Resisting digital archive fever: a critical investigation into the management of QTIPoC cultural heritage in the digital environment

Melissa Steiner
January 2017
Abstract

Increasingly, tools of digital information management are being used to preserve and make accessible the cultural heritage of marginalised groups traditionally excluded from mainstream cultural heritage institutions, such as LGBTQ and communities of colour. Alongside the explosion of digital collections, critics have begun to question the extent to which these technologies are being employed to challenge the perpetuation of oppressive traditional archival practices based on dominant archival epistemologies. Recent examples of the inappropriate use of digital information technologies with collections sourced from marginalised communities have seen the structural inequalities experienced by LGBTQ and people of colour communities intersecting with ethical and legal issues produced within the digital environment. This study investigates discourses relating to this intersection through analysis of online documentation and interviews with five London-based archivists, para-archivists and Library and Information Science professionals from the British Library, the Bishopsgate Institute, the National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives and the rukus! archive. Particular attention is paid to queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPOC) collections and the impact of intersectionality on information practices. Critical discourse analysis combined with a queer of colour critique was used to construct a range of themes constructed from the texts, which include the relationships between cultural heritage institutions with community groups; the interplay between ethics and the law and digital information technologies; the ephemerality of the QTIPOC archive; and strategies of control that can be employed by QTIPOC communities over their own cultural heritage. Many of these themes were salient for a number of the institutions involved in the study, and as such, they may provide a basis for future research which could contribute to ethical guidance for cultural heritage institutions working with QTIPOC collections in the digital environment.
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Introduction

‘Who’s archiving and why, and for whom?’ (Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski, 2014, p.115)

This quote is taken from an article by feminist archivists and activists Yula Burin and Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski in which they identify the urgent need for investigations into the intersections of ‘race, diversity and archival education’ (p. 118) in the United Kingdom. They argue that the perspectives of Black women have been excluded from mainstream British archival discourse, and by extension British history, contributing to marginalisation. They also describe the process of archiving one’s own cultural history as a means to ‘heal and be empowered’ (p. 118), facilitating the connection of present struggles with those of Black feminists who have gone before, connections too important to be left in the hands of others to narrate or potentially ignore. The quote focuses implicitly on power: who “gets” to archive collections; who gets to name the documents within, and by extension construct the histories and identities of the subjects of the archive; who benefits from and who is disempowered by this work?

Though Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski specifically focus on Black women in the UK, their critique and “call to arms” inspired the research questions underpinning my study which seeks to investigate the ethical practises around the management of primary source collections from queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPOC) communities in the UK. I wish to ask similar questions about the power structures forming the basis of relationships between cultural heritage institutions and donor communities/grassroots archivists from marginalised communities, specifically how these power structures intersect with aspects of the digital information environment.

Two experiences I had both “in real life” and online inspired this study. The first was attending a series of events called Queer Black Spaces (QBS), hosted by the Equiano Centre at University College London between 2013-2015. At QBS academics, artists, activists and archivists presented and performed work exploring Black LGBTQ identities in the UK. One of these presenters was Ajamu, co-founder of the rukus! archive, a collection documenting Black British LGBT life, whom I later interviewed as part of my research. Often drawing on
historical research, many of the participants at QBS explored their encounters with cultural heritage institutions (archives, libraries, galleries and museums). Frequently, these encounters were described as fraught due to multiple barriers to access and use of the collections held within. Many of these barriers related to limitations inherent in traditional, physical spaces intersecting with various structural inequalities experienced by QTIPoCs, for example inadequate cataloguing and description based on dominant cultural discourses, rendering retrieval of information about QTIPoC histories difficult (La Tierra, 2008), as well as more prosaic realities such as obstructive, uninformed staff and esoteric rules of entry. If one subscribes to Butler’s (2009) belief in ‘the capacity of archival memory, heritage and certain modes of representation to bring comfort, cure and healing to situations of conflict, containment, displacement and exile’ (p. 58), then it should be a point of concern for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals that communities experiencing marginalisation struggle to access their own cultural heritage from institutions ostensibly acting as custodians for this material.

The second incentive for this research was the acknowledgement that though many of the barriers described by QBS participants related to processes tied up with physical cultural heritage institutions, the digital environment, while having the potential to challenge marginalising traditional information practises, is not an automatic panacea to these problems. Kim (2015) describes the democratising potential of the online environment when he talks of ‘digital affordances’ capacity to better achieve the democratic ideals of inclusion and diversity’ (p. 24). However, he points out that it is not enough to assume that digital information technologies are automatically more democratic due to their ready availability and ease of use; consideration of intersections with sociopolitical issues is vital to ensure that digital archives do not perpetuate the same oppressive practises as traditional archives; we must be wary of ‘digital archive fever’ (p. 1).

I encountered an example of the mismatch between digital information technologies and, in this case, structural inequalities affecting LGBTQ communities via social media in early 2016. The US company Reveal Digital digitises primary source material provided by libraries who do not have the infrastructure to do so themselves. These digitised collections are provided open access (OA) on the Web. The “Independent Voices” project focuses on alternative
press, and as part of this, the lesbian pornographic magazine *On Our Backs* (*OOB*), published between 1984-2006, was digitised. One of my Facebook friends who had contributed to the print magazine posted about this and her post garnered much excitement from other lesbians in her network who were looking forward to accessing this important, historical queer periodical, physical copies of which are difficult to locate, particularly if one does not live in the US or the UK. My Facebook friend swiftly followed her initial post up with a link to a blogpost by a Canadian feminist librarian, Tara Robertson, who had published a critique of the way in which Reveal Digital went about the process (Robertson, 2016a), focusing specifically on the fact the collection was OA and that the subjects of the pornographic pictures, many of whom, 30 years on, are now living lives very different to those at the time they took part in *OOB*, and had not been asked for permission. Robertson questioned the application of the Creative Commons license (Robertson, 2016b) and argued that as a collection of pornography from recent history, there needed to be consultation that went beyond simple copyright clearance. Robertson’s argument resides in the fact that the online environment is not the same as the physical, and LIS professionals need to be aware of the ethics around these intersections. A few months after Robertson began her critique of the project, Reveal Digital redacted *OOB* citing the need for further investigation of the issues Robertson and others raised (Reveal Digital, 2016). A range of opinions began appearing on my various social media feeds. These ranged from a recognition of the importance of privacy and consent for online OA projects, particularly when marginalised groups are involved; the potential digital technologies offer for wider access to previously suppressed LGBTQ material, and the need for further discussion around the ethics of digital remediation.
Screenshot of tweet calling for discussion around the digitisation of *On Our Backs* by a profession of women’s history and digital culture (Source: @ProfessMoravec)

Screenshot of a tweet by the Queer Zine Archive Project praising the digitisation of *On Our Backs* (Source: @qzap)

Discourse revolved around what Campbell and Cowan (2016) describe as the ‘paradox of privacy’, wherein data protection is traditionally a core value in LIS, however in the ever-changing digital environment ‘privacy and confidentiality must be negotiated in new and complex information contexts’ (p. 499). LGBTQ communities have particular needs around privacy, as liberal gay rights activism urges subjects to “come out of the closet”, while at the same time the political climate around homophobia remains unpredictable, and so ‘queer users enact seemingly paradoxical impulses toward both secrecy and self-revelation’ (p. 501).

