



Title	“We’ve no problem inheriting that knowledge on to other people”: Exploring the characteristics of motivation for attending a participatory archives event
Authors(s)	Cushing, Amber
Publication date	2018-04
Publication information	Cushing, Amber. “‘We’ve No Problem Inheriting That Knowledge on to Other People’: Exploring the Characteristics of Motivation for Attending a Participatory Archives Event.” Elsevier, April 2018. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2018.06.005 .
Publisher	Elsevier
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/10056
Publisher's statement	This is the author’s version of a work that was accepted for publication in Library & Information Science Research. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as peer review, editing, corrections, structural formatting, and other quality control mechanisms may not be reflected in this document. Changes may have been made to this work since it was submitted for publication. A definitive version was subsequently published in Library & Information Science Research (40, 2, (2018)). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2018.06.005
Publisher's version (DOI)	10.1016/j.lisr.2018.06.005

Downloaded 2026-05-01 23:33:56

The UCD community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters! (@ucd_oa)



© Some rights reserved. For more information

“We’ve no problem inheriting that knowledge on to other people:”

Exploring the Characteristics of motivation for attending a participatory archives event

**Amber L. Cushing
School of Information and Communication Studies
University College Dublin
Amber.cushing@ucd.ie**

Abstract

While cultural heritage institutions increasingly use participatory events to draw in new audiences, little is known about what motivates participants to attend these events. Twenty semi-structured interviews with 29 individuals who attended one of three Inspiring Ireland 1916 public collection days were conducted in order to explore participants’ motivations for attending the event and perceived benefits. A participatory archives event, the collection days invited members of the public to bring relevant possessions to be digitally captured and have their story of the item recorded. The stories and items were then made available on the Inspiring Ireland website commemorating the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, Ireland. While participatory initiatives have enjoyed increasing attention in the archives literature of late, much of this work attempts to define terms or model behaviours from the perspective of the archivists. Little existing work attempts to explore the motivations of individuals to participate in these events using empirical methods. Findings suggest motivations for attending a collection day can be characterised across four characteristics that can be categorised as aligning with individual or communal perception of benefits: A. to share their story and provide evidence in order to influence the contemporary narrative of the Rising (individual benefit), B. to relieve the burdens

of preservation and remembering (individual benefit), C. to find out more about the object or context of the object (individual benefit), and D. to share their object via the open access features of the Inspiring Ireland website as a way to fulfil a civic duty and support a public good (communal benefit). These findings contradict existing literature about the purpose for engaging in participatory initiatives (to pluralise collections) and assumptions about why individuals are motivated to engage (altruistic, intrinsic motivation). Further exploration of the concept of communal versus individual perceived benefit could influence the ways in which cultural heritage institutions justify their role in society. The concept of an archival *user* is evolving. Understanding how participation can be considered use will help institutions develop a more holistic understanding of use in contemporary settings.

1. Introduction

The phrase participatory archives has been used to describe a shift in the focus of archival work from a focus on preservation to a focus on use (Huvila, 2008). Participatory initiatives in archives take many forms with different labels, including participant centered, web and community archiving (Theimer, 2011). Several early examples of participatory projects exist. Krause and Yakel (2007) developed an online finding aid to which users could contribute. Other work in this area has focused on model development (Huvila, 2008; Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007), case studies of participatory techniques such as crowdsourcing (Eveleigh, 2017; Theimer, 2011), and the influence of such techniques on the archives profession (Eveleigh, 2015).

1.1. Problem statement

While participatory models have been proposed and the influence of participatory initiatives on practice has been explored, little existing research focuses exclusively on the participant's

perspective of engaging in these initiatives and how such information can assist in meeting the goals of such initiatives. Further, as use of archives evolves and the definition of user expands, it is necessary to explore the motivations of the participant, not just a user in an on site reading room or a user of a static website. This study explored participation in a participatory archives project from the viewpoint of the nonprofessional participant, asking what motivated them to participate. The findings can be useful in understanding how archives might begin to thoughtfully encourage participation and develop a more holistic understanding of contemporary use of collections. As institutions compete for limited funding, understanding how better to meet user needs may lead to improved impact measures and in turn, funding.

2. Literature review

2.1. Participatory archives and archives 2.0

While the concept of participation has broadly been discussed in media and communication studies, there are fewer examples of the term *participatory* as it is applied to archival studies. Early work in this area has described specific cases or projects, with less empirical research attempting to explore how participatory initiatives could meet stated needs and goals of a project, or benefit the participant, from the participant's viewpoint.

In 2007, Shilton and Srinivasan proposed that participatory appraisal, arrangement, and description be applied to archival tasks as a way to more meaningfully represent traditionally marginalised communities in institutional archives. In their proposed model, the authors suggested that participants be asked to “share cultural, economic, educational, and other information” by uploading personal documents perceived to represent their heritage and identity (p. 99). Focus groups would then be used to gather information to develop metadata and context

for the records. There was no indication as to why individuals would be motivated to participate in this model or share personal documents with an institution.

In an effort to “address issues of communication and user participation in archival contexts,” Huvila (2008) conducted action research by constructing two digital archives in order to develop a new approach for a participatory archive, defined by “decentralised curation, radical user orientation and contextualisation of both records and the entire archival process” (p. 15). In this model, curation responsibilities were shared between professional archivists and participants, usability was considered equal to preservation activities, and it was intended that individuals be prioritised above organisational contexts of records. Engaging users was considered the priority, instead of traditional archival tasks such as preservation, appraisal, arrangement, and description. Further, Huvila believed that the term *users* should be more broadly conceived to include use of records but also participation in development of records and context. While this work better defined *participatory* it was not clear in what specific situations such a model would be best adopted or why individuals would be motivated to participate in shared governance.

