two-year posting as a librarian in Kuwait. Susan has now been with Moorland-Spingarn for 26 years. Despite her extensive education and experience, she describes herself as "…just more of a technician with two MA degrees," and claims that she "know[s] how to organize the collection and organize it well," (Interview: October 15th, 2015).

When I asked about her experience with MPLP Susan responded, "…I read the article like everybody else did when it came out, dismissed it…just totally dismissed it," and, "I'm very disappointed [with the technique] I have to admit," (Interview: October 15th, 2015). Her chief concern beyond the lack of sorting was the fact that due to the speed at which processors were moving, labels and ultimately finding aids may not accurately represent the materials and the information contained in the collection. She also identified that less processed collections meant more labor on the part of the archivist—if a researcher wants to see only photographs from a particular collection he or she may have to request 15 minimally processed boxes with mixed contents as opposed to 3 or 4 fully sorted boxes devoted only to photographs. Despite the claim that no researcher has ever been denied access to unprocessed collections, in Susan's view this

shift of labor from the front end to the back end is unique to the DCAAP & MPLP project and inherently detrimental.

When asked who archives exist for, Susan responded, "Researchers…that's the way I see it and that's the way we organize. Who else would you make archives available for? Yeah, researchers, serious researchers," (Interview: October 15th, 2015). She believes that the value of the collections under her care is made manifest in the level of organization she is able to render, emphasizing that organizing the collection well—for the researcher—allows the "…researcher to appreciate what I do," and, "…our researchers understand [that what we have is valuable]. They leave with the knowledge that what we have is good, and well organized." Organization, and in this case thorough and traditional organization, makes the archival materials legible to users. In Susan's eyes, the physical care of the materials is intimately bound up with the care of the historical narratives which they contain. Her technocratic expertise facilitates scholarly and academic expertise—disorganization undermines this relationship.

Andrea, responsible for training all of the processing assistants, generating the finding aids, and putting them on the project website, is nearly a mirror image Susan. She received her MLS degree as recently as 2011 with a concentration in archives and records management. Her work experience consists almost solely of archival processing positions, the majority of which utilized minimal processing techniques akin to MPLP. From her first exposure to archives Andrea claims she became interested in working with the collections of under-documented populations, "…because people who get their stories told are usually wealthy, white, straight, Christian, males and other peoples' stories are either deemed unimportant or get shunted aside," (Interview: Oct. 16th, 2015). Andrea is

firmly situated in Cook's (2012) emerging paradigm of archival practice—Community. For her, archiving and processing are very active and activism-oriented tasks which require a great deal of consciousness, the product of which cannot be chalked up to mere technical practice, "There's an idea that archivists have about themselves that you remain neutral and that, you know, it's not their job to take a position on anything. The idea is that if you remain neutral you are basically siding with the powerful people because you are maintaining the status quo," (Interview 2015).

Andrea, unlike Susan, has been aware of MPLP for her entire academic and professional career and has encountered it or used it in some fashion in a number of processing projects that she has worked on. "…it was one of the first things we talked about [in school]—we used to process like *this* now we're moving toward processing like *this*, and you know we read the Meissner and Greene article and discussed it at length," she said (Interview: Oct. 16th, 2015). In her view, MPLP "is not meant to be final, set in stone…it's a first step." She feels that the processing of collections can be a collaborative activity on the part of both the archivist and the researcher—"…if researchers were using the collection and you saw that they needed certain things or something wasn't working, you can always go back and do it later." In Andrea's view, the value of the historical narratives contained within the archive is constructed by both the archivist (unavoidably) and the researcher (intentionally). She openly acknowledges the tension between the professional drive to preserve archival materials and the benefits of making them more accessible to the public stating, "…the more a collection gets used the harder it is to preserve it, but at the same time if we preserve it and no one is using it, what are we doing it for?"

Andrea feels that archives are for "…everyone…there's been this feeling that they're just for scholars or just for academic researchers and I really want to promote the idea that archives are for everybody," (Interview: Oct. 16th, 2015). She is also very passionate about the ultimate goal of DCAAP, which is to engage the public via programming efforts and connect the local community with the resources being made visible by DCAAP. She feels there is an opportunity with DCAAP to subvert the traditional notion that in order to access archives one must receive special permission and identification—such as that granted to university students and researchers to enter university libraries—in order to even come close to archival materials.

When one considers how radically different, despite being grounded in the same rhetoric, the approaches that these two archivists take to the construction, use, and purpose of archives it begins to become clear why friction was generated at Moorland-Spingarn when I attempted to implement MPLP in a space that had long otherwise utilized a paradigmatically different processing approach shaped largely by Susan's views and experience. Andrea approaches processing from a perspective that resonates with that asserted by Greene and Meissner and makes an impassioned case for pursuing access over preservation in processing. On the other hand, Susan holds many views on archival practice that echo very traditional beliefs on processing and preservation—almost treating access as an epiphenomenon of archival stewardship.