Experiencing these two flash points led to the development of this project. I became interested in the ways in which aspects of the digital LIS environment interacted with the sociopolitical conditions of marginalised communities who are subjects and donors of archival collections, and the kinds of ethical practises cultural heritage institutions in the UK were enacting in this context. I particularly wanted to investigate the management of QTIPOC collections because literature that I had encountered up to that point tended to examine issues around sexuality or race (or other protected characteristics) separately, never the intersection of a range of identities, a point often raised at QBS events. I identify as a queer person of colour (QPOC) and there are many in my social network who identify similarly. However, I was initially hesitant to approach this research utilising the concept of
“QTIPOC” as a basis for my investigations as though it was a monolithic identity. Jay Bernard who participated in the first QBS states, ‘although I understand and use it, [it] is not a term that I identify with. I am black. I’m not a person of colour. Coloured is an Americanism that elides the racial dynamics among non-whites’ (Bernard, Balani and Gupta, 2014, p. 33). Furthermore, QPOC and QTIPOC are terms that I have mostly encountered via social media, for example, it is used as shorthand to label Facebook groups, providing a nebulous umbrella descriptor of the kinds of people the group includes. For this reason, I was not sure how meaningful the term was outside of my own social network, nor whether it would be possible to analyse collections pertaining to this identity in an LIS context. The acronym of “QTIPOC” contains within it a multitude of class and gender experiences, histories, oppressions and political contexts, and so I was cautious as to how helpful would it be for me to discuss collections may broadly fall under the moniker of “QTIPOC” as though they were analogous, potentially masking particular social and political conditions. I have no wish to “flatten” experiences with my research.

Nevertheless, this study utilises what Brockenbrough (2015) describes as a queer of colour critique (QOC) to analyse structures of power in the digital LIS environment. This methodology is characterised by a ‘racialized engagement with queerness’ (p. 30) and can be found in research drawn from a spectrum of queer communities such as Asian American, Puerto Rican, South Asian, Dominican, Black and Indigenous. A QOC critique ‘differentiates strategies of resistance’ (p. 30) by focusing on the lived experiences of QTIPOCs, operating to avoid the flattening of experiences within these different communities. Utilising a QOC critique I was conscious throughout my research that the context around one QTIPOC collection may be very different to that of another.

I am interested in the potential of digital archives to act as tools for social justice, or alternatively, ‘how certain archival actions contribute to, or sometimes impede, social equity and inclusion’ (Punzalan and Caswell, 2016, p. 37). As such, I have employed methodologies which allow me to investigate themes relating to power structures underpinning my topic.
Aims
As an early investigation into this relatively new area, my research does not begin from a fixed point, nor does it aim to end with a concrete theory. Formulated by the experiences mentioned above, and contextualised by poststructural, queer, critical race and feminist theories of the archive, I utilise constructivist grounded theory to identify a range of discourses around the intersection of digital information technologies with structural inequalities faced by marginalised communities, paying particular attention to QTIPoC communities. This may provide a basis for further research, and perhaps the eventual development of an ethical framework formulated from the perspective of QTIPoC communities which may be used by cultural heritage institutions managing digital QTIPoC collections.

Objectives
- To investigate a range of cultural heritage institutions in London holding collections sourced from QTIPoC, LGBTQ, people of colour (POC) or feminist communities, using semi-structured interviews and analysis of pre-existing online documentation.
- Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), identify a range of discourses in the texts relating to the intersections of the sociopolitical conditions of marginalised communities, and aspects of the digital information environment such as digitisation, OA, Creative Commons licensing, crowd-sourced metadata and social media.
- To compare themes constructed from individual cultural heritage institutions to identify cross overs and salient issues that may form the basis of the future construction of ethical guidelines for cultural heritage institutions.

This research begins with a review of the Literature, followed by an explanation of the Methodologies used, including the theoretical position and research strategies, and then an Analysis and Discussion of the results using CDA.
Literature Review

The “archival turn” describes a paradigmatic shift which has roots firmly in postmodernism. A critique of the traditional, positivist view of archives which posits them as neutral repositories of documental “evidence”, an underlying assumption of the archival turn is that there is ‘...no “Truth” to be found or protected in archives, but many truths, many voices, many perspectives, many stories’ (Cook, 2012, p. 110). There is an emphasis on self-reflexivity regarding the working practices of those using and thinking about archives, and rather than the content of the archives, it is the archive itself under scrutiny (Buchanan, 2011, p. 51).

Derrida’s seminal work *Archive Fever* (1996) is often cited as representative of the archival turn, ‘giving it theoretical stature’ (Stoler, 2009, p. 44). Not viewed so much as a text with practical usage in the everyday world of the information profession (though this thesis is written with the understanding that critical examinations of hegemonic assumptions in LIS has a direct impact on ethical practise), *Archive Fever* is seen as a text that ‘...has influenced much of the archival discourse outside of library and information science’ (Manoff, 2004, p.11) including queer and postcolonial theories of the archive, which, as shall be discussed further, provide vital frameworks for considering the functions, structures and processes of QTIPOC archives.

Derrida’s “fever” describes our ‘need of archives...It is to burn with a passion...It is to run after the archive, even if there’s too much of it...It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive...’ (Derrida, 1996, p. 91). Derrida theorises the archive as an apparatus which operates to maintain structures of power, with archive fever serving to reiterate this power. Derrida asserts that ‘...effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation' (p. 4). Harris (2011) further emphasises the archive's implicit political function by deeming the action of opening it up '...to those alienated, or estranged, in it and by it...' as activism and nothing short of justice (p. 104).

Predating *Archive Fever* by more than twenty-years, Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) asserts '[t]he archive is first the law of what can be said' (p. 129). Far from
the archive being neutral, the epistemology of the archival process itself produces discursive structures, and so ’...defines at the outset the system of its enunciability’ (p. 129, emphasis in original), legitimising particular knowledges over others. Based on Foucault’s theory, archiving non-traditional documents which often form the backbone of QTIPOC collections presents a challenge to dominant discourses about which informational objects are valid for preservation. Rodríguez (Arondekar et al., 2015) explores the ways in which African Americans and Native Americans have historically been erased or misrepresented within the official state archives, and contends that ’...slave narratives, rumba (Afro-Cuban rhythms and dance), folktales, corridos (Mexican ballad or folksong), and porn also constitute archival forms of knowledge’ (p. 226).

Similarly, Cvetkovich (2003) explains that queer communities ’...frequently produce minor or experimental genres’ (p. 8) due to erasure and exclusion from public cultures. She argues that queer archives form ’...the material instantiation of Derrida's deconstructed archive; they are composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history’ (p. 268). Her text An Archive of Feelings (2003) bases its premise on the everyday lived experience of queer people as producing the often ephemeral “documents” (such as zines, pornography and performance) that make up the queer archive.

These alternative “documents” widen the discursive scope of the archive, while their frequently private nature and collective authorship should signal a warning that traditional archival processes must be examined afresh; it cannot be “business as usual” with this material. The often emotional and political conditions under which queer archival material was formed – as Topher Campbell, co-founder of the rukus! archive states ’[p]eople have died, or been killed, or been forgotten or ignored’ (Ajamu, Campbell, Stevens, 2009, p. 283) - has direct implications for decisions made about digital remediation. Cultural heritage institutions must ’take seriously the affective stakes in the process of moving between print and digital’ (Brouwer and Licona, 2016, p. 72).

Building on Foucault and Derrida’s examinations of power and knowledge production, postcolonial theorist Spivak examines the imperial archive. Her influential essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) lays bare silences that result from the absence of the “subaltern” in the colonial archive. Spivak, however, critiques the notion that this muting may be
rectified by a straightforward “additive” approach, effectively “recovering” the subaltern's voice and assimilating it into the colonial narrative. Spivak's ‘...provocative fusion of critique and archival research gen[erating] alternative accounts of colonialism’ (Arondekar, et al., 2015, p. 219) has been influential for queer theorists seeking to challenge the production of heteronormative discourse produced through the archive as well as LIS professionals working with indigenous archives.