Unlike Huvila (2008) who categorised use of the term *participatory* from literature and blog posts, Roland (2016) explored dimensions of the term in relation to the records continuum model. According to Rolan, participatory initiatives in archives could take several forms: participatory projects, generalised systems, and archives 2.0. These three typologies could be mapped to the records continuum model, depending on the ways in which individuals interacted with the records. For example, individuals that *experienced* the records, such as care leavers experiencing a record of their own time in care, differed from individuals who *identified* with records that did not contain information specifically related to themselves but did relate to their personal life activities, such as records documenting a community. In addition, there were those who *related*

to records who may have felt connected to records that were not directly related to their lived experiences. Finally, there were those who conducted research using records based on personal/professional interest, but whom did not personally connect with the records. Whereas participatory projects were more often aligned with individuals who experienced records, generalised systems (such as a community archive) were aligned with those who identified with records, and those who related to records were most often aligned with archives 2.0 activities. According to Rolan, these dimensions of “participatory distancing represented the attitude of participants in relation to the activities represented by the records” (p. 14).

The participants’ dimension of participation was directly related to their activity associated with the records: those who experienced records about themselves may have wished to have more say in management of the records, whereas those who related to the records and engaged in archives 2.0 may simply have wished to engage and connect with others about the records and context. Rolan’s work moved the discussion of *participatory* in archives forward in that it designated typologies of participation, but it still assumed that the participation in archives was beneficial, without offering empirical evidence for the justification of such initiatives. Such justification could come from the voices of participants. The above models are of use when attempting to understand how participatory practices can fit into existing archival practices, but do not specifically address why individuals would be motivated to participate in projects.

While the user was central in both participatory and community archives, Eveleigh (2017) suggested that those who participated in participatory archives initiatives were more motivated to share with the public, rather than with a tight knit group. The work of these authors suggested that individuals engaged because they wanted to participate, but it’s not clear why they wanted to participate or the benefits they believed that they would gain from the participation.

In order to explore different ways that initiatives were used across institutions in New Zealand, Liew (2014) explored four cases of cultural heritage institutions that used participatory initiatives. The author identified the aims of participatory initiatives in libraries, archives and museums as being motivated by three categories: a) as a business strategy to please users; b) that the participatory initiatives met the needs of core goals of the sector, including creating wider educational opportunities and leveraging the knowledge base via users; and c) moving past the perception that cultural heritage institutions could be perceived as elitist. No clear definition of participatory initiatives was provided, but examples included the facilitation of user-generated content, user input in the display of collections, avenues for providing user feedback, and general use of social media tools and platforms. Liew provided one of the first empirical studies to address the purpose of adopting participatory initiatives, but did so without exploring the opinion of the participants.

2.2. Use and studying users

Previous literature has explored archival use from the user's perspective, most specifically related to information seeking in the reading room, but few examples exist that explore participatory initiatives from the viewpoint of the participant (Duff & Johnson, 2002; Duff & Johnson, 2003; Yakel, 2002; Yakel & Torres, 2003). Further, if one is to conceive of use via Huvila's (2008) definition that use includes participation, it is necessary to explore use beyond traditional definitions. While Flinn (2007) explored participatory initiatives from the perspective of the archives professional, little work has investigated the participant experience. Like Flinn (2007), Eveleigh (2015) focused on the perspectives of the archives professional, but also attempted to interview archives users about participation. In one phase of her study, most of the users were existing volunteers or employees of the archives who had engaged with the archives

online. In another phase, the author interviewed users who had completed a reading room questionnaire after visiting onsite. Quantitative data suggested that many of the reading room visitors had previously engaged in participatory projects online. A further questionnaire was developed for online users of the UK National Archives. Findings included the suggestion that the concept of use could be reimagined to include online participation beyond information seeking and that there was a potential for online participation to contribute to a sense of personalising the archives experience.

Caswell (2014) queried users of the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) about collection priorities for the digital archive. Caswell rooted the empirical study in the tradition of community archives, a collecting tradition thought to lead “to a more straightforward relationship between archival collections and community needs” (p. 1). The author conducted a content analysis of 70 responses asking users about stories from the past about they would like to know more. Responses were collected from audience members who attended the 2014 South Asian Awareness Network conference. While results were specific to SAADA, the work is significant in that it provided one of the few existing examples of an attempt to empirically explore the user’s perspective associated with participatory projects. While examples exist of gathering feedback from users to inform archival practice, there is less information available about users’ motivations to engage with archives beyond traditional user groups of historians and genealogists.

2.3. Personalising the archival experience and personal archiving

While Eveleigh (2015) suggested that online participation could contribute to personalising archives experiences, many other attempts to personalise access to and use of archival collections have looked to mobile technology and the use of technology generally to provide a more

personalised experience for different types of users, rather than a single interface and/or policy developed to suit all users. Research has found that personalisation can increase satisfaction and perceived value of a collection, as well as ameliorate understanding of a historical event (Cocciolo & Rabina 2013; Cushing 2013; Cushing & Cowan, 2017; Harley, Poitras, Jarell, Duffy and Lajoie, 2016). Participatory and community archives initiatives have the potential to personalise the archives experience for users, but this has yet to be empirically explored, beyond Eveleigh's (2015) finding.

While motivations for attending participatory events have seldom been studied, motivation for archiving behaviour has been. McKemmish (1996) found that some individuals perceived personal recordkeeping as a kind of *witnessing* or a way to memorialise life. Kirk and Sellen (2010) studied 11 families to explore the motivation and value behind home archiving. The researchers identified six values associated with the behaviour of home archiving: defining the self, forgetting, fulfilling duty, framing the family, connecting with the past, and honouring those one cares about. The researchers suggested that these results could be used to develop home archiving technology, but they may also be of use in planning participatory archive initiatives. While literature from the past decade has evolved to develop more concrete descriptions of the different types of participatory initiatives in archives, research in this area still lacks justification for the purpose of adopting such initiatives beyond general marketing to increase viability and use. Existing research has alluded to the concept that doing so is thought to be beneficial for users (Liew, 2014) and has even demonstrated that participant input can be useful to direct archivists' priorities, (Caswell, 2014). However, empirical research is needed to understand whether these assumptions are true and whether participatory initiatives are beneficial for users

and in what ways. Attempting to understand participants' motivations to participate in participatory archives initiatives would be a move in the right direction.

