

VIEWING SUBJECT(S) AS CREATOR(S): THE NEED TO REEXAMINE AND REDESCRIBE CIVIL RIGHTS COLLECTIONS FOR PLURALIST PROVENANCE

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ABSTRACT: This article reexamines and redescribes three civil rights collections, in multiple formats, to illustrate broader inclusivity through the notions of cocreatorship and pluralist provenance. Specifically, this article argues that archivists need to utilize broader descriptive practices that account for the possibility of multiple narratives, which, along with parallel and simultaneous multiple forms of creatorship, are all subsumed under the larger heading of pluralist provenance. Examples of the implementation of this broadened approach are given, and possible criticisms are addressed.

We heed a profound call . . . when we confront our own story telling and seek ways of telling better, more inclusive stories.¹

Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris

Archival collections present the stories of society. They illustrate our collective memory and history through the written word, spoken word, and photographic image. A plurality of perspectives is implicitly included in any number of different formats of archival collections. Lamentably, few beyond the author, photographer, or interviewer are considered creators of these records. Subjects, the actors who both directly and indirectly lead to the creation of the archival collections, can also be viewed as cocreators and multiple creators, alongside the individual identified as the primary creator. Because of this, many archival collections need to be reexamined, with the notions of cocreatorship and pluralist perspectives in mind, to better represent all of those involved in the creation of these records.² Through this reinterpretation of creatorship, subjects can be described as multiple creators and/or cocreators. This would allow multiple perspectives to be included, historical contexts of events to be broadened, and the roles of those individuals not identified as sole creators of archival records to be acknowledged.

One avenue for practically implementing this pluralist provenance approach, and simultaneously widening the profession's understanding of provenance, is including more descriptive cocreator and multiple creator fields within archival finding aids.³

Such a change within archival theory and practice transcends the division between creator and subject, recognizing the actions and voices of subjects and transforming them into cocreators of archival materials. This approach reflects wider trends among continuum theorists and postmodern archivists who advocate that such an undertaking would “create an environment of respect” by illustrating the existence of “multiple simultaneous and parallel provenance.”⁷⁴

This article summarizes a shift in archival theory from single to pluralist provenance description and discusses the practical applications of implementing these theories. Section one discusses recent dialogue within the archival literature that delineates the limitations of viewing archival collections from only one perspective, that of the creator. This section argues that such a limited perspective presents the researcher and the public with a skewed and myopic understanding of archival collections. Section two provides an analysis of three collections of civil rights materials housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), illustrating the existence and limitations of single provenance description in manuscript, photograph, and sound recording collections. Section three argues that to overcome this limited traditional approach to describing archival collections, archivists need to expand their understanding of creatorship to include all individuals involved in the formation of archival records. This section reviews the many ideas of pluralist provenance now developing within the archival literature and argues that such approaches should be incorporated into current archival work. Finally, section four provides a brief summary of how archivists can implement these theories in their work.

Shifting Concepts of Creatorship

It is now commonly accepted among archivists and historians that a complete record of the past is impossible to re-create. Further, what does exist of the past is limited by individual perspective and bias. In his article “Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa,” Verne Harris refers to this partial or selective remembering of the past as a slight window into historical events.⁵ Rodney G. S. Carter echoes this problem of incomplete historical records, aptly stating that “the records in the archives tell a very small part of a much larger and infinitely complex story.”⁶ While one record or version of the past is recorded, another is inevitably “left out” by the individual doing the recording.⁷ This is due to a myriad of factors involving different versions of interpretation, perspective, and bias that exist unintentionally, or sometimes intentionally, on the part of the creator.

Over a century ago, American historian and archivist Waldo G. Leland urged that archives should be “classified according to their origin; they should reflect the processes by which they came into existence.”⁸ This same basic focus on origin and creatorship still exists today. For instance, Richard Pearce-Moses identifies *provenance* as “the individual, family, or organization which created or received the items in a collection.”⁹ This principle of provenance, stemming from European archival thought and continuing to the present, embraces a central goal of archives: to “protect the integrity of archival sources.”¹⁰ If we cannot trust the origin, or provenance, of an archival record,

this thought suggested, then how can we trust in its integrity or validity in informing us of the past? Concomitant with the idea of protecting the integrity of collections, therefore, is the effort among archivists to keep certain records separate from other records. In other words, archival collections traditionally have been described as having a single creator or a single provenance. Allowing for more than one creator, some fear, would alter this provenance and could potentially damage the integrity and validity of archival collections. Others worry that expanded provenance overcomplicates the path of creatorship by allowing ancillary subjects to be considered creators, thus muddling what is a clear path of creatorship in single provenance description. While pluralist provenance does widen the concept of creatorship, it does so in an effort to more accurately portray the perspectives of those involved, as well as to represent a broader and fuller account of the historical context, witnessed through multiple lenses.¹¹

