Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Communities and their heritages: The impact of research in participatory archives and other heritage practices

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Research in UCL Information Studies on participatory and community-based approaches to archival and heritage activity has improved understanding of the motivations, impacts and challenges of these endeavours. This has led to the following impacts: (1) a higher public and professional profile for participatory and community-based archiving and heritage activities, including a better understanding of the motivations for such activities and of the significance of the engagement with such materials and activities, notably for the diversity and democratisation of cultural and knowledge production and for individual and collective senses of identity, and (2) the challenges and hurdles such approaches face, and some of the tools and collaborative approaches that can be used to overcome challenges.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Researchers at the archives and records research centre (ICARUS) in UCL Information Studies (DIS) are active in investigating the significance of archives and more participatory or community-based approaches to archiving and heritage activities for individuals and different communities. For the last 15 years public policy and professional discourse has stressed the contribution that participating in archival and other heritage activities can make to individual well-being and community cohesion by encouraging a sense of belonging, identity and social capital. Yet, much of the evidence for these impacts has been anecdotal and superficial [a, b and d]. The research activity carried out by ICARUS, examines the complex relationship between community-based archiving and heritage work, personal and collective identity, the impact of participatory approaches for professional and non-professional practice and thinking, and the challenges that such approaches face. This research seeks to understand the motivations and impacts of community-based archive and heritage activity, investigate the problems and suggest solutions including the role of heritage professions in supporting such activities [c, e]. Research was led by Dr Andrew Flinn (2004–), with Professor Elizabeth Shepherd, Dr Mary Stevens (*Community Archives and Identities* 2008–2009), collaborative doctoral award researchers Alexandra Eveleigh (2010–) and Anna Sexton (2011–), and UCL's AHRC-funded multi-disciplinary research for community heritage team *Dig Where We Stand* (2012–).

The *Community Archives and Identities* project identified the significance of some of the collections held by community-based archives and established the varied motivations for engaging in such activities (e.g. articulation of identity and right to representation, assertion of civil rights, community education, social production and dissemination of knowledge). It demonstrated the complex yet generally positive individual and collective benefits that engaging with community-based archives and heritage can bring, such as a contribution to a personal and collective sense of belonging and shared identity; a range of practical skills; the creation, preservation and dissemination to young people, among others, of histories and historical materials frequently overlooked or ignored [b]. It also provided compelling evidence of the significant challenges to sustaining mainly volunteer-run community-based heritage activities (restricted financial and physical resources, moving from project-based to more permanent models of existence, surviving generational change, and the challenge of successfully preserving fragile digital materials) and made suggestions as to how archivists, other heritage professionals, funding bodies and academics might better support community-based heritage groups to meet and overcome these challenges [c, e]. The *Dig Where We Stand* and *Continuing to Dig* research for community heritage projects examined how university research expertise can be utilised to support, enhance and ultimately co-develop community-based heritage activities. An exploration of the creative collaborative possibilities of technology in supporting community engagement with heritage institutions has been the basis of joint research projects with The National Archives and the Wellcome Library [d]. Finally this research is placed within a strong international context by studies focusing on the use of archives and heritage in pursuit of social justice, e.g. in [f], published in collaboration with Professor Wendy

Duff and Karen Suurtamm, University of Toronto and Dr David Wallace, University of Michigan.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] Flinn, A. (2007). 'Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28(2), 151-176. doi:10.1080/00379810701611936

[b] Flinn, A., Stevens, M., Shepherd, E. (2009). 'Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream.' *Archival Science* 9(1-2), 71-86. doi:10.1007/s10502-009-9105-2

[c] Stevens, M., Flinn, A., Shepherd, E. (2010). 'New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on.' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16(1), 59-76. (Submitted to REF2)

[d] Flinn, A. (2010). 'An attack on professionalism and scholarship?: Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge.' *Ariadne* 62 (http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue62/flinn).

[e] Flinn, A., (2011) 'The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice.' Hill, J. (ed) *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping,* London: Facet Publishing. (Submitted to REF2)

[f] Duff, W., Flinn, A., Suurtamm, K., Wallace, D. (online first, 2013), 'Social justice impact of archives: a preliminary investigation.' *Archival Science* doi:10.1007/s10502-012-9198-x.