3. Method

3.1. Inspiring Ireland 1916 public collection day

To understand the attendee's perspective when participating in a participatory initiative for a digital archival collection, the researcher interviewed attendees of three Inspiring Ireland 1916 public collection days about their motivations for attending. Attendees were invited by the Digital Repository of Ireland, based on heirlooms they had presented at a previous public event. According to Huvila (2008), those who contribute to the development of a participatory collection (participants) can also be considered users of a participatory archive. The present research investigated why the participants wanted to attend the event and what benefits they perceived from attending.

The 1916 Easter Rising is marked as the beginning of movement for Irish independence from Great Britain. Beginning with Easter Monday 1916 and lasting a week, Irish rebel soldiers waged urban warfare on the streets of the Dublin city centre until eventually surrendering to British troops. While Dublin saw the largest uprisings, historical accounts depict rebel organising activity throughout Ireland, leading up to Easter Week. Many of the rebels who were captured upon surrender were sent to prison camps across Great Britain, while many of the rebel leaders were executed (<http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/what-was-the-easter-rising>). For the Inspiring Ireland 1916 project, the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) invited members of the public to bring "treasured objects from 1916 to be digitised, recorded, catalogued, and preserved for the long term in the DRI and shared via Inspiring Ireland" (Digital Repository of

Ireland, 2016c). The Inspiring Ireland website¹ hosted exhibits featuring digital surrogates of objects held in institutional collections, as well as digital surrogates of items from the public collection day. According to project media, “Together these public and private objects create a dynamic, multi-media reflection on the people, events, and legacy of 1916 in one online space for viewers worldwide to enjoy” (DRI, 2016a; McGee & Harrower, 2017). The researcher was not involved in the planning, management and execution of the collection day and was only present at the collection day to gather information from event attendees whom the DRI had invited.

The project met the definition of participatory archives initiatives discussed in previous literature in its attempt to gather digital surrogates of objects from members of the public and display them in an online exhibit alongside objects held in institutional collections. The public collection days were described as follows:

Inspiring Ireland 1916 community collection days provide members of the public with an innovative way of contributing to the preservation of Ireland’s cultural heritage. Community participation allows people worldwide to share, discover and make personal connections between their 1916 memorabilia and objects from the period held in the extensive collections of Irish cultural institutions (DRI, 2016b).

Considering the above text, the Inspiring Ireland 1916 public collection day could be categorised by Rolan’s (2016) identify or relate dimensions of participation. Public collection day participants were able to contribute objects with which they identified or related (objects dating from the 1916 time period), but that did not directly describe themselves. This engagement also met Huvila’s (2008) definition of use.

3.2. Procedure

¹ <http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie/>

The collection day attendee interviews explored participants' perspectives of and motivations for attending the event. The Inspiring Ireland team provided the researcher and research assistants with a table at three collection day events between October 2015 and March 2016. Two events were held in Dublin and another in London. Collection day events generally lasted for about six hours, with attendees invited to bring their item in to be digitally captured, to share the story of their item (for the development of metadata), and to receive physical preservation advice throughout the day. On average, most attendees spent between 1-2 hours at the collection days, spreading their time across the various activities. All participants signed release forms agreeing to allow for their stories and digital items to be featured on the DRI project website.

Collection day attendees were informed of the researcher's presence and were invited to participate in an interview while they waited for their personal item to be digitally captured by the Inspiring Ireland staff. If an attendee approached the researcher's table, they were invited to participate in a 20 minute interview in which they could share their thoughts on the collection day as well as the item they brought to be digitally captured.

3.3. Research design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. During the interviews, participants were invited to discuss the object that they brought to the event to be digitally captured, their thoughts on the item being part of an online exhibit, and their thoughts about participating in the event. Prompts included: "Tell me about the item you brought here today," "What would you say the significance of your object is?," "What made you decide to bring the object here today?," "How do you think the object should be shared?," and "How does it make you feel that the item will be publically available online?".

Interviews were audio recorded, anonymised and transcribed. The interview data were coded using nVivo for Mac 10.2.2. Memoing and coding were conducted, using methods described by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Initial codes were developed from the interview protocol, with more codes being developed during analysis. Using the 13 analytical tools described by Corbin and Strauss (p. 69), the researcher first created codes based on the interview questions. Examples of codes include “item meaning,” “motivation,” “describe item,” and “why shared.” Memos were written based on the first coding of transcripts. After coding all transcripts, a secondary coding was completed in which different participant motivations were compared with one another; Corbin and Strauss refer to this as constant comparisons. Finally, motivations were categorised to draw out characteristics.

4. Findings

A total of 20 interviews were conducted at the three collection day events. Some interviews were conducted in groups of more than one participant—generally this included families, sometimes involving two to three participants contributing to the same interview. A total of 29 individuals participated in the 20 interviews. Participants were excited to share the story of their object, including their perceived historical significance of the object as well as the story of how the object came into their care. Objects were acquired as gifts, sometimes as part of a hobbyist collection, and had been passed down as family heirlooms. Many participants were knowledgeable about their object and its history at the two Dublin events. In contrast, attendees at the London event were not always aware of the origins of their object. All participants who were interviewed reported that they enjoyed attending the event and most reported experiencing feelings of pride from sharing their object with Inspiring Ireland.

4.1. Motivation

Motivation for attending the event was a key element of study findings because it not only captured the desire to attend the event, but it also allowed the researcher to explore perceptions of the event beyond general satisfaction. Participants described their motivation for participating in the collection day events along four characteristics, which were categorised as individual or communal. The participants were motivated by the perceived individual or communal benefits of participating:

- A. to share their story and provide evidence in order to influence the contemporary narrative of the Rising (individual benefit);
- B. to relieve the burdens of preservation and remembering (individual benefit);
- C. to find out more about the object/context of the object (individual benefit); and
- D. to share their object via the open access features of the Inspiring Ireland website as a way to fulfil a civic duty and support a public good (communal benefit).