Unfortunately, the traditional concept of one creator of an archival record greatly ignores the many other individuals involved in the record's life cycle, foremost among them the archivist. Many postmodern and deconstructionist archivists now accept that through their own work as archivists, they unavoidably alter the record. Brien Brothman states that archivists are not simply "acquiring and preserving" records of value, but are rather "creating value" when they process, appraise, and describe archival records.¹² Further, Wendy Duff and Verne Harris claim that archivists "cannot describe records in an unbiased, neutral, or objective way," as they "inevitably will inject their own values into all such activities."¹³

These archivists who utilize postmodern theory urge that rather than attempting to deny their biases within the records, archivists should embrace and recognize them.¹⁴ Indeed, many archivists claim that just as they shape and alter the record, so too do they inevitably "remember certain aspects and hide or forget others."¹⁵ This partial memory is similar to the notion of the archival sliver of reality, in which only a "slice, or a slice of a slice" of the actual event is recorded by the archivist.¹⁶ However, it would be incorrect to label the archivist's manipulation of the historical record only in terms of forgetting and hiding. Randall Jimerson, for instance, argues that the role of the archivist is to "help to ensure accountability and documentation" of the archival record by providing "a means to verify or correct personal and collective memory through documentation."¹⁷ Thus, whether verifying, correcting, hiding, or forgetting, the archivist is an integral shaper and creator of the archival record and should be identified and understood as such within the finding aid.

According to Jeannette Bastian, archives and historical research have changed "dramatically over the past several decades," shifting from "privileging the powerful to celebrating the peripheries."¹⁸ Accompanying this change has been an emphasis on reexamining not only the role of the archivist in interpreting and altering the archival record, but also that of the subject and the user. Though the shifting landscape of provenance within the archival realm to which Bastian alludes will be discussed in greater detail in section three of this article, it is important to mention it briefly here. Not only does this shift alter the focus of historical study and recordkeeping from the powerful to the peripheral, it also broadens the idea of creatorship to include multiple creators: the originator(s), the subject(s), the archivist(s), and the user(s). Michelle Caswell portrays this shift or "re-conceptualization" of provenance as

an ever-changing, infinitely evolving process of recontextualization, encompassing not only the initial creators of the records, but the subjects of the records themselves; the archivists who acquired, described, and digitized them (among other interventions); and the users who constantly reinterpret them.¹⁹

Implementing the practice of recognizing cocreatorship may appear daunting. But examining a few examples of single provenance description reveals the limitations of such a practice. Furthermore, such an examination of archival records should hopefully encourage future generations of archivists to broaden their inclusivity by presenting multiple narratives and thus the pluralist provenances that exist within many archival collections.

Civil Rights Case Studies

To illustrate the limitations of single creatorship and the potential remedies, this article focuses on three collections of materials housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The first collection consists of manuscripts in the Freedom Rides Freedom of Information Act Files, 1961–1963, 1971–1977, a series of photocopied documents obtained from the FBI relating to that agency’s investigation of the burning of a Greyhound “Freedom Rider” bus in Anniston, Alabama, in 1961. The second collection consists of nine photographs from the Benjamin E. Smith Papers, 1955–1967, which depict civil rights protestors being arrested for picketing a Meridian, Mississippi, Woolworth’s store that supported Jim Crow laws in 1964. The third collection comprises sound recordings of taped oral history interviews that a northern civil rights volunteer made with a civil rights activist in Bogalusa, Louisiana, in 1966. These sound recordings are part of the Miriam Feingold Papers, 1960–1967.

The first of these, the Freedom Rides manuscript collection, documents incidents surrounding the burning of a Greyhound Freedom Rider bus in Alabama in 1961. According to the finding aid summary, the collection consists of “photocopied documents obtained from the FBI in 1999 under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).”²⁰ These documents, which include reports, diagrams, and summaries of witness interviews, relate to the FBI’s “investigation of the violence perpetrated against the Freedom Riders, the racially integrated group which rode segregated interstate buses in the South in 1961.”²¹

As the manuscript collection includes a large amount of material relating to the burning of the Freedom Rider bus, pertinent information has been restricted to interviews of Greyhound Bus officials made by FBI agents. These interviews summarize the events of May 14, 1961, as experienced by the bus driver and his regional manager, and then relayed to federal employees. Even before the information reached the archivist at WHS, its transfer through several individuals illustrates two levels of creatorship. Chris Hurley refers to this as “multiple provenance.”²²

The two Greyhound officials aboard the Freedom Rider bus recounted incidents of violence and racism. Roy Franklin Robinson, the regional manager of the Southern