Quality of research is demonstrated by the following peer-reviewed research grants:
- AHRC Early Career Research Grants, 'Community Archives and Identities', Andrew Flinn (PI), Elizabeth Shepherd (Co-I), £166,000 (20 months, 2008-2010). Rated 'outstanding' by AHRC. [b, c, d, e]
- AHRC Connected Communities: Research in Community Heritage award, 'Dig Where We Stand: Developing and Sustaining Community Heritage', Andrew Flinn (PI), £25,000 (2012)
- AHRC Connected Communities: Research in Community Heritage award 'Continuing to Dig: Researching and Developing Community Heritage', Andrew Flinn (PI), £90,000 (2013).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

A major contribution of UCL DIS research has been in raising the profile of community-based heritage activity and recognition of its significance in the UK and internationally. This impact has been strongest in terms of perceptions of community archives, and is demonstrated by the increased funding and formal acknowledgement for community-based archive projects. Between 2008 and 2013 research findings were disseminated to professional archivists through articles in practitioners' journals (e.g. [a], [b], [c], [d] and [f] in section 3), in other publications aimed at largely professional audiences [e], at workshops and conferences organised by professional bodies in the UK (London, Manchester, Oxford, Liverpool, Brighton, Preston, Aberystwyth, Llandrindod Wells, Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow), internationally (Ireland, Sweden, United States, Canada and Australia) and at the International Council on Archives congresses in Kuala Lumpur (2008) and Brisbane (2012) [1]. With audiences ranging from 20 to 200, a total of about 2,000 archive and heritage professionals, members of funding bodies and policymakers heard discussion of our research and its findings during this period.

This widespread dissemination of the research has been instrumental in creating awareness of the significance of community-based archives and community-based heritage activity in the professional sector. Although no one would claim that this is exclusively due to DIS research, it has certainly been an important contributor, as explicitly recognised in both the UK and internationally. In 2008, for example, the President of the Society of Archivists urged fellow professionals to read article [a] which 'far more effectively than I could do here, [makes] the case for seeing community archives as an important part of the overall archival attempt to capture the history of society in all its diversity' [2]. A former senior manager at the National Archives of Canada, referring to [e], emphasised the significance of the research for contemporary archival thinking and practice and credited Flinn with being 'an early and prominent voice in bringing the community archives perspective to the attention of the profession' [3]. The former national archivist and librarian of the United States Virgin Islands and a leading North American commentator on archival issues reflected on the influence of Flinn on a new generation of North American archive professionals, 'Community archives is his area, I don't think there is anyone else…I would say his work has been

foundational' [4].

This new awareness has contributed to broader and more inclusive perspectives on professional practice for archivists and other heritage workers. A tangible result of this may be seen in the fact that in 2011 the Archives and Records Association (ARA, formerly the Society of Archivists) acknowledged the significance of community archives by the Chair and Chief Executive of the new association addressing the annual UCL community archives conference and inviting the Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) and its approximately 400 members to become a special interest group within ARA. When ARA looked for someone to give an overview of the developments in the last ten years for community archives in their professional magazine *ARC*, the editors asked Flinn [5]. This has also affected funding policy: the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sees the funding of community heritage even in a time of austerity as a priority, introducing in its strategic framework for 2013–2018 a new fund, 'Sharing Heritage', specifically targeting community heritage activity and extending the scope of existing community-focussed programmes such as 'Our Heritage' from £50,000 to £100,000 [6]. The AHRC included 'community heritage' as a strand in its Connected Communities research theme, for which Flinn was invited to participate in an Expert Consultation Event in 2009.

Much of the DIS research has focused on better understanding the motivations and significance of community-based heritage and archive activity, and has changed practices in a number of areas. Flinn has been closely associated with the development of the advocacy body CAHG since 2005, and that body and its members had a mutual interest in the research, informing it and benefiting from it, and were thus close participants in the research process. The knowledge of the variety, significance and challenges faced by community archives acquired through the research [a, b, c] directly impacted Flinn's drafting of the community archives movement vision statement, which 'informed and continues to inform the essence of what [CAHG] do'. The CAHG chair notes: 'There is a two-way relationship that then evolves; Andrew's work in raising the profile and scoping and defining the field, impacts and benefits CAHG members and the work of CAHG members benefits and informs Andrew's understandings of what community archives are and can be' [7].

DIS research on community-based heritage has influenced debates and policy on archives and heritage in London and beyond. For instance, Flinn was an invited member on the Mayor of London's Heritage Diversity Task Force (HDTF) Archives Diversification Sub-committee (2007-2009), drafting the sub-committee's final report and jointly authoring a section in the HDTF report which was sent to all London arts, heritage and archival institutions and policymakers stressing the vital role of independent community-based archive activity in the context of London's diverse populations [8]. He also spoke on an expert panel at the cross-domain Cultural Equalities Now conference at the British Museum (2011), and was consulted by the HLF in its discussions on the evaluation of 'success' of its funding of community-based heritage and oral history work (2013). Stevens contributed reflections from the findings of the *Community Archives and Identities* research and community-based heritage activity into publications for the think tank IPPR, notably 'Stories Old and New, Migration and Identity in the UK heritage sector: A report for the Migration Museum Working Group' (2009) has been crucial to the direction and ongoing work of the Migration Museum Project to create the UK's first major museum of migration [9].