Resisting the Universal Archive

There is a tendency among scholars and professionals writing within the emerging archival paradigm to engage with distinctly post-modern discourse (Cook 2012). Often, within this discourse the "truth" and "history" these authors see being generated by archival materials fall into the trap Trouillot (1995) warns against[xxv]—coupling a positivist divorcement of the "fact" from the "fact making process" with a blanket ratification of all histories and truths as equally valid which denies systems of power and inequality. In probing these perspectival divergences more deeply it has become clear that there is another dimension to the inconsistent implementation of 'post-modern' archival practices, or the conscious acknowledgment of the unbiased role of the archivist (Griffin 2010).

One can detect in the way Andrea talks about archives as community resources, and claims that they are for "everyone", that her approach to archival "truth" is particularly post-modern. She feels very passionate about the opening-up of archives to the wider public and feels that egalitarian representation of diverse identities within archival repositories is a sensible and achievable goal, should technological practice be applied correctly (i.e. MPLP). This perspective is reflected in James Cuno's (2004) concept of the Universal Museum, which relies heavily on cosmopolitan ideals. Cuno calls for the establishment of an institution that houses art and artifacts from every culture in the service of educating and enlightening every person. He sees "great works of art" as the inheritance of all peoples and feels that these particular objects have the power to

[xxv] Ch. 1

overcome what he chooses to refer to, by way of Patrick Geary, as the toxic waste dump of historical ethnic nationalism (2004: 2).

Particular items of cultural heritage were made in spite of, as resistance to, because of, or adjacent to, which is ignored in this way of thinking. Cuno asserts that the purpose of any institution which houses cultural heritage should be to highlight what unites us, not what makes us different—cultural heritage can serve as a balm for old collective wounds, can knit together severed societal ties, and can forge new and coordinated social effort primarily by encouraging us all to become more tolerant of the differences of others. Cuno at no point considers why societies may seek to perpetuates their differences or preserve their closely-held objects of cultural heritage.

In contrast to Andrea, Susan is much more wary of post-modern pursuits of egalitarian representation. Her concern for the devaluation of Black materials echoes Haunani-Kay Trask's (1991) indictment of Western, colonialist anthropologists who claim that native peoples are simply "inventing" their traditions in the service of Western political pursuits. A fundamental issue in this argument is control—who has control of the narratives being produced and who has the final say on the authenticity and "truth" of histories. For Andrea all historical narratives have an equal weight of truth, despite that truth having gone unequally acknowledged in the past, and it is the archivist's moral duty to bring those narratives to the public in equal measure. Susan's pursuit of control may help explain her choice of an evidence-centric archival ideology. By subsuming the acquisition, preservation, and regulation of Black materials under traditional, standardized archival practices, which in the past have historically and preferentially hidden them from view, the materials themselves are imbued with the weight of truth

which evidence carries. On the other hand, however, "…memory becomes bogus, false, wishful thinking, or is transformed into imagination, fiction, ideology," (Cook 2012: 9). It is not enough to merely preserve artifacts of Black history.

In other words, marginalized knowledge is brought into the mainstream as it is categorized, labeled, and sorted along the same lines as mainstream knowledge. This process occurs in the space between—or perhaps at the collision of—the dual Foucauldian (1969) *a priori* I established in chapter one of both the technical narratives of archival practice and the Black historical narrative. When these come into contact a sense of legitimacy is fostered by the actors at Moorland-Spingarn, although this sense of legitimacy feels precarious in the face of MPLP to actors such as Susan.

Additionally, a primary point offered to me by numerous DCAAP *and* Moorland-Spingarn employees was that the level of organization achieved by MPLP was not meant to be final, merely "good enough" to allow researchers some minimal level of access to the collections. However, despite the fact that the event is always archiving and the archive is always producing and is produced by the event (Meek 2012), the narrative which an individual researcher will produce and take away from the collection at the moment of research will not be dynamic in the same way—in fact it will often be notably synchronic. This is partially reflected in Susan's overwhelming concern with how a disorganized collection appears to outsiders of Moorland-Spingarn. An incompletely organized collection reflects an incomplete history, and will not allow a researcher the fullest or truest picture of the history that the collection contains.

Attributing the friction that I felt in the processing space at Moorland-Spingarn solely to a misalignment in archival ideologies would make for a rather shallow analysis. While the differences in technological approach between Susan and Andrea stem greatly from the moment in which they entered the field of archiving and the discourse circulating within the profession, I argue that the difference between their differential archival ideologies is the result of processes which are more temporally, geographically, and historically situated. In speaking with the administrators of both the DCAAP project and employees at Moorland-Spingarn it appears that the rejection of a post-modern approach to archives which calls for unilateral minimal processing of backlogged collections is bound up in the same systems of inequalities which contributed to the very backlog it seeks to address. Recourse to a strictly technocratic critique of MPLP and attribution of the friction between minimal processing and more traditional processing to a mismatch in archival ideologies elides a multivalent, contextually and socially specific decision making process which is ongoing at Moorland-Spingarn.