Characteristics were categorised as individual and communal benefit based on the way in which the participants spoke about their motivations. Most participants described their reasons for taking part in terms that indicated personal gain—as a result these were categorised as individual benefit. An example of this would be a participants speaking of how something was important to themselves, using words such as *I*, *my* or *me*. In contrast, if a participant was more likely to speak about the benefit to others and was less likely to refer to themselves, then this characteristics was categorised as communal benefit. Interestingly, of the four characteristics, three were associated with the perception of receiving individual benefit. Characteristics were not mutually exclusive; some participants described more than one characteristic guiding their motivation for attending the collection day. For example, while some participants emphasised the role of sharing their story, when probed they also spoke of influencing a narrative. As a result, characteristics often blended into one another.

4.1.1. Providing evidence and influencing a contemporary narrative (individual benefit)

Participants from all collection days expressed a desire to share their story as motivation for attending the event. When asked why they decided to bring their object to and attend the collection day event, several participants spoke of feeling an impulse to share the story of their object as well as the unique perspective that their object provided to understand the context of the 1916 Easter Rising. Some participants were more concerned with sharing the story of a specific family member, while others wanted to share the story of individuals with whom they identified due to shared characteristics, such as home county or occupation. This characteristic was similar to wanting to share their object via open access features (characteristic D), but the main difference was that those who wanted to share their story expressed a desire to influence the context or narrative of events, while those concerned with open access emphasised the desire for as many people as possible to have free access to the digital surrogate of the item. The desire to influence the narrative was often manifested as wanting to offer a perspective different to the popular narrative with which one was familiar, or the narrative that participants had learned in school—in other words, to “have one’s say” and to share one’s own perspective with others so that there were more sources about the Rising publically available. The participants offered evidence (through their objects) to support the idea that there was more to the Rising than the narrative learned in school and that permeated popular culture.

Interview Dub1.5 included three members of the same family (two parents and their adult child), describing an heirloom crucifix. The crucifix was owned by a priest who performed last rites on a leading member of the rebels before he was executed and the crucifix was then given to one of the participant’s fathers when he served as an altar boy for the priest decades later. Members of this family agreed that they brought the item to the collection day and chose to attend the event

as a family because the crucifix demonstrated their family's story in the historical events.

According to one family member,

We've no problem inheriting that knowledge on to other people...the fact that we can share this story with the public. We've read so many stories out there, and heard so many more stories from the public too. Now you think that maybe we would use it [the crucifix] to let everyone else know about the story, too. (Participant Dub1.5.c)

This family of participants wished to influence the narrative of the events by highlighting their family's role in the events—the role of the everyday person.

Participant Dub2.6 was also interested in sharing her family's story. She explained how she had brought a postcard to be digitally captured. Her grandmother had sent the postcard to her great grandmother, after she went to visit her brothers (the participant's great uncles) who were interned in a Welsh prison camp (Frongoch) for their participation in the Rising. She explained how her grandmother played a role in the Rising by delivering weapons to the rebels in a baby's pram, but her role was never discovered because she was female. Her grandmother continued to help the prisoners by visiting them and bringing them food, sending her mother a postcard when she would arrive safely in Wales. According to the participant, the postcard served as evidence that people from Dublin visited the prisoners in Wales, and that the British government censored mail originating in the camp (parts of the postcard were blacked out). The participant pointed out that while the postcard was important as evidence, it could not be separated from the significance of the story that contextualised it.

In terms of, you hear prisoners were sent to Frongoch, people did visit them in Frongoch. There's an example somebody who actually did visit them...I think the story is important. The story goes with the item. It's the background to the item. The item is just evidence that she was there (participant Dub2.6).

This participant's desire to influence the narrative of the Rising is evident—she wanted people to know that Dubliners went over to Frongoch to visit the prisoners and that the British tried to censor records of this behaviour via the post.

Participant Dub2.2 was also concerned with the treatment of those interned at Frongoch and understood her object as providing evidence of prisoners' time in the camp. She brought a scrapbook that was created by her father during his time at the camp. The scrapbook included content authored by leaders of the Rising, such as drawings, accounts of events, and signatures. She described her father as the historian of the Frongoch. She wanted the object to be digitally captured and shared because "I think the more people who know about these sort of things the better. .. They're absolutely important to our history" (participant Dub2.2). This participant was motivated by the understanding that she possessed evidence that could be shared as a way to influence the narrative of the Rising.

Participant Dub1.8 was interested in sharing objects from her home county of Tipperary. The objects included documents and memorabilia associated with an Irish Republican Army brigade located in that county. She explained that many people inaccurately think the Easter Rising events were isolated to the Dublin city centre, when events actually occurred throughout Ireland. Her object served as evidence of this; she attempted to influence the narrative by expanding it to include all of Ireland without such a focus on Dublin:

Participant Dub1.8: How you associated with 1916 is you hear of this big rebellion, but in actual fact, when you get into details of it, it wasn't a big rebellion. It had a big impact on history, but in actual fact, there was 100, 150 people in total. You had this big impression until you read the detail. Really, a different story develops.

Interviewer: Do you think your item develops that story?

Participant Dub1.8: Absolutely yes. It develops it down south to compare with what happened up in Dublin. Down south, it was during a lot of different events, but they were

all still reported back to Dublin. They're intertwined, but hundreds of miles away from each other.

Participant Lon1.8 was particularly concerned about sharing the story of the Irish in England during the Rising. He described how his objects, pamphlets from a Free Ireland rally that took place in London, demonstrated how the Irish English took part in the Rising: "I thought that was quite important to see what was going on in London at that time. ... The London Irish in Britain at that particular time" (Participant Lon1.8). In this example, the participant desired to widen the narrative to include Irish living outside of Ireland.

While several participants wanted to share the story of their family's role in the Rising as a way to simply inform others, other participants attempted to share their story as a way to influence the narrative of the Rising via their object and context. Therefore the characteristic of sharing their story had multiple underlying motives—feelings of pride when sharing a family story as well as sharing a story to influence the narrative of the events.

4.1.2. Relieving the burden of preserving and remembering (individual benefit)

When participants spoke of wanting their objects to be preserved or that the object signified their desire for a specific person to be remembered, this was often expressed as absence of loss.