Having identified the challenges and opportunities faced by community-based archives [b, c, e], <u>researchers worked collaboratively with individual archives and led workshops to provide training and develop skills</u>. For instance, between 2009 and 2013, researchers advised the Black Cultural Archives, South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive (SALIDAA), the National Centre for Carnival Arts Carnival Archive, Eastside Community Heritage, ALDATERRA, Hoxton Hall and most recently the proposed UK Disabled People's Movement Archive (UKDPMA), among others, on different aspects of community-based archival and heritage practice. In some cases this has taken the form of a one-off advisory session, in others it has been a more sustained and long-term collaboration and engagement. Research on community-based heritage practice and ethics led to guidance to Hoxton Hall which, according to their Heritage and Education Officer, 'supported us to shape and deliver a project (Shoreditch Storybank) that is of real relevance to the community of Shoreditch and our organisation', and the advice was then built into a large on-going HLF-funded project to develop the Hall and explore its community heritage [10]. According to ALDATERRA Projects, research-based advice enabled them to identify new streams of relevant HLF and AHRC

funding which supported the development of the organisation, and on projects such as the Living Archaeology of the Place 'enabled a specialist competence to be brought into our work' [11].

Drawing on the collaborative approaches discussed in [c], researchers delivered ten workshops between 2009 and 2013 on archival skills, ethical research practice, digital preservation, dissemination and intellectual property and models for community-based heritage collaborations to community groups. Research findings were presented formally and informally at seven successive UCL-hosted Community Archives conferences. These conferences are attended by 150 delegates annually, including community groups, heritage professionals and policymakers. As a member of the organising group Flinn guided and directed the themes and messages conveyed to the wider membership, providing an unrivalled opportunity to discuss and disseminate the outcomes of research to the audience it most directly related to. For example, a finding of *Community Archives and Identities* research was the extent to which the survival of materials collected and created by community archives and heritage groups was endangered by digital instability [c, d]. Once this need was identified, researchers led by Stevens organised a digital curation workshop in 2009, as well as talks at community archive conferences on digital preservation. Eveleigh was asked by the City Archives of Amsterdam to advise and collaborate on the motivations underpinning successful participatory archive and heritage projects, while Sexton has been invited to address professional audiences in Italy about her research on collaborative heritage practice as part of the *Dig Where We Stand* team. In addition, Eveleigh was commissioned, with Flinn, to produce guidance on digital preservation guidance for community groups, which was disseminated to community archives via the Community Archives and Heritage Group. According to the CAHG Chair, this was an important model of 'turning academic research into something very practical and very usable which is very important to a sector where the whole point is to engage in a practical process and produce meaningful and lasting end products ... it was a perfect way in which that [research] expertise can be made accessible to community archives to fulfil a knowledge gap' [7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Andrew Flinn, 'Archives & their communities: serving the people', 16th ICA Congress 2008 (http://www.kualalumpur2008.ica.org/en/speakers/flinn-andrew); 'Sustaining independent archives' 17th ICA Congress 2012 (http://ica2012.ica.org/files/pdf/Full%20papers%20upload/ica12Abstract00111.pdf); Eveleigh with Ellen Fleurbaay (Amsterdam City Archives), 'Crowdsourcing: Prone to Error?' 17th ICA Congress 2012 (http://ica2012.ica.org/files/pdf/Full%20papers%20upload/ica12Final00271.pdf).

[2] Victor Gray (2008): 'Who's that Knocking on Our Door?': Archives, Outreach and Community, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 29:1, 1–8, (doi: 10.1080/00379810802499652).

[3] Terry Cook (2013), 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms' *Archival Science* 13: 95–120, (doi: 10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7).

[4] Professor, Simmons College, Boston. Interview with UCL researcher, 10/07/13. Copy available.

[5] Report of 2011 UCL Community Archives conference, (http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/page_id__1081_path__0p6p70p.aspx) and 'Community Archives and Heritage' Special Issue *ARC magazine* March 2013.

[6] HLF Strategic Framework 2013–18; see page 33. (http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/Documents/HLFStrategicFramework_2013to2018.pdf)

[7] Honorary Secretary, ARA Board and Chair, CAHG. Interview with UCL researcher, 22 July 2013. Available on request.

[8] Flinn, A., Pick, G. 'Diversifying and democratising archive collections' in *Embedding Shared Heritage: The Heritage Diversity Task Force Report*, London: GLA 2009. Available on request.

[9] Stevens, M. *Stories Old and New, Migration and Identity in the UK heritage sector: A report for the Migration Museum Working Group*, IPPR, 2009, (http://www.migrationmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ippr-Stories-Old-and-New.pdf)

[10] Heritage Officer Hoxton Hall. Interview with UCL researcher, August 2013. Copy available.

[11] ALDATERRA projects. Interview with UCL researcher, August 2013. Available on request.