Opinions offered by Moorland-Spingarn employees, in the context of the history and function of the repository on a broader, societal scale, demonstrate that the collections accessioned into the Moorland-Spingarn are done so because they play a vital role in affirming and strengthening the Black American historical narrative. For instance:

> …Reconstruction has gone through various interpretations over time, and without primary documents from that period no one can really come to a clear conclusion of what was really going on. If it wasn't for the fact that people like [W.E.B.] Du Boise and others were able to go back and look at primary documents they

> wouldn't be able to tell the story of what actually happened. (Henry Interview: Oct 8th, 2015).

The desire to fully process these collections stems from this system of cultural valuation as much as it does any technically-driven archival ideology.

Furthermore, DCAAP's goals are broadly future-facing. The mission is outlined on the George Washington University Library website as follows:

> George Washington University's Special Collections Research Center and Africana Studies Program are partnering with five partner archives throughout the city to enhance access to previously unavailable research materials that document the history of the African diaspora in DC, the civil rights movements, the struggle for Home Rule, the rise of Black-owned businesses, the development of Howard University, slavery in the nation's capital, jazz music in D.C., and the literary arts," (library.gwu.edu/dcaap)

The project seeks to open up the past while looking forward to future research endeavors and community engagement which will enrich the historical narrative and fill in gaps and blind spots which have been previously inaccessible due to the inaccessibility and fragmentation of the materials. This is emphasized by DCAAP's project manager who discussed with me the project's ability to tie together a "segmented narrative" which will build over time as the project proceeds into its second year (Michelle Interview: Oct. 21st, 2015).

On the other hand, Moorland-Spingarn's tagline is *preserving the legacy of the black experience.* The processing being done in this institution is fundamentally

concerned with the care and preservation of the past in an effort to own and ratify the present. In the view of the employees at Moorland-Spingarn, and particularly Susan, MPLP does not allow for any sort of preservation of history and therefore diminishes the power of the archival materials to affirm any sort of Black identity in the present. "Black materials are undervalued, if not devalued, you know on a good day. It just seems like MPLP is undervaluing what we have sought so long to collect and preserve," (Interview: Oct. 15th, 2015). Susan's opinion points to the fundamental divide within minimal methodologies between access and care—the haste with which materials are processed in order to open them up to the public inherently places the materials of Black cultural heritage housed at Moorland-Spingarn on a rung of value lower than, say, presidential materials housed in the National Archives which are not subject to the same minimal practice. In short, despite attempting to correct a history of obfuscation enacted by preferential treatment of archival materials from marginalized communities, MPLP appears to reinscribe hierarchies of archival value.

The alternate temporalities at play for DCAAP and the staff at the MSRC add to the tension generated by the ideological abutment of MPLP and traditional processing practices within the processing space. This is something which is, for the most part, entirely ignored by critics of the MPLP technique.

Conclusion

Objects of Love and Permanence

"The desire to preserve the national heritage in these material remains signals the transformation of the former colony into a modern nation and the national attainment of a specific sign of being modern."

(Buckley 2005: 250)

"Graphic artifacts" (Hull, 2012) are imbued, by way of their materiality and entanglement in the world, with value that stems in large part from closely-held beliefs about how the world can or *should* be. Anthropologist Liam Buckley (2005) probes this assertion through a case study of photographs held in the National Archives of The Gambia. His observations reveal that the decay of these photographs—made during the colonial period in The Gambia—is consciously allowed and intimately tied to certain actor's beliefs about progress, modernity, and the future of The Gambia.

One can draw a number of parallels, perhaps running counter to one another in many senses, between the postcolonial archives in the Gambia that Buckley (2005) examines and the Black materials held in the manuscripts division at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center which I have discussed at length. There is a direct engagement in each case with the material preservation of archival materials in order to aid in the ratification of a collective pursuit of modernity grounded in history, and specifically in the case of Moorland-Spingarn, a pursuit of narrative control. In the case of the Gambian materials, allowing colonial photographs to decay clears the way for a colonial past to be refigured into a postcolonial, modern future (Buckley 2005: 258). In the case of Moorland-Spingarn the assiduous maintenance of specific materials of Black and African heritage achieves the same.

Buckley asserts that in the Gambia, "the establishment of archives signaled the ability of the new nation state to legislate with authority," (250). As I discussed in the introduction, the emergence of archival holdings in general, and Moorland-Spingarn specifically, in the founding and development of Howard University laid the groundwork in the late 19th century for highly marginalized communities of African Americans to define and exercise some authority in a socio-economic era when such a concept was virtually unheard of. Today at Moorland-Spingarn authority is still being defined and contested—not, as in Buckley's case, in the form of what kind of materials are allowed to remain in the archives—but in how the materials which have already been accessioned into the institution are controlled, and by whom. The friction between myself and Susan over proper processing technique which I flagged in the introduction to this thesis is a direct result of this negotiation, or perhaps struggle, for control.