An example of the use of a postcolonial archival epistemology can be seen in the digitisation of indigenous material in the Pei te Hurinui Jones collection in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2011. The advisory group was formed through 'established professional and iwi [tribal] networks' (Anderson, 2012, p. 119). The intersection between intellectual property and indigenous cultural heritage came under scrutiny, specifically as manifested in a networked environment. It was noted that under Western intellectual property law the ‘...intrinsic connection and relationship with [Māori] cultural heritage and how they collectively operate as a community' (Anderson, 2012, p. 77) is erased. The issue was not about whether digitisation should be undertaken or not - the advisory group acknowledged the value of digitisation for access and preservation - but rather how kaupapa and tikanga Māori (Māori strategies and protocols) could underpin the project, centering the Māori worldview and ensuring the communities from where the collection originated remained full participants in the process (p. 134).

Butler (2009) addresses the issue of absence in collective memory, drawing upon postcolonial theorist Said's (2000), concept of a 'right to a remembered presence' (p. 184) to examine the use of digital archives to restore cultural history to the Palestinian diaspora. The deliberate erasure of Palestinian history, illustrated with the infamous quote from former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir 'there is no such thing as a Palestinian' (Butler, 2009, p. 58), is a blatant archival silence which Butler argues can be redressed through different strands of heritage and memory work. Butler pays particular attention to open access (OA) archives accessible on the Web, such as www.palestineremembered.com, citing the medium as ‘...a crucial means by which communities can gain a sense of cohesion and maintain communication' (p. 65).
Paradoxically, challenging gaps in the archives has led some theorists to examine the utilisation of silence as a choice by marginalised groups. Removing oneself from the archive may be viewed as counter-intuitive given the struggles of these groups to be heard. Indeed, “Silence=Death” was the slogan used by Act Up, the gay activist AIDS coalition group formed in the late 1980s (Smith and Gruenfeld, 1998), a statement directly linking the suppression of information with the threat to human life. Similar gay rights activism tends towards the breaking of silence or increased visibility, e.g. the concept of “coming out of the closet”, and perhaps it seems retrograde to advocate for anything other than this position given advances made to LGBT civil rights as a result of this activism. However, Brockenbrough (2015) maintains ‘[b]y bringing race, class, and culture to bear on politics of queer visibility, a QOC [queer of colour] critique casts insightful doubts on the liberatory effects of coming out for non-White queer subjects’ (p.37). He argues against the binary of visibility/invisibility, maintaining that many QTIPOC groups utilise strategies which are erased or misunderstood when viewed solely through the dominant paradigm of white gay activism, rather than a queer of colour epistemology that centres the lived experience of QTIPOC people (p. 30).

Parallels can be seen between strategic choices made by QTIPOCs about “outness” and the “openness” of cultural heritage. Carter (2006) asserts that while ‘[u]nnatural silences must be combated by the archivist...natural silences, those where the marginalized can assert their own power, must be respected’ (p. 228). The decision not to partake in the archive is a politicised one, and often ‘...forces active participation by the readers/listeners’ (Carter, 2006, p. 230). As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, ‘the expectations and assumptions of free and open access to information that is often embedded invisibly into networked technology’ (Srinivasan et al., 2009, pp. 162-163) are confounded by strategic silences in the digital archive, forcing the user to question the function of the archive in the production of knowledge.

Echoing Spivak's critique of 'the recovery model of archival research' (Arondekar, 2005 p. 13), Thi Nguyen (2015) cautions against the perfunctory inclusion of marginal voices in the archive as as a kind of 'course correction' (p.13) to hegemonic archives and the narratives they evoke. She argues that this action amounts to nothing more than Derrida's “archive
fever”, that frenzied, often unthinking impulse to archive. Memory institutions may use “diverse voices” as “gap fillers”, without exploring the conditions under which the material was obtained or exploring the marginalisation and oppression that led to gaps existing in the first place. Furthermore, Thi Nguyen wonders to what extent is the 'minor threat' that marginalised voices potentially pose to the dominant discourse is defused by being 'enlisted to enhance a normative principle' (p. 13), and implies that not participating and effectively creating a silence may in fact be a more powerful critique.

Developments in digital information technologies have heightened the “archive fever”. While digital archiving offers new potential for access and preservation, the ready availability of these tools has also led to what Kim (2015, p. 3) describes as ‘techno-utopianism’, the uncritical embracing of technology as panacea to the “problems” of physical archives. The growing number of digital collections, many freely available on the Web, have become the basis for study and experimentation by digital humanists, scholars who utilise 'computational methods that are trying to understand what it means to be human' (Terras, 2014). Though much of this work is producing exciting and important new ideas, critics from within the field warn against 'the wielding of computation and code as instrumental, socially neutral or benevolent, and theoretically transparent...' (Bianco, 2012). There is a drive to view the building blocks of the digital environment (i.e. code) as operating in similar ways to those structuring physical archives which have been critiqued by postmodernists as reproducing the power dynamics of knowledge production.

Kim's (2015) analysis of a variety of digital humanities projects highlight this lack of neutrality. He investigates the intersection of technology and knowledge production instantiated in digital archives, specifically how these collections can be utilised to represent marginalised racial and ethnic identities. Kim points to the convergence of the postmodern and postcolonial critiques of the archive and the shift towards the digital as potentially complimentary, with the former theorising the democratisation of the archive and the latter offering the tools for doing so. However, he states that the extent to which this democratisation will be successful is dependent on how thoroughly the convergence of these paradigms '...accommodates those “minoritarian” histories and voices that have been largely silenced in the previous archival era' (p. 4). He emphasises that epistemological
assumptions around the construction of the archive must be challenged. Echoing the critiques of archival “recovery” by Thi Nguyen (2015) and Spivak (1988), Kim argues that it is not enough to merely add a few more “voices” to diversify a collection, nor can it be assumed digital technology is intrinsically democratic. For democratisation to occur and for non-essentialised and nuanced racial identities to be represented, it is essential to ‘...explore possibilities for various digital tools and methods that are beyond simply instrumental in the telling of the “real” histories by the “people”’ (Kim, 2015, p. 27).

One example Kim explores is the 2013 Claremont University Consortium project using the content management system (CMS) Scalar to contextualise and highlight the racial assumptions made by *The North American Indian (1907-1930)*. This photographic archive compiled by white American Edward C. Curtis influenced early popular perceptions of Native Americans and was digitised and made an OA collection by the Northwestern University in 2004. The collection is controversial due to the way it ‘Others’ its subjects and was created through a colonial lens; tribal communities have no ownership over it. This goes against the recommendations of ‘Protocols for Native American Archival Materials’ (Kim, 2015, p.75) which argues for the right of sovereignty of Native Americans over their own cultural heritage, and cautions that the use of OA is not appropriate for some materials.

Screenshot of *The North American Indian* digital archive, showing linearly organised content
(Source: Northwestern University Digital Library Collections)
The Claremont University Consortium did not wish to produce another digital archive that would be encountered by the user in a linear way, wherein contextualising material or contemporary critiques of the original archive would be accessed separately from the archival material itself; this would merely replicate the pre-existing digital edition. Instead, Scalar allowed the team to embed multimedia supplementary material (e.g. a video created by a scholar of photographic methods of the era which would help users critique the images) as the main access points to The North American Indian archival material. Thanks to '...Scalar’s ability to link related media files in a manner that fundamentally impacts navigation' (Kim, 2015, p. 85) users of the archive can follow several directions/contextualisations to discover more about an image. This fosters exploration into the power dynamics intrinsic to a digital archive such as The North American Indian, and embodies Punzalan and Caswell’s (2016) recommendation to 'create avenues of meaningful access without further promoting the uneven power dynamic that inspired the creation or collection of records of certain communities or groups' (p. 34). The methodology runs counter to the idea that digitised archives are first and foremost about preservation of the original source material. Even access, that other archival concept that goes hand in hand with preservation is problematised as Kim states that the '...differentiated access through [Scalar] points out that “open access” in and of itself is not the point of arrival but rather the point of departure' (p. 107).
Screenshot of *The Performing Archive: Curtis + “The Vanishing Race”* showing embedded supplementary material and multiple options for discovery (Source: Wernimont et al.)