Greyhound Lines in Atlanta, Georgia, reported to the FBI that before boarding the bus from Atlanta to Birmingham that day, he was “aware of the possibility of racial trouble.”²³ According to Robinson, nine people aboard the Greyhound bus were known to be “Freedom Riders,” “four negroes and five white passengers.”²⁴ On arrival at the Anniston, Alabama, bus terminal en route to Birmingham, “there was an estimated mob of 200 people, mostly young males, swarming around the bus screaming, cursing, and waving clubs, chains, knives, and bricks.”²⁵ Soon after the mob approached the bus, smoke was spotted spewing from the back of the vehicle. The intense heat and smoke forced passengers to exit, at which time the crowd started to attack them.²⁶ “A tall Negro with the Freedom Riders was hit in the face” with either a chain or a rubber hose, depending on the account of the eyewitness interviewed.²⁷ A sergeant of the Alabama State Patrol arrived and restored order by firing a gun into the air and threatening to “shoot anyone who molested any of the passengers.”²⁸

The interviews collected in the Freedom Rides Freedom of Information Act Files present the archival user/researcher with an example of the limitations of single provenance description. The author in this collection is designated somewhat vaguely as an anonymous agent of the FBI.²⁹ However, limiting the author or creator to the individual who performed the interview does a disservice to those interviewed. It filters information through the interviewer’s perspective, allowing that person to retain or reject certain pieces of information as he or she sees fit. Privileging one perspective, that of the FBI interviewer, simultaneously denies “equal legitimacy to other” perspectives of those involved in the event, in this case the Greyhound officials, the bus passengers, and the mob of would-be attackers.³⁰

All of the many actors involved in this event can and should be considered creators of the archival record. The Greyhound officials who witnessed the racial violence in Anniston, the victims of the racial violence (the bus passengers), as well as those who perpetrated that violence (the local mob), equally shared in, and thus equally created, the archival record. Expanding the notion of cocreatorship and paying heed to the recent shifts in archival theory toward multiple perspectives simultaneously embraces the role of the subjects as active agents or creators in the archival record.

This first example illustrates the limitations of single provenance in manuscript collections, which is also readily apparent in collections of photographs. Included in the papers of Benjamin E. Smith, a prominent southern civil rights lawyer involved in the Mississippi Freedom Summer activities, is a series of photographs documenting protests against racial segregation.³¹ The collection consists of nine black-and-white photographs that depict the protest and arrest of individuals boycotting a Meridian, Mississippi, Woolworth’s store because of its stance on segregation and Jim Crow laws in 1964.

The images in this collection, organized chronologically, begin with a photograph of four Meridian police officers, all wearing helmets, arriving at the scene of the protest.³² Several subsequent photographs depict the advance of the police and their confiscation of protestors’ posters outside of the Woolworth’s store. Two posters clearly display the words “Woolworth is Jim Crow, Don’t Buy,” and “Freedom NOW.”³³ The final series of photographs in this collection portrays a black male protestor being handcuffed and

then led into a police car by three white Meridian police officers. In the background, several more protestors, police officers, and bystanders can be seen.³⁴

Evident in the photographs is the fact that the protestors, perhaps 10 people, are a mix of young and old, male and female, all notably African American. Archival descriptions and finding aids refer to these individuals as “subjects” of the photographs, ignoring their necessary role in the creation of the images. Clearly, without them the photographs would not exist, and in this manner they are just as much creators as the photographer or the archivist who may later shape and alter the collection.³⁵ Similarly, the Meridian police and curious bystanders documented in the photographs are also “creators” rather than mere “subjects” and should be described as such in the archival description.

It is also important to note the possibilities that the photographs were staged or that the scene was in some way manipulated by the photographer, the subjects, or both. This relates directly to Joan M. Schwartz’s question: “Who are the persons intervening in the creation of the photograph and what is the nature of the document in relation to them?”³⁶ If, indeed, some collaboration took place with the protestors depicted in the photographs, then they too are not only creators or cocreators of the archival record, but are also active shapers of the image.

The third of the examples of civil rights materials from WHS is a collection of sound recordings of oral history interviews in the Miriam Feingold Papers. According to the finding aid summary, the collection includes “papers and tapes of a Civil Rights activist describing demonstrations, prison experiences, treatment of local blacks, and other topics regarding her work which was primarily in Mississippi and Louisiana.”³⁷ As in the case of the Freedom Rides collection, the Feingold Papers contain a large amount of civil rights material from throughout the South, much of it not directly related to the sound recordings and interviews.³⁸

The oral history interview of Gayle Jenkins concerns many events in Bogalusa, Louisiana, and the changing racial and social structure of that community in 1966. As secretary of the Bogalusa Voters’ League, Jenkins was heavily involved with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the struggle for integration throughout the South. Her interview covers many racially significant topics including violence perpetrated against southern black men, women, and children, and the impotence of the federal government or its unwillingness to intervene. Jenkins speaks of the murder of both an African American sheriff and another unidentified man about which no follow-up or police inquiry was made. When she questioned agents of the federal government regarding this, she was told that as it was not a federal case, they could not become involved.³⁹ Repeated mention is made of this impotence on the part of the federal government in aiding its own citizens in their struggle for equality. Jenkins reports that in many instances, federal agents witnessed and took notes during events of racially motivated abuse, but offered little protection.⁴⁰ An example of this was when, during the integration of the Bogalusa city park in the summer of 1965, known Klansmen and local police reportedly beat black women and children while federal agents stood by doing nothing.