Chapter one set forth a range of critical analyses of the categories "history" and "truth," due to the claim by critics that these categories are inherently neglected by the MPLP technique. Michele-Rolph Trouillot (1995) offers a reminder that historical facts, in this case generated by archival documents, are the product of contextually specific historical processes subject to systems of unequal force and representation. Not only are documents about and *toward* something, but they exert power within, and are shaped by, society (Cantwell-Smith 1996; Briet 2006; Riles 2006; Miller 2011). Furthermore, order and the act of ordering (i.e. sorting and labeling) animate archival materials in unavoidable and durable ways—although the act of processing is dynamic the narratives produced post-processing via the user are static (Ricoeur 1984; Derrida 1996). Eric Prenowitz, translator of Derrida's Archive Fever (1996), poetically elaborates on the

perils of translation, which the archivist is continually engaged in while processing and which provides for the coproduction of historical narratives with any future archival user, emphasizing that something is always lost in the process (Meek 2012). Working through these various theories allows a connection to be made between the ocular proof (Knapp 2003) of the archival document, the technocratic expertise accrued by archivist, the scholarly expertise wielded by the researcher, and finally the "true" historical narratives which emerge from the archive as a result of the compounding effect of the former elements.

Minimal processing techniques and MPLP specifically, have emerged recently as a result of the evolution of the purpose and conception of both archives and the archivist in the face of material and ideological challenges. Chapter two traces this evolution via Terry Cook's (2012) four-part framework of archival function (evidence, memory, identity, and community) in order to situate the deployment of MPLP by DCAAP at Moorland-Spingarn in both a historical and contemporary context of practice. In speaking with my interlocutors at DCAAP, it appears that the project is part of the newest archival paradigm, community engagement, which seeks to preserve and maintain archival materials of, by, and for, the community of their origin. MPLP spurred a wide range of professional critical responses, which I also address in chapter two, upon the publication of Greene and Meissner's lengthy treatise. These critiques have been echoed forcefully by my superiors and coworkers at Moorland-Spingarn, and tempered by my coworkers at DCAAP. The critiques emerge from the historically-embedded evolution of the definition of "the archive" and rely on particularly techno-centric language. My observations at Moorland-Spingarn and the testimonies of those individuals who are

highly invested in the management of the records containd therein, however, have revealed that these critiques often ignore or mask historicized and site-specific systems of power and inequality.

The archivist deploys his or her technocratic expertise in the moment as a result of his or her particular archival ideology—a concept elaborated from Manning and Gershon's (2014) media ideologies, and which I proposed in chapter three. Whereas Cook's archival paradigms are general and have evolved broadly across history, archival ideologies are subjective and motivate the processing choice of the archivist as a result of the bundling of "archival properties" inherent to each document, environmental circumstances, and the archival paradigm (or paradigms) to which they adhere. The friction I experienced with Susan while labeling the hat during my second week at Moorland-Spingarn can largely be attributed to a collision of differing archival ideologies which, like Wittgenstein's (1968) language games, must be reconciled if progress is to be made. The properties which Susan finds important about the hat—for instance, why it was important to Arthur Davis and where it fits in the larger schema of Moorland-Spingarn's collections—are not the same properties which I isolated when making a processing choice. In my case, what I found important about this particular archival object was the fact that it had a legible and easily transferrable label on an extant folder. However, the final product of all processing endeavours—the finding aid—which entextualizes these ideological choices elides the complexity and subjectivity of said choices.

Through the course of my observations and interviews, however, it became clear that the device of archival ideologies is not quite enough to explain the friction I

expereinced with Susan over Arthur Davis' hat. Buckley identifies that because, "much of the analysis of the archive as an object of critique works within an index of modernity that privileges order and regulation, command and control," (2005: 250) allowing colonial photographs to decay stands as a subversive act. At Moorland-Spingarn the drive to adhere to traditional processing practices which elevate order and control over access and user needs is also a subversive act, in that it allows the collections of historically marginalized and "hidden" Black materials held in the repository to achieve the weight of archival truth long bestowed on non-marginalized materials and maintains control of the historical narrative within the repository itself. Although Susan's understanding of the institutionalized systems of inequality which have historically led Black materials to be "hidden" is a part of her archival ideology, to leave the analysis at this point would reify the institutionalized nature of the management and preservation of closely-held artifacts of cultural heritage for traditioanlly marginalized communities.