Withey (University of Kansas IDRH, 2015) suggests 'the slowing down' of archival practices as an antidote to the kind of digital archive fever that leads to indiscriminate and inappropriate digital remediation, an approach also advocated by Campbell and Cowan (2016). Withey encourages the critical engagement of digital humanists with processes of curation and collection – how has the source material come to be in the digital archive? How is it being used and re-purposed? Withey draws parallels between the Western archivists's uncritical “discovery”, collection and display of indigenous materials in a digital environment and the 'colonial collecting paradigm' (University of Kansas IDRH, 2015).

Pointing to the unreflective love affair of many digital humanists and information scientists, (and I would argue, well-meaning radical librarians), with the concept of OA, Withey advocates for a re-analysis of what constitutes “public good”. If marginalised communities have protocols around cultural heritage that differ from the dominant discourse in LIS, who benefits from the display of their materials? If, as Withey argues, historically the concept of the “public” has not been welcoming to indigenous groups and ethnic minorities (University of Kansas IDRH, 2015) how “democratic” is OA? It must be determined whose gaze is being served and what politics of representation are being espoused with the digital archive in question. Withey argues that ‘the vocabulary of censorship and open access actually limits
our ability to see different ethical systems at play within archival practices, curatorial workflows and modes of viewing' (University of Kansas IDRH, 2015).

At a fundamental level the pro-OA position assumes 'access to information is a universal good' (Srinivasan, et al., 2009, p. 171), and as Withey says, opposers to this stance are often framed as the enemy to progressive ideas of knowledge sharing (University of Kansas IDRH, 2015). However, Withey describes an online learning space which seeks to provide alternatives to the binary discussion of “open” versus “closed” access. Digital Dynamics Across Cultures is an interactive tool that was created in collaboration with community members from Warumungu Aboriginal community in Tennant Creek, Australia. This digital archive contains information about places significant to Warumungu people, but embeds the viewing protocols of this community within the digital architecture of the tool itself. As stated on the landing page of the database, 'access to certain elements of Warumungu culture is restricted. As such, you might come across images, videos or other content that have been partially or completely blocked from view' (Christen and Cooney, 2006).

Navigating through the database, the user will occasionally encounter information redacted in an obvious fashion (such as masking tape placed across videos or images). The user is then encouraged to explore why this is the case, and in doing so, experiences a potentially more meaningful and instructional digital tool than one merely focussed on preserving “authentic” snippets of Warumungu life. The user is also forced to question more deeply the power dynamics around the access to information.

Screenshot of Digital Dynamics Across Cultures showing redacted content (Source: Christen and Cooney)
**Digital Dynamics Across Cultures** went on to inspire the creation of open source CMS **Mukurtu** which is customisable, allowing indigenous groups from all over the world to embed their own protocols for accessing information directly into the structure of the CMS. The message to communities who may wish to use Mukurtu is 'you are the steward of your own cultural heritage' (Mukurtu, 2016), addressing best practice concerns raised by those working in the field of indigenous cultural heritage.

While Mukurtu is innovative and unique, as McPherson (2012) reminds us, computing history and social movements have always been deeply intertwined. She points out that while it is common knowledge that computing technology arose out of the needs of the Cold War era, we need to remember this was also the Civil Rights era. McPherson urges digital humanists to incorporate race into their investigations which '...does not mean that we should “add” race to our analysis in a modular way, neatly tacking it on, but that we must understand and theorize the deep imbrications of race and digital technology even when our objects of analysis ...seem not to “be about” race at all' (p. 34).

Despite race and sexuality not being directly analogous, the condition of marginality in dominant LIS discourse is similar for people of colour and queer groups and demand investigations into the impact of digital archive fever. As such, research on ethical issues surrounding indigenous digital collections can offer useful insights for queer projects receiving similar digital treatment. The recent controversy surrounding the digitisation of the lesbian pornographic magazine **On Our Backs (OOB)** (published 1984-2006) by Reveal Digital is an example where ethical considerations around access in the digital environment were not considered as thoroughly as they might have been, and has led queer and feminist critics to question the assumption that ‘“all information wants to be free”’ (Sheffield, 2016, p. 581).

**Reveal Digital** is a company which digitises independent media and publishes it on the Web, taking its source material from a range of libraries who do not have the infrastructure to digitise their own collections. Their 'Independent Voices' project seeks to digitise alternative publications such as those produced by feminist, LGBTQ and Black and Hispanic groups. Their decision to digitise OOB and make it OA was met with the criticism from feminist librarian Tara Robertson that 'consenting to a porn shoot that would be in a queer print
magazine is a different thing to consenting to have your porn shoot be available online' (Robertson, 2016a). Robertson points out that women who were photographed in the early issues of *OOB* agreed to do so in a time when the future possibilities of the internet, with its culture of digital mashups, sharing, surveillance and social media, were unfathomable. Robertson argues that given the ongoing prevalence of homophobia, more care should have been taken to ensure the women depicted, some of whom are now living lives very different to what they were at the time they agreed to take part in a work of lesbian pornography, consented to their images being made available online.

Though Reveal Digital obtained the rights to digitise from the copyright holder (Reveal Digital, 2016) and therefore were operating in accordance with copyright law, Robertson (2016b) discovered some of the individual contracts with women who contributed to the magazine which clearly state that the images would be used one time only and only within the publication. Reveal Digital cite *Greenberg v. National Geographic Society* as a justification, the ruling from that case being that as long as the digitised material appears as it did in its original print context, the digitising organisation does not have to seek permission from individual contributors (Association of Research Libraries, 2008). This ruling takes as a given that the medium in which the content exists is neutral. Robertson's argument is that the digital context is exactly what should give the company pause for thought. She queries the application of the Creative Commons (CC) CC-BY attribution licence, which opens up the images of the womens' bodies for re-use in ways that were clearly not agreed to (Robertson 2016b), and which I would argue, could see images being reproduced outside of their original context (which would seem to contravene the *Greenberg v. National Geographic Society* ruling). Hathcock (2016) lends support to Robertson's criticism, stating 'this uncritical act of opening all things to all people is in and of itself an act of aggression and oppression'. Copyright law is adhered to, however, in a project that is ostensibly about preserving material created for social justice purposes by potentially vulnerable groups, surely ethics must also play a part? As Chenier (2015) reminds us, given the current political climate in which progressive rights for LGBTQ people thought to be unassailable in the West are under threat again, the acknowledgement that what is okay today might not be okay tomorrow is vital, as 'such political shifts cannot be anticipated' (p. 38).
Egan (2015), in discussing the copyright clearance procedures of the Cork LGBT Digital Archive also critiques the application of (Irish) copyright law as sole determinant of digitisation for an LGBTQ collection. However, she takes a different tack to the Reveal Digital commentators. Egan argues that because '[t]he prime focus of the legislation is on the protection of ownership and any accruing economic rights and benefits' (no page number), and the purpose of the Cork LGBT Digital Archive is non-economic and '...to make the history of this community more visible and accessible and to acknowledge the community’s contribution to social and political change in Ireland' (no page number), copyright law only serves to hinder the archive’s ability to act as a tool of social justice. Furthermore, Egan points out that much of the material that constitutes the archive was created with the intention of widespread distribution, for example informational posters and leaflets, and therefore the Cork LGBT Archive would be operating in line with the motivations of the creators in digitising and making the material OA. Despite this, Egan did seek permission from various LGBT organisations before digitising.
One of Robertson's (2016a) key contentions is that 'consent is a key feminist and legal concept', and implies that feminist practises should have been considered by Reveal Digital given the nature of OOB. Utilisation of feminist practise in conjunction with digitisation is in evidence at the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in New York. McKinney (2015) explores procedures taken by the LHA to digitise a box of pornographic photographs labelled "unprocessed 'porn'? And several snapshots" (p. 115) in which the subjects and photographers in many of the photos are unknown; donated by friends of the archives, these images hold stories that have been forgotten, or were never known' (p. 117).