Participants thought that if their item was digitally captured, it would be less likely to be lost, relieving them of some of the perceived responsibility of maintaining the object. This motivating characteristic, the desire to participate as a way to relieve duty, is more personal than civically minded. This is represented by one of Participant Dub1.2's motivations to attend the event:

"Thought it would be good just to have it digitised because there's all this danger in it getting lost in the drawers, etc., you know?" Participant Dub1.4 described that previous loss motivated him to have his objects (photographs) digitally captured for safekeeping: "That's safekeeping.

My sister can't find one of the photographs of the two boys. The original ... I have it somewhere."

Participants liked the fact that they could keep the physical original and were happy to let the DRI control the digital surrogate: "It's putting it on record for everyone to see the digital, but I have the original" (participant Dub1.8). This is an important motivation for professionals to recognise, especially if they so much enjoy their work (in preservation) that it can be difficult to understand that many members of the general public understand preservation as a burden, not an engaging activity.

The desire to forget by releasing a burden is similar to the motivation of wanting to remember. Specifically, individuals wanted to be relieved of the burden of the duty to remember and were motivated by the efforts of Inspiring Ireland to help them with this duty. Participants tied the concept of remembering with evidence in records. According to participant Dub1.4,

All the people are gone, but the reason I would do it is that I want them to be remembered. I'm very keen on remembrance. It ties up with my belief about the whole afterlife. I feel that I've got to leave a record. My own Dad died when I was 13. My big interest in research and family history stems from that occurrence. I've had the most startling discoveries due to researching my father's own family and his history. He was 50 years dead in 2011. In 2010, I started researching my Dad's life.

In this description, participant Dub1.4 associated remembering with the desire to leave a record or trace.

The ability to be remembered by leaving a record was also a theme in interview Dub1.7. Two siblings discussed how they brought in a photograph of their father, a surgeon who gave aid to the wounded during the urban warfare on Dublin city streets during Easter week in 1916:

We hear a lot about the sergeants and the entirety of the British. There were a lot of people who died, who were just going around selling newspapers. Trying to find coal to bring home to keep the house warm. It's a record of the ordinary people, who were caught up in it (participant Dub1.7.a).

This is associated with the characteristic above, of wanting to share a story, which demonstrates how the characteristics overlapped. However the desire to share the story of ordinary people was also associated with the desire to remember their father's work helping those ordinary people, which differentiates it from characteristic A. to share their story and provide evidence in order to influence the contemporary narrative of the Rising (individual benefit).

4.1.3. Find out more (individual benefit)

Overall, participants at all three collection day events touched on characteristics associated with A, B and D. However, this changed in the case of characteristic C. to find out more about the object/context of the object (individual benefit), which categorised attendance as motivated by the desire to find out more about their object. This was the only characteristic in which the Dublin and London participants differed. While nearly all the London attendees addressed this characteristic, few Dublin attendees spoke of it. This is not necessarily surprising considering location; whereas the Easter Rising is extensively covered in the Irish primary and secondary school curriculum the general UK population (with the exclusion of Northern Ireland) would be less familiar with Irish history. In addition, effects of the historically contentious relationship between the UK and Ireland still exist and came to the fore in disagreements about remembrance of the 1916 events.²

According to participant Lon1.3: "The reason I'm here is I've got a photograph of my late father, and he seems to be wearing a uniform...what it's about, I have no idea." This participant went on to discuss how he came to the collection day.

² Political disputes occurred when deciding whether or not to invite English dignitaries to Rising events (O'Halloran, 2015). A memorial which lists the Irish and English who died in the 1916 events has been publically questioned fA including the names of deceased English soldiers and has been vandalised (Brady, 2017).

I met somebody in an Irish centre and I took the photograph, and she said the best thing to do is to send it to the Irish Embassy (in London). They may be able to help you. I sent a letter with the photographs and then I got an invitation [to the collection day, which was held in the Irish Embassy in London].

In further conversation, it became clear that this participant associated finding information about the photo to connecting with his family:

I suppose that a lot of people in my position, as well, and haven't thought about it, don't know what to do about it. I'm just trying my luck to see if I've come up with the right answer, so I can pass it on to my family. If everybody does that then we'll have some clearer picture of what they actually did do in the times of the Troubles, hopefully. I might be wrong, but that's my thinking....My sister, at this lonely time would be sitting up at seven o'clock tomorrow morning I'll ring in at six o'clock tonight because they are ahead of us and she is looking forward to all this information.

For participant Lon1.5, attending the collection day was a step in the process of researching her family history but it also connected her with her mother. She described how she brought a photograph of her grandfather to learn more about him, but also as a tribute to her mother and Ireland:

It's poignant because my mom is still very emotional about it. She went into the orphanage at four. She didn't really know her father either, but she knew this about him. Her sisters were a lot older so they must've discussed it in those days, I don't know. I just think for my mom's sake, I'm making her proud that we're doing this. She's representing her father and Ireland. Just proud for the family (Participant Lon1.5).

Pride was frequently mentioned, across characteristics A-C, as a motivator. Whether a participant wanted to share a story to influence a narrative, provide open access to their item, preserve, remember or find information, they were all proud to participate, suggesting that pride, when combined with other characteristics, can be a powerful motivator in engaging with participatory initiatives. The difference was how this pride played out: to satisfy an individual or communal interest.

4.1.4. Open access, civic duty and public good (communal benefit)

While characteristics A-C were more likely to be motivated by perceived individual benefits, D. to share their object via the open access features of the Inspiring Ireland website as a way to fulfil a civic duty and support a public good (communal benefit), was more closely associated with perceived benefits for society. Several participants said that they attended the collection day event because it provided an opportunity to share their item with many people, as they were aware of Inspiring Ireland's espoused goal of making items freely accessible online. For this characteristic, sharing was a motivator, but it was less about influence and pride (as is described in characteristic A) and more about sharing with as many people as possible through open access features. Quantity of sharing was of more concern in this characteristic. Further, motives were less individual and more communal—it was less about pride and influence and more about making an object and story available to the masses. Participant Dub1.1 was particularly attracted to this feature of the project. He explained that private collectors had offered him large sums of money for his object, but on the conditions that the item not be made public and be housed in a private collection and never be photographed.