During another part of her interview, Jenkins describes Klansmen “burning and shooting into the homes” of black citizens in Bogalusa and the retaliatory actions of a group of semi-anonymous members of the Deacons for Defense.⁴¹ In contrast to this group, Jenkins mentions the sizable contingent of “conservative negroes” in the community, mostly local black citizens not involved in the civil rights movement.⁴² Concluding her interview, Jenkins speaks of broader efforts to integrate the community, specifically the problems resulting from “token integration” within the schools.⁴³ She states that four black students were admitted into the twelfth grade and two into first grade, but adds that these children were “intimidated, beaten, kicked, spit on” and that their food was reportedly “served with worms in it.”⁴⁴

The interview of Gayle Jenkins made for Miriam Feingold’s collection of civil rights materials is just one more example of the limitations of single provenance description. The events described by Jenkins reflect the hardships experienced by a southern African American community during the waning years of legalized segregation. As such, although the experiences and events are told through the narrative of one individual, they reflect the multiple experiences and manifold narratives of the entire community. Rather than limiting the notion of creatorship solely to the interviewer, provenance should be expanded to reflect the experiences of those interviewed and those described as members of the Bogalusa community. This broadened provenance illustrates well recent trends in the archival profession that push for recognition of cocreatorship and pluralist provenance in a community or societal environment.

All three of these collections, manuscript, photograph, and sound recording, document the struggles of African Americans in their effort to gain equality in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. Further, and particularly relevant to the argument of this article, each collection depicts the author or creator in a form of single provenance. By broadening their understanding of creatorship and accepting that multiple perspectives and narratives exist, archivists can transform the subject(s) of these collections into creator(s).

Broadening the Concept of Creatorship for Pluralist Provenance

The three case studies of civil rights archival collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society illustrate the limitations that confront researchers when they examine records. Although an archival sliver or a “slice of reality” is present in a record’s finding aid, it represents only one perspective. This type of single provenance description does a disservice to the multitude of other individuals—with their own perspectives, stories, and biases—involved in the creation and life cycle of each record. According to Terry Cook, “There is not one narrative in a series or collection of records, but many narratives, many stories, serving many purposes for many audiences, across time and space.”⁴⁵ Archivists who ignore these other perspectives further diminish the “slice of reality” extant in historical, archival records.

The shift in archival thinking from single to pluralist provenance broadens the principle of provenance and is helping to move us from an “archival universe dominated by one cultural paradigm to an archival multiverse; from a world constructed in terms

of ‘the one’ and ‘the other’ to a world of multiple ways of knowing and practicing, of multiple narratives co-existing in one space.⁷⁴⁶ This shift in thinking comprises a number of differing schemas to better describe “multiple narratives” and is the work of many archival theorists, scholars, and practitioners.⁴⁷ A full discourse on each concept is beyond the scope of this article, but it is necessary to briefly define some of these emerging views and discuss how they do or do not provide remedies to the traditional practice of single provenance description. In this new reconceptualization of the archival world and its descriptive terminology, some emergent ideas related to the issue of provenance that are discussed in this article include pluralism, the community of records approach, societal provenance, ethnicity as provenance, indigenous notions of provenance, as well as parallel, multiple, and simultaneous multiple provenance.⁴⁸

According to Duff and Harris, archivists need to “accept that there always have been and always will be many provenances, multiple voices, hundreds of relationships, [and] multiple layers of context, all needing to be documented” within the archival record.⁴⁹ Added to this, Eric Ketelaar states that “every interaction, intervention, interrogation, and interpretation by creator, user, and archivist activates the record.”⁵⁰ Consequently, each record would have “many creators” and “many who may claim the record’s authorship and ownership.”⁵¹ Accepting this idea of multiple creatorship then, the recent call within the field for a “set of principles relating to inclusive, pluralistic, and culturally aware record-keeping”⁵² becomes clear.

Any discussion of postmodern discourse and theory inevitably carries with it weighted terms of language and the competing power structures that underlie them.⁵³ In spite of this, language is nevertheless required to communicate abstract and complex concepts and is necessary to explicate recent employments of the term “pluralism” by archival scholars. Pluralism as it is used here does not simply refer to many or different perspectives, but rather implies multiple versions of reality that can be acknowledged through different perspectives on archival records.⁵⁴ A fuller definition of this complex term posits that

pluralism emphasizes understanding the records of local, minority, and marginalized communities and community expectations of archives and archival professionals, as well as understanding of records and associated expectations of governments, corporations, academic institutions, and other large bureaucracies. The pluralist approach emphasizes issues such as the role that records and archives could and do play in creating and preserving cultural memory, and the role of records in truth and reconciliation commissions, in community recovery from human rights abuses, and in promulgating and addressing ethnic strife and political and social injustices.⁵⁵

The pluralist approach, then, is one in which multiple actors and narratives exist and are acknowledged within the archival record. It accommodates “multiple and plural perspectives on the record and its context, supports participatory management models, and enables people and communities—once considered the subjects of the records—to add their perspectives and stories.”⁵⁶ In this reconceptualization of the archival record,

the incorporation of the pluralist approach insists on the need for recognition of multiple creators, each bringing his or her own conception of reality.