Pornography is common to find in queer archives and is extremely important to the understanding of LGBTQ history including QTIPoC history (see for example, Ajamu, Campbell, Stevens, 2009), although as seen in the Reveal Digital example, it brings an abundance of ethical dilemmas for the archivist or librarian wishing to digitise it. McKinney cites '...the growing pressure of “queer liberalism”' (p. 117) which requires LGBTQ organisations to become more visible and “out” as an inducement to urgently consider ethics around the digital remediation of queer material. As McKinney discovered during her ethnographic study of the LHA’s procedures, decisions made about whether to digitise are deeply ethical, but also improvised. Photographs are considered on a case by case basis, with the archivists undertaking a self-reflexive approach to their roles and to the wider political context in which images of lesbians exist. Accompanying metadata is borne out of the ‘subjective feminist engagements' (p. 121) of the volunteers, and allows the category of “lesbian” to remain open to historical change. McKinney describes the process as ‘[m]oving with care, doing it yourself, deciding together and thinking about the intersecting values of multiple archives publics, past and present’ (p. 126), thus offering a resistance to hegemonic archival practices.

Utilisation of a feminist and community-based archival methodology is considered a necessity by the Digital Archives and Marginalized Communities project. The group, based in Canada, is currently working on the creation of the Sex Work Database, an archive of born digital and digitised material pertaining to grassroots activism, academic research and other media around sex work, including memorials of ‘missing and murdered women in sex work' (Ferris and Allard, 2016, p. 189) of which group Indigenous women are disproportionately represented (p. 194). The open source archiving software Zotero is used for the
management of records, while CMS Omeka is used for archiving (p. 191). The project is community led, with organisers taking cues from the sex work community who emphasise the need for differentiated access to the database so that some areas of information can be kept private. Strategic silences (Carter, 2006) are also honoured; as the project developed it was understood that some materials may have to "disappear"/be forgotten/drop out of public circulation' (Ferris and Allard 2016, p. 197) in situations where individuals may be under threat of harm. Ferris and Allard note that allowing these redactions and offering different levels of control to sex worker groups produced technological challenges whilst simultaneously strengthening the social justice aims of the project (p. 198). Zotero will only be used temporarily, again at the behest of the sex work community, 'because of the server's location in the United States; all information stored in the US is subject to US law, including the Patriot Act, which enables, among other things, wide scale digital surveillance and record-keeping by US law enforcement of private individual and group digital materials' (p. 191). Following the initial work, all records will be shifted to Omeka, where they will be stored on a Canadian server. Here is an example of the implications of the intersection of technology with structural oppression manifesting through the production of a digital archive.

The Sex Work Database is an overtly political project, 'deliberately assembling an anti-colonial feminist argument that highlights marginalized voices, and embraces principles of social justice and reciprocity' (Ferris and Allard, 2016, p. 193). As such, it is not surprising that attention has been paid to the political implications of the technology. However, Derrida's (1996) assertion that access to the archive - not just the material held within, but the systems constructing it - is the basis for democracy implies that the management of the cultural histories of marginalised groups is always political, with the potential for social justice. As demonstrated in examples such as the use of Mukurtu, the Sex Work Database and digitisation at the LHA, an emphasis on agency and control over one's own cultural history is deemed crucial for undermining dominant and oppressive archival epistemologies that have the potential to lead to disenfranchisement. Cook (2012) posits that the community or participatory archive paradigm is the logical next stage in archival history, stating '[i]n this new digital, political, and pluralistic universe, professional archivists need to transform themselves from elite experts behind institutional walls to becoming mentors,
facilitators, coaches, who work in the community to encourage archiving as a participatory process shared with many in society’ (p. 114).

Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd (2009) point to a rise in independent/community archives in the UK which has allowed for a growing documentation of marginalised communities, given that these 'histories...are often absent from mainstream archives and other heritage institutions' (p. 72). Partnerships between these community archives with larger, mainstream cultural heritage institutions is an increasingly common dynamic, though some independent archives remain suspicious about being subsumed under the mantle of the institution. Sheffield (2016) emphasises that part of the stewardship duties of the professional archivist is to respect that some community archivists will not want to hand over their material. She argues 'some history is unexplored because its creators want it to remain that way' (p. 581).

Within the community archival paradigm there is a growing emphasis on participatory metadata, wherein communities can describe their own material and in effect, name themselves. This is seen as a tool of agency, not to mention the most effective way to ensure material can be accessed by its target audience. Within the area of Library classification, la Tierra (2008) critiques the application of inappropriate Library of Congress subject headings which make it impossible to discover information about homosexuality combined with ethnic identifiers. She describes her disappointing forays into the library as a young woman when she 'wondered if I was the only Latina lesbian in the world' (la Tierra, 2008, p. 95). If a marginalised community can describe its own cultural heritage it 'allows the community to exercise some control over its representation and the construction of its collective and public memory', (Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd, 2009, p. 83).

The CMS Mukurtu offers multiple options for user communities to apply their own metadata, including the use of Traditional Knowledge Labels (TKL), a tool developed by the Local Contexts initiative which operates in addition to CC licences. Indigenous communities can apply TKL to specify to the user of the archive how the material should be used in ways respectful and appropriate to cultural protocols.
Similarly, the Sex Work Database project employs “tags” created by the sex work community alongside descriptions by the media which frequently depict sex workers in ways that are 'stereotyped and dehumanizing' (Ferris and Allard, 2016, p. 195). The juxtaposition of this metadata provides the opportunity for sex workers to 'speak back to and critique dominant representations of themselves' (p. 195). As with other projects discussed earlier in the chapter, it also encourages the user to question the production of knowledge around marginalised communities. Participatory metadata engages with Foucault's (1972, p. 129) 'system of enunciability', allowing communities to name themselves and retain control over their own histories and identities.

Conclusion

This Literature Review has included a number of perspectives useful for considering ethical issues around the intersection of digital information practices and the sociopolitical context of collections sourced from marginalised groups such as QTIPoCs. The power hierarchies of the archive and the production of knowledge identified by Derrida, Foucault and Spivak are further deconstructed by queer, feminist and postcolonial critics who examine discourses around who has control of the archive, who is allowed to construct narratives from the material and who describes and names its contents. Examples of the consideration of the intersection of digital technologies with structural oppressions can be seen in initiatives such as the Sex Work Database, Digital Dynamics Across Cultures, and the digitisation of the
Pei te Hurinui Jones collection, wherein tools such as participatory metadata and flexible content management systems, as well as epistemological decisions based on the worldview of marginalised communities are implemented, presenting a challenge to dominant LIS discourses.