Future Research

As mentioned in the introduction, Moorland-Spingarn is one of six repositories in which DCAAP operates. Given the opportunity, I would seek to carry out similar analyses of how MPLP is used and received in each of the six repositories to further analyze the concept of archival ideologies. Although the history and context of each repository is unique and different from that of Moorland-Spingarn, each has a particular and historicized engagement with Black materials and the Black community in Washington, D.C. I am interested in speaking with more archivists and processors about their subjective approaches to processing, and to observe their processing practice. One

category which I touched on briefly in this thesis, which begs much deeper analysis, is the importance of these collections to the history of Washington, D.C. and how differential processing methods are seen to shape a geographically-specific identity in conjunciton with a community-specific identity. Furthermore, I believe it would be useful to conduct a study of the ways in which researchers engage with DCAAP collections post-processing as opposed to non-DCAAP collections within the same repository in order to examine Susan's claims that poorly-organized collections negatively impact a researcher's ability to construct a coherent history. Finally, I hope to trace the progress and the products of DCAAP through the end of its granting period. If, as Michelle claims, this project will unite a historically fragmented history in the District of Columbia, it would be interesting to examine how, and if, this is achieved.

Literature Cited

Anchor, Rachel. 2013. "More Product, Less Process': Method, Madness Or Practice?". Archives and Records 34(2). Informa UK Limited: 156-174.

Archiviststoolkit.org. 2015 Introduction to The Archivists Toolkit | Archivists' Toolkit. http://archiviststoolkit.org/node/96, accessed December 15, 2015.

Bakhtin, M. M, Michael Holquist, Vern McGee, and Caryl Emerson. 1986. "Speech Genres And Other Late Essays". Austin: University of Texas Press.

Battle, Thomas C. 1988. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. LIBR QUART 58(2). University of Chicago Press: 143-151.

Blouin, Francis X, and William G Rosenberg. 2007. "Archives, Documentation, And Institutions Of Social Memory". Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bmrc.lib.uchicago.edu. 2015. Black Metropolis Research Consortium | A Resource For Black History In The Chicagoland Area. http://bmrc.lib.uchicago.edu/, accessed December 15, 2015.

Bowker, Geoffrey C, and Susan Leigh Star. 2002. *Sorting Things Out*. London; Cambridge (Ma): MIT Press.

Briet S. 2006 [1951]. "What Is Documentation?" Transl./ed. RE Day, L Martinet, HGB Anghelescu. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow

Brothman, Brien. 2002. "Afterglow: Conceptions Of Record And Evidence In Archival Discourse". Archival Science 2(3-4). Springer Science + Business Media: 311-342.

Buckley, Liam. 2005. "Objects Of Love And Decay: Colonial Photographs In A Postcolonial Archive". Cultural Anthropology 20(2). Wiley-Blackwell: 249-270.

Casey, Edward. 2010. *Getting Back Into Place*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press.

Connect.clir.org. 2015. So What Do We Mean By "Hidden"? - Council On Library And Information Resources. http://connect.clir.org/blogs/christa-williford/2015/02/12/so-what-do-we-mean-by-hidden, accessed December 15, 2015.

Cook, Terry. 2007. "Archival Principles and Cultural Diversity: Contradiction, Convergence Or Paradigm Shift? A Canadian Perspective". 2007(3-4). Liverpool University Press: 37-48.

Cook, Terry. 2011. "'We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are': Archival Appraisal Past, Present And Future". Journal of The Society Of Archivists 32(2). Informa UK Limited: 173-189.

Cook, Terry, and Joan M. Schwartz. 2002. "Archives, Records, And Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance". Archival Science 2(3-4). Springer Science + Business Media: 171-185.

Cook, Terry. 2012. “Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms”. Archival Science 13(2). 2013 (95-120).

Cox, Richard J. 1990. *American Archival Analysis*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

Crowe, Stephanie H., and Karen Spilman. 2010. “MPLP @ 5: More Access, Less Backlog?”. Journal of Archival Organization 8(2). Informa UK Limited: 110-133.

Cuno, James. 2004. “View From the Universal Museum”. Paper given at the 2004 *“Imperialism, Art, and Restitution Conference”.*

Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. 1996. “Archive Fever”. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Duff, Wendy M., and Verne Harris. 2002. “Stories And Names: Archival Description As Narrating Records And Constructing Meanings”. Archival Science 2(3-4). Springer Science + Business Media: 263-285.

Foucault, Michel 1977. “Discipline And Punish”. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel, Alan Sheridan, and Michel Foucault. 1972. “The Archaeology of Knowledge”. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel, Luther H Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H Hutton. 1988. Technologies of The Self. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1975. *Truth And Method*. New York: Seabury Press.

Gershon, Ilana 2010. “Media Ideologies: An Introduction”. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 20(2). Wiley-Blackwell: 283-293.

Gershon, Ilana, and Paul Manning. 2014. “Language and Media.” In *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, edited by N.J. Enfeild, Paul Kockelman, and Jack Sidnell, 559–76. Cambridge University Press.

Greene, Mark 2010. “MPLP: It's Not Just For Processing Anymore”. The American Archivist 73(1). Society of American Archivists: 175-203.

Greene, Mark, and Dennis Meissner. 2005. “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing”. The American Archivist 68(2).

Griffin, Melanie. 2010. "Postmodernism, Processing, and the Profession: Towards a Theoretical Reading of Minimal Standards," Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists: 28(1).