One of the emergent archival approaches that embraces multiple creator provenance is Jeannette Bastian's "community of records." "Within a 'community of records,' record creation is attributed not only to the literal inscriber of a record but also to the community and each of its members."⁵⁷ "In such an approach, even the subjects of records are viewed as cocreators."⁵⁸ Jimerson praises this type of broadened, inclusive provenance, as it extends creatorship to those often overlooked in archival collections, namely the "marginalized or silenced."⁵⁹ In this way, the community of records approach remedies the limitations of single provenance description by recognizing that all actors in the archival record are equal creators. For Bastian, "All layers of society are participants in the making of records, and the entire community becomes the larger provenance of the records," with "all segments of the society" becoming "full partners."⁶⁰

Similar to Bastian's community of records approach is Jennifer Douglas's concept of societal provenance. Douglas defines this notion of expanded provenance as asking "archivists to recognize that records creators do not operate in isolation, but are instead members of a collectivity that influences the choices they make and the ways they behave."⁶¹ Thus, like many of the other ideas examined in this article, societal provenance enlarges archivists' understanding of the interactions of records creators, subjects, and users, specifically their context within larger society.

Joel Wurl is another archivist concerned with the limitations of traditional ideas of provenance. In a 2005 article, Wurl described the recent shift of archivists active in "challenging the profession to widen its understanding of provenance."⁶² He states that many of these archivists want to develop a form of provenance that encompasses "the subjects as well as the literal producers of records."⁶³ As a potential solution, Wurl suggests the idea of recognizing "ethnicity as provenance." This broadened conception of provenance and creatorship "enables us to break free from the limiting constraints of the classical definition," away from ideas of the individual or the organization, and instead emphasizes the community, the group.⁶⁴ For Wurl, this expanded notion of provenance allows archivists to "ensure that the record of society truly represents the people who compose it," not just the elite.⁶⁵

Many of the ideas of expanded provenance, plurality, and multiple ways of perceiving the world so far discussed can apply directly to conceptions of indigenous notions of provenance. The approaches posited by Bastian, Douglas, Wurl, and many others relate to non-Western perceptions of history and reality. Interrelated with these ideas of creatorship and participation in the creation of the archival record are notions of ownership and access. While the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* does not explicitly address provenance and viewing subjects as creators, it does repeatedly advocate for the rights of indigenous ownership of archival materials.⁶⁶ Specifically, it references notions of "community ownership" that illustrate the claims of Bastian and Wurl that archivists need to develop community or culturally based forms of provenance. Indeed, Wurl adds to this that archivists would do better in this "paradigm of cultural provenance" if they shifted from a form of archival custodianship to one of "stewardship."⁶⁷ In this way, the subject community would have a greater voice in the handling and presentation of materials, as well as greater access and ownership. For

Wurl, as for other advocates of such an approach, this would go a long way in creating a “full and free engagement of the documented” and the documenter.⁶⁸

Regarding indigenous notions of provenance, access, and ownership, Sue McKemish writes that “as subjects of the record, Indigenous people have access rights, but do not participate in decision-making relating to appraisal, custody, preservation, description, and access.”⁶⁹ Fortunately, Kimberly Christen has undertaken some recent work to re-address these issues of active participation by indigenous peoples and communities in their own records. Christen, working with several Native American tribes in the Pacific Northwest and Washington State University’s Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC), created the Plateau Peoples’ Web Portal.⁷⁰ According to Christen, their goal was to “undo the privileging practices” extant in traditional archival practice and, “in their place, to establish a set of standards that allows for multiple voices, layered context, diverse forms of metadata, and the expansion of the archival record.”⁷¹ Clearly such work involves a completely new way of viewing and understanding not just provenance, but access, ownership, and diverse forms of knowledge.

A final set of ideas around this recent shift to expanded provenance concerns the work of Chris Hurley and relates to multiple ways of defining and describing forms of creatorship. For Hurley, “Parallel provenance denotes uncertainty, confusion, ambiguity, or unresolved contestation in existing descriptive practice.”⁷² To remedy this, archivists need to utilize broader descriptive practices that account for the possibility of multiple narratives, which, along with parallel and simultaneous multiple forms of creatorship, all are subsumed under the larger heading of pluralist provenance. Hurley refers to this form of expanded description as “the ability to render alternative narratives about the same records.”⁷³

Hurley divides these notions into multiple and simultaneous multiple forms of provenance. In his words, multiple provenance recognizes “that documents assembled as records can pass through the hands of several successive creators over time.” He notes, however, that such a form of creatorship “still affords a primacy.”⁷⁴ Some form of primacy obviously must be given, as without it, the notion of creatorship can be traced *ad infinitum*. An example of multiple provenance from the case studies already given is the interview of Gayle Jenkins performed by Miriam Feingold. Although Jenkins would be the primary creator, her words and perceptions were modified by Feingold, then by the archivist(s) processing the collection at WHS, and since then by every successive user of that collection.