I got an email from an American collector, who had seen one of the pictures from the book, and what annoyed me, I'm sure it was, he wanted to buy the diary but one of the conditions was that he didn't want anyone to either photograph it. ... I said 'This is something that the people of Ireland and the people of the world should see of what was happening.' He said if I did that it would decrease the value. I turned the offer down for the diary, which was significant. That it is important that ordinary people who haven't got money in their pockets can enjoy the pleasures of a book or a piece of memorabilia whether it's from the 1916 Rising, or whether it's across the spectrum like my diary that goes from 1906 to 1916. I fought with a lack of money, in history terms, I think it was important for people to have access to their heritage form the archives. (Participant Dub1.1)

While Dub1.1's quote may highlight the benefits of free, open access, other participants were also able to point to the benefits of open access by emphasising the reach their item would enjoy

after it was digitally captured and preserved by the DRI, a state institution, with the mission of being “a trusted national infrastructure for the preservation, curation and dissemination of Ireland’s humanities, social sciences and cultural heritage data” (DRI, 2016b).

In interview Dub2.5, two participants who were siblings brought their collection of items about the Ashe family. Thomas Ashe was considered to be a leader of the Rising, and the collection brought to be digitally captured provided evidence of how Nora Ashe, Thomas’ sister, also took part in the Rising. The participants collected memorabilia about the Ashe family as a hobby, as they felt a connection—like the participants, both Thomas and Nora Ashe were teachers from County Kerry. When asked why they brought their Ashe family collection to be digitally captured, the participants also contrasted open access with monetary gain:

Participant Dub2.5.a: They’re priceless. ... We just love them. We take them out occasionally, we look at them. We actually have been quite bothered by the amount of stuff that has gone on public sale in the last, say 10 to 15 years, if it’s not going to be available to the people.

Interviewer: To the public, you mean?

Participant Dub2.5.a: Exactly, oh God yeah, to the public. This sounds like a contradiction, one of the reasons that we’re interested in [the collection day] and that we came out today is that we actually think these things should be accessible to the people. In terms of value to use, we have no interest in monetary gain, but we have an interest in making if there was anything of interest or value, the people will be able to see them. Just like we’d be able to see other things as well.

Both of the interviews above emphasise the perceived benefits of open access by describing the reason to attend the collection day as associated with civic duty—to assist in the open access process. However, interview Dub2.5 also included elements of wanting to right what they perceived to be a wrong, that is, the private market for heritage goods. This again displays the motivating characteristic of sharing information about historical objects as a public good.

Participant 2.4 described this aim in simpler terms: “I’ve had [the object] locked away. I’ve shown stuff to some people who inquired, but I know they would be of interest to researchers in the future.” Participant Dub2.3 described the benefits of open access and his motivation for attending the event in a single sentence: “to put out stuff up there and to look at other people’s stuff.” This is a more reflexive understanding of sharing for open access. The participant understood that he could benefit by sharing with the public, but also that if others did the same, he could also benefit from the process of sharing for open access.

Whether described in detail or a single sentence, some participants were motivated to participate by the civic mission of open access, to provide free, equal access to cultural heritage for all. This motivating behaviour aligns more closely with the concept of perceived communal benefit.

5. Discussion

Findings identified four characteristics that motivated study participants to participate in the Inspiring Ireland collection days; three were associated with perceived individual versus one associated with communal benefits. Many of these findings relate to findings consistent with existing literature. However, while the study was limited to the Inspiring Ireland event and the perspectives of 29 participants, some results emerged that challenge previous findings.

It is not necessarily difficult to comprehend that participants were motivated more by a perceived individual benefit than by a benefit to community and greater society—individuals are motivated to meet their own needs and desires. However, previous literature has implied that individuals tend to participate for altruistic reasons or a feeling of civic responsibility (Eveleigh, 2017).

The existing literature has implied that individuals should engage in participatory archives events as a way to pluralise collections, and that those who do engage in participatory archives

initiatives are motivated by altruistic, intrinsic purposes, whereas the findings of the present study suggest that individuals are motivated by other, more individual perceived benefits. Future research could explore further the finding of this tension between individual versus communal perception of benefits in the context of cultural heritage collections and could be extended to a larger discussion about the ways in which cultural heritage institutions justify their existence in society.

5.1 Findings consistent with existing literature

5.1.1. Feelings of pride

In her exploration of genealogists' personal information management practices, Yakel (2004) found that family historians experienced feelings of pride when searching for genealogy records in archives and that these family historians viewed themselves as the family narrator. This study found the same in participants' motivation to share the story of their family and spoke of experiencing feelings of pride. This further supports Huvila's (2008) suggestion that the term *user* should also include those who engage in participatory events; these findings suggest that the participants are characteristically similar to the more traditional users that Yakel described.

5.1.2. Personal archiving

Some participants were motivated to attend the event as a way to relieve a burden through preservation—this concurs with Kirk and Sellen's (2010) findings that individuals reported engaging in personal archiving as a way to forget. In that study, the motivation was relief from the burden of preservation. In contrast to forgetting is remembering. McKemmish's (1996) seminal article "Evidence of Me," described personal archiving behaviour and its associations with memory and identity. Participant Dub1.4 spoke of engaging in genealogy because she wanted to leave a record. The loss of this participant's father appears to motivate her desire to

leave a record. It is also similar to Kirk and Sellen's finding that remembering is framed as a duty and that participants engaged in personal archiving to fulfil this duty.

While remembering is commonly juxtaposed with forgetting, this was not the case in these findings or in existing archives literature. Harris (1999) reminded archivists that people keep records for more than just the purpose of evidence and that remembering and forgetting were not necessarily opposites and are intertwined. Previous literature has also explored the ways in which archival collections leave out records or give preference to certain records over others in their appraisal strategies and archival processing (Cook, 2013). Yet, forgetting is usually framed collectively (as in reference to collective memory) and not at the individual level. As several participants in this study spoke of forgetting as a way of releasing a personal burden, this might be an interesting avenue for archives to pursue in future participatory projects: Promoting archives in their role of helping individuals to forget (in relation to personal unburdening), rather than to remember.