The following study utilises the theories and perspectives identified in this Review as a framework to further investigate the subject in the context of London cultural heritage institutions.
Methodology

Theoretical position

My study has been conducted from a poststructural theoretical perspective using a queer of colour (QOC) critique. QOC critique takes its name from Roderick Ferguson's (2003) text *Aberrations in Black: toward a queer of color critique* and ‘...seeks to unveil the social and historical forces that have produced QOC marginality, as doing so provides a backdrop for exploring strategies of resistance' (Brockenbrough, 2015, p. 30). QOC critique is informed by feminist, queer and critical race theories, all of which have impacted the literature research conducted as part of this project. Brockenbrough (2015) argues that QOC critique and poststructuralism are theoretically opposed, as QOC critique locates meaning within the lived experience of queer people of colour, an experience which has been historically marginalised by the dominant culture of white heteronormativity. Poststructuralism on the other hand argues for a multiplicity of meanings and resistance against essentialism. My study combines what I view as the complementary aspects of these positions: poststructuralism's critique of hegemonic cultures of power, 'dominant practices and accepted truths' (Johnson, 2014, p. 103), as they specifically relate to queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPOC), paying attention to strategies of resistance against marginalising information practices.

This theoretical position 'pushes for reflexivity in research' (Johnson, 2014, p. 103) and acknowledges the role I play as researcher, arguing against the possibility of objectivity in my analysis. This position is theoretically aligned with my research strategies discussed below. It also demands transparency about the research process which is in keeping with the aim of my project to contribute towards the development of an ethical framework around the management of QTIPOC cultural heritage in the digital LIS environment.

Research strategies

This was a qualitative study, utilising constructivist grounded theory (CGT) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to look at data obtained from semi-structured interviews and pre-
existing online documentation focused on discourses around the ethical management of collections pertaining to QTIPoCs and other marginalised groups, especially in a digital LIS environment.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is 'a process of analysis that is intended neither to answer specific questions nor to test an existing hypothesis' (Pickard, 2013, p. 181). The “constructivist” aspect refers to the understanding that the analysis is constructed rather than essentially “true” (Johnson, 2014), and is dependent on time and context and the researcher’s subjectivities. My use of this method could be seen to represent what Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81) describe as 'grounded theory “lite”': although a process consistent with grounded theory was used, that is, an iterative moving back and forth between the data and development of ideas and research design (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2014), the project was not large enough to result in the full-scale development of a theory, which is the expected outcome of grounded theory research.

This methodology was chosen due to the exploratory nature of my study. The initial idea was generated from a variety of recent events which I spontaneously encountered both “in real life” and online, as explained in the Introduction. These events raised questions for me which seemed to culminate around particular themes, but I wasn’t altogether sure what the research was “about”, which fits with the idea of classic grounded theory in which '[t]he purpose is discovery, the research begins with a very broad question and it is not until the researcher begins to observe and collect data that a focus starts to emerge' (Pickard, 2013, p.181) (or in the case of CGT, rather than the focus “emerging”, the researcher can begin to construct the themes).

I encountered the online controversy around the digitisation of On Our Backs (OOB) via Facebook, Twitter and blog posts, and followed the informal discussion occurring between LGBTQ professionals in the LIS sector and other members of the LGBTQ community, some of whom had their work in OOB. Much of the discussion appeared to be people thinking out loud on the internet, working through ideas and feeling ambivalent about new technologies. I did not participate in these discussions, merely “lurked”, but noticed that things moved
very quickly. Within months of the discussion beginning, Reveal Digital redacted OOB. This was met with more discussion on social media expressing more ambivalence. The whole arc of OOB’s digitisation and subsequent redaction seemed rather hasty, and a more thorough investigation of the surrounding issues seemed pertinent.

Another nebulous area was the utilisation of the category of “QTIPOC” as the focus for the collections I wanted to investigate. At the start of the research process, I was unsure whether any cultural heritage institutions did indeed curate collections in this way, given that the concept of “QTIPOC” seemed to mostly exist on social media, and also variously appearing as “QPOC” (queer people of colour) or “QTIBIPOC” (queer, trans, intersex, Black, indigenous, people of colour) among other iterations (see the Introduction for further discussions around the complexity of QTIPOC). As my research progressed I frequently encountered collections that were purposefully split along lines of “race”, “sexuality” and “gender” which made me wonder how helpful it would be for me to analyse these collections as though they were analogous. Was it theoretically tenuous that I had selected the QTIPOC category mainly because it was one that I and many of my friends identified with?

A note on intersectionality

The methodology of CGT meant that I was constantly moving back and forth between the data, research design and the theory (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2014). My analysis of the online texts and interviews about the rukus! archive as well as research done as part of my Literature Review led me to press on with the exploration of this category, as I realised that my research design could be shaped by the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality was a concept originally introduced by professor of Law and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in an essay in which she criticised the common ‘...tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis’ (p. 139). The concept is now utilised for a range of social groups and is seen as ‘a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool’ (Carبدو et al., 2013, p. 303). The way in which those involved in the Queer Black Spaces (QBS) events engaged with their overlapping, multi-faceted identities partly inspired this research, and so I had no wish to deem them
“too difficult” to be included. Furthermore, the use of QOC critique ‘differentiates strategies of resistance to account for the shifting exigencies of the lives of queers of color’ (Brockenbrough, 2015, p. 30), which allowed me to take a variety of permutations of QTIPoC collections into consideration, and resisted the need for my analysis to “flatten” differing issues that arose around race, sexuality and gender.

Nevertheless, developing interview questions, particularly for institutions other than the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) and the rukus! archive, in order to elicit responses around intersectionality proved difficult, particularly as I was unsure how familiar participants would be with the concept. An initial investigation of the kinds of collections held at the institutions my participants worked at suggested that most were contextualised or described along the lines of either “race”, “gender” or “sexuality”. As Bowleg (2008) states, '[t]ry as we might, it is virtually impossible to escape the additive assumption implicit in the questions we use to measure intersectionality' (p. 322).

Critical Discourse Analysis

DA is '...the study of the way in which an object or idea, any object or idea, is taken up by various institutions and epistemological positions, and of the way in which those institutions and positions treat it. Discourse analysis studies the way in which objects or ideas are spoken about' (Finlay-de Monchy, 2015, p. 2, emphasis in original). A method of analysis with roots in poststructuralism, DA is a way to construct meaning from texts, described as '[the] linguistic record... of a communicative event' (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, p. 7). As this was an exploratory study, I wished to investigate what kinds of ideas were being considered by various stakeholders in the cultural heritage of QTIPoCs and other marginalised groups, regarding how structural inequalities may interact with current digital LIS technologies. As well as utilising my interview transcripts, I widened the field of my investigation to include pre-existing online texts relating to the archives/libraries of my interview participants.

Critical discourse analysis takes into consideration social, historical and political context, as well as the relative positions of researcher and creator/s of the text to construct theories around how ideologies are formed and how they related to social justice (Bloor and Bloor,
2007). For this reason, it was an ideal method for interrogating the power dynamics impacting the ethical management of the digital cultural heritage of marginalised groups.

Sampling

This research operates under the assumption of 'digital convergence', that is, '...that the increased use of and reliance on digital resources has blurred traditional distinctions between information organizations, leading to a digital convergence of libraries, archives, and museums' (Marty, 2008, p. 247). As such, I was open-minded about sampling interview participants who were involved with any of these institutions.

Participants were obtained through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Initial participants were chosen because they had an obvious connection to my project. After conducting a thorough online evaluation of cultural heritage institutions, it appeared the LMA housed the only explicitly QTIPIOC primary source collection in London, the rukus! archive. I also approached one of the founders of rukus!, Ajamu, who I had already met in other QTIPIOC contexts.