Simultaneous multiple provenance, as described by Hurley, is slightly different. In this form of provenance, “two or more creators” of the archival record are able to be identified “at one and the same time,” effectively existing parallel to each other.⁷⁵ An example from the civil rights collections pertaining to simultaneous multiple provenance are the photographs of protestors in the Benjamin E. Smith Papers. As multiple subjects, the protestors, the police, and the bystanders are all creators of the photographs, as is the photographer actively creating them. Each subject/creator is depicted in the “same” photograph, at the “same” time, though their understanding and perception of reality allow for “different” ways of seeing.⁷⁶ These different ways of seeing would reflect a deeper and fuller historical context, one that incorporates the perspectives of multiple subjects as creators.

Although such abstract and heavily loaded conceptions of creatorship appear to be able to continue on *ad infinitum*, Hurley assures his readers that “parallel provenance does not imply an indiscriminate attribution of ‘creators’ to documents.”⁷⁷ Rather, he states that “only those that are necessary to a full understanding of the acts or circumstances that make the associated documents meaningful as records” should be considered as part of the provenance.⁷⁸ In other words, archivists’ conception of a community or society of provenance does have barriers, and they are only relevant to the provenance of a record in how they relate to the event described. If they cannot be shown to be related to the event, that is to be “contextual factors,” then they should not be considered part of its provenance.⁷⁹

Practical Implications of Pluralist Provenance

With the introduction of any new theory into a field of study, doubts arise about its validity and necessity. The field of archival studies is no different, and its need to ascertain the contributory nature of emergent archival theories is both understandable and laudable. Questions relating to expanded provenance description and its place in the archives include, but are certainly not limited to, what are the practical implications? Can it really work? And how would archivists go about implementing these theories into their daily practice? This section briefly addresses these concerns by illustrating the adaptability of pluralist provenance by applying it to the civil rights case studies previously discussed.

After reviewing the multiple conceptions of expanded provenance, it is clear that these constructs are applicable to many archival collections. Indeed, many different conceptions of provenance can be applied to the same collection and overlap. Each of the civil rights examples presented in this article illustrates the definition of the pluralist approach in that multiple narratives and actors exist in each record and are necessary for the record’s formation. Whether in the case of the burning of the Greyhound bus in Alabama, the arrest of protestors in Mississippi, or the abuse of African American women and children in Louisiana, the telling and retelling of each of these stories includes a host of creators, providing pluralist or multiple perspectives on each event. This is not restricted to those records mentioned here, however, as the pluralist approach is appropriate to describe virtually any archival record in which creatorship concerns the actions or narratives of those beyond the individual. As archival records are readily acknowledged, at least by postmodernists, as being shaped, molded, and manipulated by the archivist(s) as well as the user(s), this pluralist approach to describing provenance is practically limitless in its use in the archives.

As noted, these case studies are not limited to being described only through the pluralist approach, but instead, a similar argument could be made for each to fit, for example, Bastian’s definition of a “community of records,” Douglas’s “societal provenance,” or Hurley’s “multiple” or “multiple simultaneous provenance.” According to Bastian, in a community of records approach, record creation is attributed to the whole of the “community and each of its members.”⁸⁰ In a similar manner, Douglas speaks of expanded cocreatorship by acknowledging the role of society and societal

influences on the creation, or provenance, of archival records. Just as Gayle Jenkins's interview in the Miriam Feingold Papers addresses issues and experiences of the community of Bogalusa, so too does it implicitly recognize the role of larger societal influences, thus illustrating both Bastian's and Douglas's approaches. For instance, although the interview is told from Jenkins's perspective, she speaks for and about the larger African American community in her town, recognizing conservative and radical factions, including experiences of racist and moderate white members of her community, and acknowledging larger societal influences through the witnessing of federal agents, and the interviewer, a northern white woman. To implement such a pluralist provenance approach to archival description, it would be necessary to reexamine such a collection, and redescribe the "creator" in light of the multiple perspectives, narratives, and influences of all of these individuals. Specifically, this can be implemented by utilizing broader descriptive practices that account for the possibility of multiple narratives and by including more descriptive cocreator and multiple creator fields within archival finding aids.