5.1.3. Similarities with traditional archives users

Characteristic C, find out more, is closely aligned with information seeking and is similar to the traditional concept of the typical archives user—someone who seeks archival resources to learn more about the past, be it their personal past or the past in general. Concerning this motivation, Yaker's (2004) work again applies, given her finding that family historians seek information from archives in order to seek meaning and connect with their family.

Motivation to learn more about one's self or a possession is not new to the information professions, though this motivation has not been explored widely in the vast research literature on information seeking. It may be useful for institutions to consider a participatory event as an information seeking exercise. For participants motivated to attend the collection day because of

the desire to discover more information about their object, collection day attendance could be considered similar to the collecting habit of seeking out information (Case, 2009). It may be of use for information professionals to recognise that collection days may be of use as information seeking activities and could be marketed as such, something that was not emphasised in previous literature.

5.2. Individual versus communal benefit: Participatory archives initiatives

Archivists' motivations to develop participatory archives initiatives may rest in the desire to pluralise collections, which can be understood as a public good; however, they should be cautioned not to assume that participants share the same motivations. Previous studies have found that participatory archives initiatives were most useful as a method to pluralise collections and imply that recruitment should entice participants to share their voices as a way to engage in curatorial responsibilities as a civic call (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). However, the present study findings suggest that attempts to motivate individuals to participate based on "good for society" language and purpose may not resonate. Participants were more likely to speak of individual benefits as motivating their engagement. Shilton and Srinivasan described the benefit of using a participatory model as a public good.

We believe this process [participatory appraisal and arrangement] can help build culturally relevant records repositories while enabling marginalized communities to share their experiences with a wider public. By broadening their traditional tools to actively engage marginalized communities in the preservation process, archivists can preserve local knowledge and create representative, empowered archives. (p. 87)

In this example, engaging marginalised communities is situated as a public good and as something archivists should aim to achieve using participatory methods. Further to this point, participatory archiving is justified for its ability to empower additional voices beyond that of the individual archivist.

Participatory archiving asks that these [archivist's choices about appraisal] be made explicit and transparent, to further the understanding of the ontologies behind the collection and to let the creator own the choices they have made, ensuring that they speak with their own voices, and empower their representation into the future. (p. 101)

However, Shilton and Srinivasan provide little evidence that the marginalised communities to which they refer might *want* to engage in the participatory process as a civic duty to pluralise collections, or even how pluralising collections will benefit the participants on an individual level. The authors listed benefits for the archival collection and society in general, not the participant.

Study findings also contradict the assumption that individuals engage because of altruistic, intrinsic motivation. Eveleigh (2017) showed that previous literature on the topic described participatory initiatives as an altruistic good: “Their [participant’s] motivation is also assumed to be primarily altruistic in that their participation is expected to benefit others as well as (or rather than) themselves” (p. 13). In this example altruism is aligned with public good in that the result is meant primarily to benefit the public, not the individual. Eveleigh also highlighted the point that Huvila (2008) appeared to assume that individuals would be motivated to participate in his decentralised curation, in which “the curatorial responsibilities are shared between archivists (or information managers) and the participants in an archive” (p. 25). This suggested that participants *wanted* to volunteer to engage in curatorial responsibilities over time. As they would receive no payment, it had to have been assumed that the volunteers would be intrinsically motivated to engage in this civic duty (Eveleigh, 2017). While participants in the Inspiring Ireland study wanted to share their story as a way of gaining influence over the 1916 narrative and share corresponding evidence to support their point of view to be recorded by the DRI, no participants spoke of interest in sustained participation. Further, some study participants were engaging in a one-off activity in order to free themselves from the burden of preservation. They

would be unlikely to engage in shared responsibility—they were most interested in handing the responsibility (of preservation) over to another party (the DRI).

As Huvila (2008), Eveleigh (2017) and Rolan (2016) have suggested, different user groups would be motivated to engage in different forms of participation, yet previous literature has not empirically found this to be true. It is possible that historians could view it as a professional duty to engage in shared curatorial responsibilities, that genealogists would help transcribe historical documents over time in pursuit of their hobby, and that American South Asian community groups would be able to connect archivists with volunteers interested in conducting appraisal work (in the example provided by Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). However, previous literature has not provided details as to whether these proposed user groups were directly queried about their desire to engage in activities and at what level, so it would be unwise to assume that they would engage in a sustained manner, to support Huvila's (2008) or Shilton and Srinivasan's (2007) model.

5.3. Individual versus communal benefit: The justification of cultural heritage institutions in society

Setting aside recruitment for participatory archives initiatives, the finding that individuals were motivated to participate in the Inspiring Ireland event as a result of perceived individual benefit may also be an indicator that cultural heritage institutions could re-evaluate the ways in which they justify their role in society as a public good. Shera (1949) is largely regarded as one of the first scholars in library studies to have identified the library's role in supporting democracy—a public good. This has been extended to archives and museums over the years, in their attempts to pluralise collections as a way to support democracy. However, technology increasingly allows

for individuals to personalise day to day life in the media they consume and to manipulate through apps the ways in which they engage with libraries, archives, and museums. Therefore, it may be useful to consider whether Shera's argument that libraries (as well as archives and museums) exist as a public good needs to be reimagined in an era of personal technology and personalisation. This kind of technology could be encouraging an expectation of libraries, archives, and museums to exist for personal benefit versus public good.

Future work could explore the juxtaposition of communal versus individual benefits in the context of funding and impact. The concept that pluralising archives is a public good is an extension of the ways in which many libraries, archives, and museums attempt to justify their role in society and therefore, justify public and charitable funding. However, if the findings from this study were used to develop a study of public motivations to support, not just engage with, cultural heritage institutions, similar findings may result. This could lead to further explorations of ways to justify financial support as well as an examination of the ways in which cultural heritage institutions measure and communicate impact.