Ho, Engseng. 2006. *The Graves Of Tarim*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Howard, O. O. 1907. *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General, United States Army*. New York: Baker & Taylor Co.

Hull, Matthew S. 2012 *Government of Paper*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Implementing “More Product, Less Process” [A&D]. 2015.| Society Of American Archivists. http://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/course-catalog/tr-implementing-%E2%80%9Cmore-product-less-process%E2%80%9D

Jenkinson, Hilary. 1922. *A Manual of Archive Administration Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Jimerson, Randall C. 2009. *Archives Power*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.

Jules, Bergis, and Jennifer James. 2013. "D.C. Africana Archives Project Grant Proposal." Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Building a New Research Environment.

Kaplan, Elisabeth. 2002. “Many Paths To Partial Truths’: Archives, Anthropology, And The Power Of Representation”. Archival Science 2(3-4). Springer Science + Business Media: 209-220.

Keane, Webb. 2003. “Semiotics and The Social Analysis Of Material Things. Language & Communication”. 23(3-4). Elsevier BV: 409-425.

Knapp, J. A. 2003. “’Ocular Proof’: Archival Revelations and Aesthetic Response”. Poetics Today 24(4). Duke University Press: 695-727.

Krensky, Alexandra, and Doretha Williams. 2014. "D.C. Africana Archives Project Processing Manual." Council on Library and Information Resources; Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Building a New Research Environment.

Library.gwu.edu. 2015. Welcome To DCAAP | GW Libraries. http://library.gwu.edu/dcaap, accessed December 15, 2015.

Logan, Rayford Whittingham. 1969 [1944]. *What The Negro Wants*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Meehan, Jennifer. 2010. “Rethinking Original Order and Personal Records.” *Archivaria* 70: 27-44.

Meek, David. 2012.”YouTube and Social Movements: A Phenomenological Analysis of Participation, Events and Cyberplace”. *Antipode.* 44(4): 1429-1448.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Claude Lefort. 1968. “The Visible and The Invisible”. Evanston [Ill.]: Northwestern University Press.

Miller, Daniel. 2011. “The Power of Making”. In D. Chaney Ed. *The Power of Making*. London V&A Publishing. Pp14-27

Muller, Samuel, Johan Adriaan Feith, and R. Fruin. 1898. *Manual For The Arrangement And Description Of Archives.* New York: H.W. Wilson Co.

O'Toole, James M. 1990. Understanding Archives and Manuscripts. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.

Pacscl.org. 2015. Home | Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries. http://pacscl.org/, accessed December 15 , 2015.

Phillips, Kenvi, Kamili Anderson. 2015. MSRC History - Moorland-Spingarn Research Center - Library at Howard University Library System. Library.Howard.Edu. http://library.howard.edu/MSRC-History, accessed December 15, 2015.

Phillips, Kenvi, Kamili Anderson. 2015. Home - Moorland-Spingarn Research Center - Library At Howard University Library System. Library.Howard.Edu. http://library.howard.edu/MSRC, accessed December 15, 2015.

"Rev. Jesse E. Moorland". 2003. Notable American Philanthropists: Biographies of Giving and Volunteering. American Library Association: 40-4982-40-4982.

Ricœur, Paul. 1984. *Time and Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Riles, Annelise. 2006. *Document*s. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Schellenberg, T. R. 1956. *Modern Archives*: University of Chicago Press.

Shankar, Shalini, and Jillian R. Cavanaugh. 2012. "Language and Materiality In Global Capitalism*". Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 41(1). Annual Reviews: 355-369.

Sims-Wood, Janet L. 2014. *Dorothy Porter Wesley At Howard University*: *Building a Legacy*. Mt. Pleasant, SC :The History Press.

Smith, Brian Cantwell. 1996. *On the Origin of Objects*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Stoler, Ann Laura. 2002. "Colonial Archives and the Arts Of Governance". Archival Science 2(1-2). Springer Science + Business Media: 87-109.

Suchanek, Jeffery. 2009. "More Product, Less Process: One Size Does Not Fit All" : paper given at the 2009 meetings at the Society for American Archivists.

Trace, Ciaran B. 2002. "What Is Recorded Is Never Simply 'What Happened': Record Keeping In Modern Organizational Culture". Archival Science 2(1-2). Springer Science + Business Media: 137-159.

Trask, Haunani-Kay. 1991. "Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle". The Contemporary Pacific 3 (1): 159-67.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

Van Ness, Carl. 2010. "Much Ado about Paper Clips: "More Product, Less Process" And the Modern Manuscript Repository". The American Archivist 73(1). Society of American Archivists: 129-145.

Weld, Kirsten. 2014. *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*. Print

Williford, Christina. 2015. "So What Do We Mean by "hidden"?" Council on Library and Information Resources.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig., Beardsley, Monroe C., and Cyril Barrett. 1968. “Lectures and Conversations On Aesthetics, Psychology And Religious Belief”. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 26(4).