Other participants were sampled in more of a snowball manner, and as it was clear I had to broaden out from QTIPIOC collections, I chose institutions that held collections of feminist, LGBTQ and people of colour communities, theorising that the experiences of the marginality of these groups in the LIS environment could be compared. I attended the Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) conference: Without Borders: LGBTQ+ and the Archives Matter conference at Goldsmiths in June 2016. Both events critically dealt with issues around sexuality, race and gender in the LIS sector and many of the conference papers were extremely useful for “signposting” my research (Pickard, 2013). The Bishopsgate Institute (BI) and Vicky Iglikowski of the National Archives (NA) participated in the ALMS conference and so I learned that the BI has a vast LGBTQ collection and specialises in left-wing political material, while Vicky works as the Diverse Histories records specialist and so deals specifically with collections pertaining to marginalised communities. Amid interviewing these participants, I became aware that the British Library (BL) had decided to redact many of the recently digitised issues of feminist magazine Spare Rib. This seemed to have echoes of the OOB issue, and it made sense to approach the BL for inclusion in the
sample, particularly as it was becoming increasingly clear that most of the institutions I was speaking to were not working with digital collections on the scale that the BL was, and therefore many of our conversations were theoretical rather than being based on actual examples within their own institution.

Ajamu was the only participant of colour, as well as the only archival donor/community archivist. This meant that most my interview data was not generated by people from QTPOC communities, though as a QPOC myself, it is likely that my assumptions based around my own identity impacted upon the direction of the interviews.

Institutions included in the study

**The LMA** is a local government archive, based in the City of London. Its collections are drawn from throughout Greater London, and are open to the public and free to use. It took on the rukus! archive in 2010.

**rukus! archive** is a multimedia collection launched in 2005 by Ajamu, a fine art photographer and Topher Campbell, a filmmaker. It documents Black LGBT life in the UK, mostly London. It is the only explicitly QTPOC archive that I came across in my research.

The Bi houses a **Library and Archive**, and is an independent, charity-funded organisation based in Spitalfields, London. The Library is open to the public and free to use. It took on the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive in 2011.

**The BL** is the national library of the UK based in Kings Cross, London. In 2015 the digitised archives of *Spare Rib* magazine was launched as an open access collection on its website.

**The NA** is a non-ministerial government department, and is the official archive of the UK government. It is based in Kew, London.

Literature Review

The Literature Review was conducted simultaneously with my interviews and was directed by themes that began to emerge via the participants in a manner that was 'symbiotic'
(Biggam, 2015, p. 161). Indeed, part of my interview with Ajamu at his house was an extended period in which he showed me some of his own reading as part of his PhD preparation which was useful for informing my research. During my online research, I encountered many examples of international digital initiatives and these became useful as comparisons and contextualisations for the data gathered from the London institutions. During my interviews, I often used these international projects as examples to illustrate some of my questions about topics that the participants seemed unsure about, which helped them to understand where I was coming from. The basis for my Literature Review stemmed from the theoretical underpinnings of QOC critique: feminist, queer and critical race theory in relation to LIS. These positions investigate conditions of power which is relevant to the events which sparked this research: the discussions at QBS about archival barriers, and critiques of “digital archive fever” being applied to LGBTQ collections such as OOB.

**Interviews**

My interviews were semi-structured. I wanted to leave the direction open to allow my participants to explore themes that I had not considered, while also ensuring my broader topic of interest was kept in view. Some interviews were more structured than others, for example, I wanted to find out the specifics behind why *Spare Rib* had been redacted by the BL. In my earlier interviews, I attempted to “shoehorn” in questions regarding the digital environment even when participants seemed to have little interest in the topic. I quickly learned that my approach would need to be more flexible, in part due to the relative newness of the subject area and the fact that some institutions had more resources to digitise than others. Later interviews, particularly with Ajamu, took the form of a 'purposeful conversation' in which my questions flowed ‘from the immediate context’ (Pickard, 2013, p. 200) which meant his interview was twice as long as the others. This was in part due to the informal setting of our interview, and the fact we had met before.

Each interview was conducted in the participant’s place of work, apart from Ajamu’s which was conducted in his front room. Interviews were recorded on my iPhone, and then transcribed by me in full.
Pre-existing online documents

Pre-existing online documents pertaining to each institution was also used as data. Selection of these documents occurred after the interviews took place, as I wanted to choose documents that expanded upon themes constructed from the interview data. Due to space constraints, I limited my choice to one or two online documents. This limits the generalisability of my analysis, but serves to triangulate the data, facilitating the validity of the study. Some online documentation was taken from social media. As Garofalo (2013) states, use of social media sites 'alter the traditional relationships between individuals and organizations or between individuals and institutions' (p. 2), and as discussed in the Literature Review, individuals' conversations on social media can have a direct impact on institutional practice, for example the redaction of OOB.

Analysis of texts

Coding and CDA of interviews

Interviews were transcribed in full by me. Once all five had been completed, I applied an iterative coding system which developed as I read through the transcripts. I undertook initial readings with broad codes in mind relating to the general themes of my research: interactions between sociopolitical issues and digital LIS technologies; issues around the identities of QTIPoC groups, and issues around ethics. These themes were considered within the context of critiquing power imbalances in LIS environments and centering a QOC experience.

It became clear as I read through the transcripts that the interactions between sociopolitical issues and digital LIS technologies, and the identities of QTIPoCs had not generated much text. On my second readings, then, I focused on topics that the participants had frequently raised, and constructed codes that seemed to make sense of these topics, a process that was of course subjective to me as the researcher. This method is consistent with CGT in which 'the theory, grounded in the data, is constructed, rather than emergent' (Johnson, 2014, p. 105).
The following nine codes were applied to participants' transcripts, which were analysed line by line:

1. relationships between community groups/grassroots archivists/donors and cultural heritage institutions
2. open access to information as public good versus the privacy rights of individual subjects in the archive
3. issues around the digital LIS environment, including open access, Creative Commons licensing, digitisation, social media
4. ethics and/or legality
5. intersectionality
6. facilitation of a participatory environment
7. interactions between formal archival procedures and collections pertaining to marginalised groups
8. the control of marginalised groups over their cultural heritage/archival documents
9. “ephemeral” versus “physical” characteristics of the queer archive

Each transcript contained at least one instance of all of these codes, though due to the differing roles and contexts of interview participants, some codes appeared more or less often. For this reason, my Discussion initially begins with a separate analysis of each participant's transcript. Following this, I discuss themes that appear frequently in interviewees transcripts and which had significant cross-over with at least one other institution to provide an element of comparison.

Once I had selected themes to discuss for each transcript, I performed CDA on the text. This was again conducted within the context of critiquing power imbalances in LIS environments and centering a QOC experience.

CDA of pre-existing online documentation

As mentioned above, online documentation was selected to expand upon salient themes I constructed from participants' interview data. This involved browsing web pages and social
media relating to the institutions/contexts the participants were associated with, and selecting material that seemed to enrich the discourses already identified.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations were informed by this study's adherence to theoretical perspectives that critique structures of power. As the researcher, I hold the power as mine is the last word on the data, and so I tried to mediate this imbalance as much as possible. In the participant information sheet given to each interviewee prior to the interview, it was explained that participants would be sent a copy of the interview transcript so that they could redact anything they wished to. They were also given the option of remaining anonymous, though their workplace could not be anonymous. My aim was to keep the research process as transparent as possible, allowing participants to have control over their own contributions. This opened the possibility that data useful for my research may have to be removed, however, had that been the case, it would have been an interesting parallel to the very subject of the research. As it was, only one redaction was requested, which was in regard the negative mention of another institution's practice. Allowing interviewees to read over their own transcripts also served to increase the validity of the study by ensuring I had not misrepresented or misheard their responses.

Recorded interviews were deleted after the study was completed, and written transcripts were included in this thesis, but deleted from my laptop where they were originally typed.