6. Conclusion

Use of archives is evolving. Huvila (2008) and Eveleigh (2017) demonstrated that fact in their suggestions that the concept of use be expanded to include user participation. It has long been acknowledged that archives users are not limited to historians and genealogists who visit a reading room or visit a static archives website on a desktop computer. Technological advances in modern society have contributed to shifting user preferences and interests. User participation is evidence of this shift, but more work is needed to further investigate how newly identified preferences such as influence, personalisation, and emphasis on perceived individual benefit can coexist with the established motivations of identity, evidence, and context in order to provide

direction for a new model of user driven archives. In addition, more work is needed about different kinds of participation. It is understandable that the participation of a long time volunteer will differ from that of an attendee at a one time event, and research needs to address this. Future work could also use the findings of this study to develop practical solutions for motivating participation in participatory projects. The more that is learned about individuals' motivations to access, use, and generally engage with archival collections in any way, the more can be done to guide future policies for work in the field.

7. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Natalie Harrower and Caroline McGee of the Inspiring Ireland 1916 project team for providing access to the collection day events and research assistants Odile Dumbleton and Joe Schuldt for their assistance with interviewing.

8. Funding

This work was funded by a 2015 UCD College of Social Sciences and Law Seed grant.

References

- Brady, S. (2017 9 April). Vandals attack 1916 Rising remembrance wall in Glasnevin Cemetery. *Irish Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/vandals-attack-1916-rising-remembrance-wall-in-glasnevin-cemetery-35607838.html>
- Case, D. O. (2009). Serial collecting as leisure, and coin collecting in particular. *Library Trends*, 57, 729–752.
- Caswell, M. (2014). Community-centered collecting: Finding out what communities want from community archives. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 51(1), 1-9.
- Cocciolo, A., & Rabina, D. (2013). Does place affect user engagement and understanding? Mobile learner perceptions on the streets of New York. *Journal of Documentation*, 69, 98–120.

- Cook, T. (2013). Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms. *Archival science*, 13(2-3), 95-120.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Cushing, A. L. (2013). "It's stuff that speaks to me": Exploring the characteristics of digital possessions. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64, 1723-1734.
- Cushing, A. L., & Cowan, B. (2017). Walk1916: Exploring non-research user access to and use of digital surrogates via a mobile walking tour app. *Journal of Documentation* 73, 917-933.
- Digital Repository of Ireland (2016a). *Inspiring Ireland 1916: Weaving public and private narratives*. [Pamphlet]. Dublin, Ireland: DRI.
- Digital Repository of Ireland (2016b). *Mission*. Retrieved April 19, 2017 from <http://www.dri.ie/about>
- Digital Repository of Ireland (2016c). *Our project*. Retrieved from <http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie/about/our-project>
- Duff, W. M., & Johnson, C. A. (2002). Accidentally found on purpose: Information-seeking behavior of historians in archives. *The Library Quarterly*, 72, 472-496.
- Duff, W., & Johnson, C. (2003). Where is the list with all the names? Information-seeking behavior of genealogists. *American Archivist*, 66, 79-95.
- Eveleigh, A. (2015). *Crowding out the archivist? Implications of online user participation for archival theory and practice*. London, UK: University College London.
- Eveleigh, A. (2017). Participatory archives. In H. MacNeil & T. Eastwood (Eds.), *Currents of archival thinking* (2nd ed., pp. 299–326). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Flinn, A. (2007). Community histories, community archives: Some opportunities and challenges. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 28(2), 151–176.
- Harley, J. M., Poitras, E. G., Jarrell, A., Duffy, M. C., & Lajoie, S. P. (2016). Comparing virtual and location-based augmented reality mobile learning: Emotions and learning outcomes. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 1–30.
- Harris, V. (1999). Law, evidence and electronic records: Strategic perspective from the global periphery. *South African Archives Journal*, 41, 3-19.
- Huvila, I. (2008). Participatory archive: Toward decentralised curation, radical user orientation and broader contextualisation of records management. *Archival Science*, 8, 15–36.
- Kirk, D. S., & Sellen, A. (2010). On human remains: Values and practice in the home archiving of cherished objects. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 17(3). <https://doi.org/DOI.10.1145/1806923.1806924>
- Krause, M., & Yakel, E. (2007). Interaction in virtual archives: The polar bear expedition digital collections next generation finding aid. *American Archivist*, 70, 282–314.
- Liew, C. L. (2014). Participatory cultural heritage: A tale of two institutions' use of social media. *D-Lib Magazine*, 20(3/4). doi:10.1045/march2014-liew
- McGee, C., & Harrower, N. (2017). Inspiring Ireland: Building digital history, making shared memory. *Éire-Ireland*, 52(1), 303-320.
- McKemmish, S. (1996). Evidence of me. *Archives and Manuscripts*, 24(1), 28–45.
- O'Halloran, C. (2015, February 21). Easter Rising centenary should be 'shameless celebration,' says UCD professor. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from

- <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/easter-rising-centenary-should-be-shameless-celebration-says-ucd-professor-1.2112755>
- Rolan, G. (2016). Agency in the archive: A model for participatory recordkeeping. *Archival Science*, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-016-9267-7>
- Shera, J. H. (1949). *Foundations of the public library: The origins of the public library movement in New England, 1629-1855*. Brooklyn, NY: Shoe String Press.
- Shilton, K., & Srinivasan, R. (2007). Participatory appraisal and arrangement for multicultural archival collections. *Archivaria*, 63, 87–101.
- Theimer, K. (2011). What is the meaning of archives 2.0? *American Archivist*, 74, 58–68.
- Yakel, E. (2002). Listening to users. *Archival Issues*, 26, 111-127.
- Yakel, E. (2004). Seeking information, seeking connections, seeking meaning: Genealogists and family historians. *Information Research*, 10(1). Retrieved from <http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper205.html>
- Yakel, E., & Torres, D. (2003). AI: Archival intelligence and user expertise. *American Archivist*, 66, 51-78.