Yakel, Elizabeth. 2005. “Hidden Collections In Archives And Libraries”. OCLC Systems & Services: International Digital Library Perspectives 21(2). Emerald: 95-99.

Zinn. Howard. 1970. "The Archivist and Radical Reform," unpublished manuscript, delivered at the 1970 meetings of the Society for American Archivists pp. 12-13, 18.

Appendix A

Collection Inventory

Series A: Personal Papers

Series Description

Primarily materials related to the death of Frederick Douglass, including eulogy, obituaries and the acknowledgment for the expressions of sympathy

	Box	Folder
In Memoriam-acknowledgment of expressions of sympathy	1	1
In Memoriam-Eulogy (p.3. only)	1	2
In Memoriam-obsequies by Jeremiah E. Rankin	1	3
In Memoriam-obituary, "L'Eclair" (typescript) Feb. 24, 1895	1	4
In Memoriam-obituary, Strassburg Post (Typescript) March 1,1895	1	5
In Memoriam-news articles (xerox)	1	6
In Memoriam-news articles (original)	1	7
Certificate of appointment as Asst. Secy. Commission to Dominican Republic (xerox copy) 1871	1	8

Figure 1: Example Finding Aid; Papers of Frederick Douglass (Coll. 028): Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (2015)

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series 1: Subject Files 1882-2002 (inclusive)

Arrangement note

This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

1990 General Election 1990	Series 1: Box 19 Folder 24
A Law Enforcement Trainer's Guide to Domestic Violence 1987	Series 1: Box 17 Folder 22
Annual Report on D.C. Depository Act for FY 1990-1991 1992	Series 1: Box 6 Folder 1
Applications for certification with various agencies 1/2 ca. 1993	Series 1: Box 2 Folder 17
Applications for certification with various agencies 2/2 ca. 1993	Series 1: Box 2 Folder 18
Assorted Council Documents ca 1980	Series 1: Box 9 Folder 16
Assorted Publications 1991-1998	Series 1: Box 17A Folder 11
Bail Reform 1991	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 12
Bail Reform 1991	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 13
Bail Reform 1991	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 14
Bail Reform 1992	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 15
Bail Reform 1992	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 16
Bail Reform 1991	Series 1: Box 5 Folder 17
Blow, Russell 2002	Series 1: Box 19 Folder 20
Bonds and Statements 2001-2002	Series 1: Box 19 Folder 13
Cable Television Communications Act of 1981 Bill 4-35 Background info/Newsclippings 1981-1982	Series 1: Box 3 Folder 10
Cable Television Communications Act of 1981 Bill 4-35 Background info/Newsclippings 1975-1981	Series 1: Box 3 Folder 11

Figure 2: Example Finding Aid; Papers of Wilhelmina Rolark (DCAAP.0013): George Washington University Special Collections (2015)

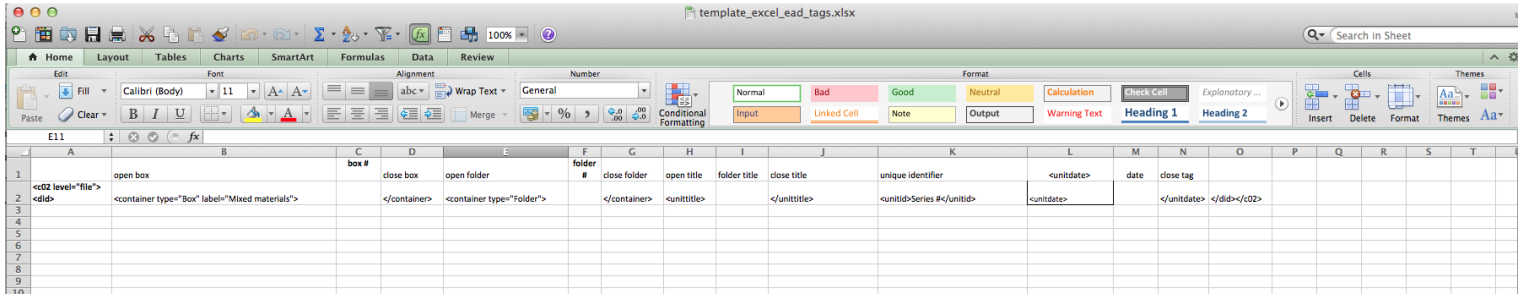

Figure 3: Blank DCAAP spreadsheet with Archivist Toolkit metadata tags displayed (2015)