Many of the approaches of expanded pluralist provenance description can be applied to each of the case studies discussed above, illuminating the perspectives of the "subjects" and recognizing their contributions as "creators." Critics of such a broadened approach of creatorship would certainly note, however, that there must be some logical stopping point at which archivists no longer recognize the notion of a cocreator. This is referred to by Hurley as the barrier between embodying "what provenance involves" and merely "association" with the event.⁸¹ In addition to a broadened notion of creatorship, implementing pluralist provenance also expands the role of the archivist. It becomes the archivist's responsibility to decide who is involved in the provenance of the collection, who is merely associated with it, and how these individuals, these creators and subjects, should be identified in the record. As an "active shaper" of the archival record, it is the archivist's responsibility to decide what constitutes "involvement" and "association" with the records in his or her care, but with an eye toward greater receptivity to the stories and memories of all members of society, not just the primary creators or compilers.⁸²

Such an approach requires a reexamination and redescription of the finding aid documentation to include more than just a single creator. Widening the profession's understanding of provenance and recognizing the necessary role of cocreators in archival records can be practically implemented through the inclusion of additional creator, cocreator, and multiple creator fields within finding aids.⁸³ Admittedly, implementing this broadened description of archival creatorship would require additional time and resources. Because of the limited budgets of many archival repositories and historical societies, critics may easily question why archivists would devote their scant resources toward expanded provenance description. As noted throughout this article, however, this type of broadened description recognizes the contributions of numerous individuals and communities, some who have been consciously silenced, and allows them greater voice and authority within our collective history, and it is therefore a benefit in line with the costs.

Further, in addition to expanding the list of creator(s) to include subject(s), archivists can also redescribe the finding aid and the collection through the use of colophons and annotations.⁸⁴ This practice of implementing pluralist provenance in archival collections presents a deeper, fuller, and perhaps truer reflection of the events. Rather than altering the historical context, pluralist provenance more fully reflects the historical context of the event in its manifold state, recognizing, and even highlighting, that apparent biases always exist—in the perspectives of the interviewer, photographer, archivist, or researcher. By including such devices that speak to the mediating role of the archivist(s) and user(s), a broadened understanding of multiple perspectives is presented, and archivists are better able to fulfill their “responsibility and role in the transmittal of cultural and social memory.”⁸⁵

Conclusion

The civil rights case studies examined in this article each represent the traditional notion of single provenance description and illustrate the inevitable lacunae that arise through such a limiting approach. The Freedom Rides Freedom of Information Act Files, for instance, designate the provenance or creator as simply an anonymous agent of the FBI.⁸⁶ Mention could, and should, be made of the multiple other perspectives and voices instrumental in the creation and existence of this record detailing the events of that 1961 day in Anniston, Alabama. Rather than single provenance, this collection’s finding aid could be reexamined and redescribed to better represent its pluralist provenance that includes the perspectives and biases of the Greyhound Bus officials, the FBI agents, the Freedom Rider bus passengers, and the angry mob, as well as the archivist(s) and user(s) later involved.

Similar arguments could be made for the subjects/creators of the Meridian, Mississippi, Woolworth’s protest photographs in the Benjamin E. Smith Papers, or for Gayle Jenkins and her fellow community members of Bogalusa, Louisiana, in the Miriam Feingold Papers. Both examples could be rewritten to illustrate several of the expanded provenance descriptions already mentioned, including Bastian’s community of records, Douglas’s societal provenance, or Hurley’s multiple and simultaneous multiple provenance. To do so, archivists will need to reexamine and redescribe the collections in their care with an eye for diversity and for sensitivity, and an acknowledgment of multiple ways of perceiving the world. The adoption of such an approach by archival institutions would do more than simply reflect the recent shift toward pluralist provenance within the archival literature. It would also go a long way in recognizing and documenting the “lives, desires, [and] needs of ordinary people,” as well as establishing an “environment of respect.”⁸⁷

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NOTES

1. Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, “Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings,” *Archival Science* 2, nos. 3–4 (2002): 280.
2. “Pluralist perspectives” is used here not to refer simply to many perspectives, but rather in the sense that there are multiple versions of reality that can be acknowledged through different perspectives on these records; see Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG), “Educating for the Archival Multiverse,” *American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 69–103.
3. Joel Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience,” *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 67.
4. Michelle Caswell, “Records Management” (class lecture, University of Wisconsin–Madison, May 3, 2012).
5. Verne Harris, “Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa,” *Archival Science* 2, nos. 1–2 (2000): 27.
6. Rodney G. S. Carter, “Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence,” *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 221.
7. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Silencing the Past: Layers of Meaning in the Haitian Revolution,” in *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations*, ed. Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 43.
8. Waldo G. Leland, “American Archival Problems,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1909* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911), 346.
9. Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, Archival Fundamentals Series II (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).
10. Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009), 14.
11. While the role of provenance delineates creatorship, and with it an implicit understanding of the creator(s)’ bias in the archival record, expanded provenance simply broadens this creatorship and the path of pluralist provenance into manifold contexts of the historical record.
12. Brien Brothman, “Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice,” *Archivaria* 32 (1991): 82.
13. Duff and Harris, “Stories and Names,” 276.
14. Duff and Harris argue that those archivists who claim “they are merely a conduit for a story” rather than part of the storytelling process generate a sense of “professional disingenuousness” within the discipline; see Duff and Harris, “Stories and Names,” 276–77.
15. *Ibid.*, 275.
16. *Ibid.*, 278.
17. Jimerson, *Archives Power*, 187.
18. Jeannette Bastian, “Reading Colonial Records through An Archival Lens: The Provenance of Space, Place, and Creation,” *Archival Science* 6, nos. 3–4 (2006): 268.
19. Michelle Caswell, “Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence and Voice in Khmer Rouge Mug Shots” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2012), 33.
20. Freedom Rides Freedom of Information Act Files, 1961–1963, 1971–1977, [M2001-094], Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
21. *Ibid.*