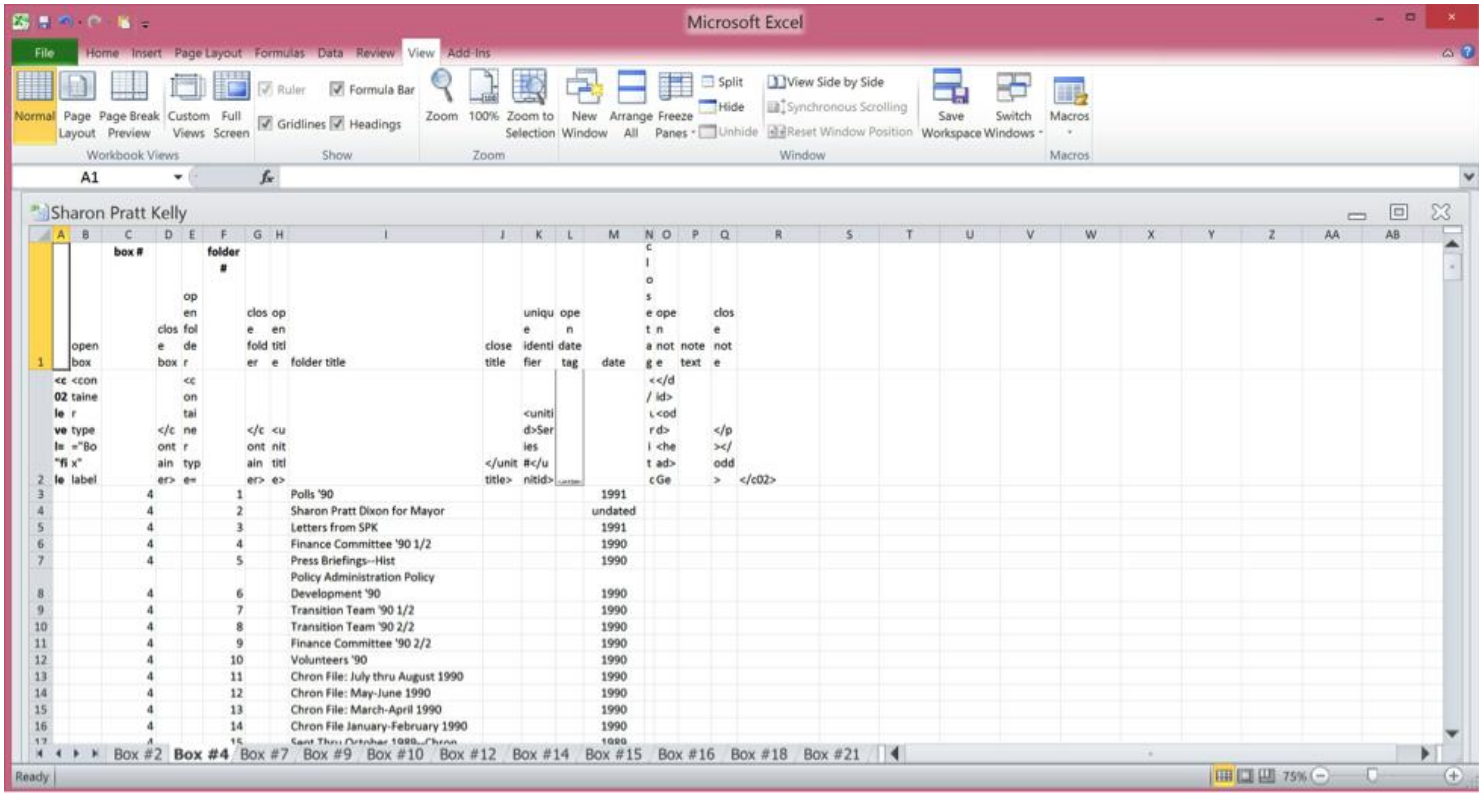

Figure 4: Example DCAAP Spreadsheet with processor's labels entered into appropriate cells (2015), Labels regard the papers of Sharon Pratt Kelly, the finding aid for which has yet to be completed.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Participant Background

1. Tell me about your background—educational, professional, and personal.
2. How long have you been working with archival materials?
3. How did you become interested in archives?
4. How would you describe your relationship to history?
5. Do you have a particular focus within the discipline of history?
6. What sort of archival and historical training, if any, have you received?

Archiving and History

1. In your opinion, what is the purpose of archives?
   -in History?
   -Today?
2. Who do archives exist for? Who typically uses them?
3. How are archives meant to be used?
4. If there existed a model of "Best Practices" in both the creation and use of archives, what would that look like?
5. What kind of materials are typically found in archives?
6. What is the most important characteristic of archival materials?

Minimal Processing and DCAAP

1. What is your knowledge of either MPLP or Minimal Processing?
2. If you are familiar with it, do you have an opinion on it? If so, what?
3. Describe the collection (s) you are currently working on.
4. Describe your process when you approach a new box of materials.
5. How does your life as a Howard University/George Washington University student [for student workers] intersect with the work you do in the archives processing space?
6. What was the extent of your knowledge about the DCAAP project prior to its initiation here at Howard?
7. [for DCAAP and Howard supervisors] How was the DCAAP project conceived? Why now and why these particular materials?
8. Are there other projects out there similar to DCAAP? Can you speak to their processes and efficacy?
9. [for DCAAP and Howard supervisors] What was the process of negotiation between Howard and the authors of the CLIR grant in the beginning stages of DCAAP?