22. Chris Hurley, "Parallel Provenance (If These Are Your Records, Where Are Your Stories?)," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 110–45, and 33, no. 2 (2005): 52–91. The concept of multiple provenance will be explained more fully in section three of this article.
23. [124], [Folder 9], [Box 1], Freedom Rides, [M2001-094] Wisconsin Historical Society.
24. *Ibid.*, 125.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 127.
27. *Ibid.*; Robinson claims the individual was struck in the face with a chain, while the Greyhound bus driver stated that the man was hit with a rubber hose.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. Rachel Hardiman, "En mal d'archive: Postmodernist Theory and Recordkeeping," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 30, no. 1 (2009): 31.
31. Benjamin E. Smith Papers, 1955–1967, [PH Mss 513], Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. In his article "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth," Terry Cook argues that the "archivist as much as the creator or researcher is one of the narrators" of an archival collection; see "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives," *Archivaria* 51 (2001): 26.
36. Joan M. Schwartz, "'We Make Our Tools and Our Tools Make Us': Lessons from Photographs for the Practice, Politics, and Poetics of Diplomats," *Archivaria* 40 (1995): 47.
37. Miriam Feingold Papers, 1960–1967, [Tape 528A], Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
38. For the sake of brevity, information has been limited to one interview deemed relevant to the argument of this article. However, it should be noted that any of a number of sound recordings, manuscripts, or photographs would also illustrate the limitations in single rather than pluralist provenance description.
39. *Ibid.*, tape 1, side 1.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. Cook, "Fashionable Nonsense," 26.
46. PACG, "Educating for the Archival Multiverse," 73.
47. Among the many currently working in the field to develop such ideas are Jeanette Bastian, Michelle Caswell, Kimberly Christen, Jennifer Douglas, Chris Hurley, Eric Ketelaar, Sue McKemmish, Barbara Reed, Frank Upward, and Joel Wurl.
48. Caswell, "Archiving the Unspeakable," 33.
49. Duff and Harris, "Stories and Names," 274.
50. Eric Ketelaar, "Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (2005): 48.
51. *Ibid.*
52. PACG, "Educating for the Archival Multiverse," 76.
53. Michel Foucault, for instance, spoke of the determinism of language in controlling humankind, arguing that the words we use to describe reality are just representations or constructs, and not really reality. Thus, any type of empirical statement on historical events becomes meaningless.
54. See PACG, "Educating for the Archival Multiverse."
55. *Ibid.*, 79.
56. Frank Upward, Sue McKemmish, and Barbara Reed, "Archivists and Changing Social and Information Spaces: A Continuum Approach to Recordkeeping and Archiving in Online Cultures," *Archivaria* 72 (2011): 231.
57. Jennifer Douglas, "Origins: Evolving Ideas about the Principle of Provenance," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010), 34.
58. *Ibid.*

59. Jimerson, *Archives Power*, 300.
60. Jeannette Bastian, *Owning Memory, How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), 82–83.
61. Douglas, “Origins,” 34.
62. Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance,” 67.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, 69.
65. *Ibid.*, 73.
66. Northern Arizona University, *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>.
67. Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance,” 72.
68. *Ibid.*, 73.
69. Upward, McKemish, and Reed, “Archivists and Changing Social and Information Spaces,” 208.
70. Kimberly Christen, “Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation,” *American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 185–210.
71. *Ibid.*, 198.
72. Hurley, “Parallel Provenance,” 10.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*, 39.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, 10.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*
79. Douglas, “Origins,” 37.
80. *Ibid.*, 34.
81. Hurley, “Parallel Provenance,” 17.
82. Terry Cook, “What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift,” *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 29; Duff and Harris, “Stories and Names,” 275.
83. Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance,” 67.
84. See Michelle Light and Tom Hyry, “Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid,” *American Archivist* 65, no. 2 (2002): 216–30.
85. *Ibid.*, 229.
86. Freedom Rides, [M2001-094], Wisconsin Historical Society.
87. Howard Zinn, “Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest,” *Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 27; Caswell (class lecture, May 3, 2012).