Selection of themes, as well as the construction of salient discourses were influenced by my own subjectivities as an immigrant, QPOC, cis-gendered female librarian and researcher. I have a personal interest in this research, and the research is influenced by my background in queer and critical race theory. The way in which I interpreted my participants' responses and the quotes I chose are necessarily affected by my theoretical position, identity and politics.
Analysis and Discussion of Results

Jan Pimblett and Richard Wiltshire, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

(See Appendix for interview transcript)

Jan Pimblett, Principle Development Officer and Richard Wiltshire, Senior Archivist both took part in this interview. Richard oversaw the 2010 move of the rukus! collection from the home of its founder, Ajamu, to the LMA. Jan's role deals with outreach, events and engagement and she oversaw the Speak Out London LGBTQ oral history project which was taking place at the time of this interview.

For Jan, unsurprisingly given her role, the theme of relationships was particularly salient, and she attributed the success of the relationship between the LMA and the founders of the rukus! archive on the strength of its foundations. Throughout the interview she often referred to the length of time she had known Ajamu and Topher, 'I met Ajamu who was recommended to me as a speaker by the then head curator of the Museum of London...so that was a long time ago, well over 10 years, and from that a very good relationship got established. So Ajamu and Topher are regulars really'. Her description of them as 'regulars' suggests a warm relationship based on more than merely the acquisition of a collection. Indeed, the fact that Jan began by explaining Ajamu was a speaker at the LMA LGBT History and Archives conference constructs the relationship as one built on mutuality, rather than positioning the LMA as operating at an institutional distance from its donors.

A few weeks before the interview, I had heard Ajamu speak at the Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) conference and he had described the experience of moving the rukus! archive from his house to the LMA as ‘tearful’. I wanted to find out the extent to which the LMA acknowledged the emotional toll of a community archive giving up its collection to the institution. Jan emphasised that this was not a process that was rushed, saying, ‘you have long conversations with people. I suppose it takes the time that it takes’. As with her depiction of the relationship with Ajamu and Topher, she placed more emphasis on quality of the partnerships than the quick acquisition of collections, stating, 'there is no, sort of, “we need your stuff and we need it now”', business because it is a very emotional
time for people...it is like your baby's left home'. This evokes Cvetkovich's (2003) 'archive of feelings' with its understanding that queer community archives are more than just a collection of documents.

One of Ajamu and Topher's conditions for the rukus! archive going to the LMA was the participation of volunteers in the cataloguing of the material. Richard spoke in a positive way about 'everyone feeding in', and narrated the story of one volunteer who took part because she wanted to learn more about the Black LGBTQ community because her daughter had just come out. In relating this story, Richard demonstrates that he was aware of the political and social benefits of taking a participatory approach to an archive like rukus!.

However, balancing the wishes of rukus!'s founders with the demands of the archival processes adhered to by the LMA created challenges for Richard. The project attracted a lot of interest which Richard acknowledged was partly due to the unique 'nature' of rukus! itself, but the pool of volunteers was ever-changing due to work and study commitments, 'I would say from a practical point of view...it may have been quicker if we'd just done it ourselves...I'm really proud of what the volunteers have achieved, I mean it's brilliant. And it's great that they had the involvement...but...it definitely had a toll on me'. Richard identified that the organic nature of the rukus! archive caused problems, 'items themselves are sort of loose, although they're in boxes we actually had to do some rearrangement, there were duplicates everywhere'. This necessitated intensive training of the volunteers, some of whom dropped out after training was given. Richard's ambivalence is shown in the way he constructed his narrative, constantly switching back and forth between the positives of the participatory approach and the negatives which had practical implications for his work. Similarly, when he related the story of rukus!'s move he began by discussing it in terms of the emotion of the day, but ended by explaining the practical complications that arose because it was not always clear whether all of the collection belonged to Ajamu and Topher or not, 'from an archival point of view, quite a lot of work had to go into trying to work that out'. He joked that now, he 'would rap their hands on various things that they'd done in terms of the acquiring bit'.

Richard's narratives demonstrate that the LMA's agreement that rukus!'s founders retain control over their collection was not without its difficulties, which suggests that rukus! may
not have had similar experiences with other institutions who were not so committed to mitigating the power imbalance that implicitly exists between the institution and community archivist. The LMA’s emphasis on forming strong relationships requires the institution to operate flexibly, presenting challenges for professional staff.

On the topic of placing rukus! in the digital environment, Richard explains ‘there was never a focus on it’. Digitisation is based on funding, and so only selected documents were digitised as part of the Speak Out London exhibition, though most of the audiovisual material had been digitised and was available in the Mediatheque facility accessible within the LMA. Both Richard and Jan pointed to the openness of the Web as the major factor when deciding whether digitised images would appear on the Speak Out London website. Jan describes the Mediatheque as a compromise, describing it as like ‘opening an electronic box’ in the sense that it is not online, and so replicates the control of the physical archives.

Both participants alluded to the particular ethical issues around LGBTQ collections that went beyond merely adhering to the law. Discussing the pornographic content of rukus!, Richard said that age warnings needed to be included due to issues that went, ‘way beyond copyright’. Similarly, Jan recounted an anecdote about a bisexual man who wanted his oral history to be heavily edited due to pressures he felt from his community. She confirmed that in these situations, the LMA would, ‘do the work to make sure that was made discrete, or unavailable or whatever people needed’, but the conundrum was, ‘how do you reveal the story and be anonymised?...people are still walking that line.’ Jan constructs the LMA’s policy as one that centres the needs of subjects of the archive. Nevertheless, she described the redaction of the oral history in a way that suggests it was not a straightforward process for the LMA. Her remark, ‘what it started to feel like was, “oh I did this, but actually I’m this now”’ suggests she felt there was some revisionism going on, and rather than presenting the edited version that the bisexual man suggested, made the decision to make it inaccessible.

Online documentation

I investigated ways the LMA provided information to potential donors online and engaged with LGBTQ users. The Collections Acquisition and Management Policy (London Metropolitan Archives, 2016) is a PDF document available on the LMA website and is the
main source of information about the process of depositing collections. Its formal language is in sharp contrast to Jan and Richard's warm and informal narrative of how rukus! came to reside in the LMA. Structured in the official manner of most policy documentation, it states the intention of the LMA to acquire: 'Records of ethnic and other minority communities which reflect the diversity of modern London, including collections from the Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Asian and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered communities'. The conflation of 'ethnic and other minority communities' attempts to construct the LMA as inclusive and desirous of diverse collections. However, the document's language and structure masks the focus on individual relationship building that occurs “behind the scenes”, which is perhaps off-putting for community archivists. Jan and Richard indeed mentioned they had expected more deposits of QTIPoC collections on the back of rukus! than has so far occurred.

Given that the LMA is a local government archive it is perhaps not surprising that its official website is written in this manner. The social media maintained by the LMA is more reflective of the personalised, participatory approach described by Jan and Richard.

![Screenshot of re-tweet. (Source: @sammy_sturgess)](image)

This tweet (Sturgess, 2016) showing the transgender symbol on the LMA's toilet doors was retweeted by the institution, showing its pride in its usage which promotes an environment of inclusivity and suggests a willingness to adopt a forward-thinking stance in the ongoing debate about transgender access to bathrooms (e.g. Thorn, 2016). Furthermore, encouragement for more community participation was embedded in the Speak Out London
exhibition, for example this poster tweeted by a user (Hayward, 2016). It emphasises the LMA’s desire to encourage dialogue with source communities and move away from a “top-down” approach, allowing LGBTQ communities to have a say over their own cultural heritage.
Ajamu, co-founder of the rukus! archive

(See Appendix for interview transcript)

Fine art photographer Ajamu co-founded the Black LGBTQ archive, rukus! along with filmmaker Topher Campbell in 2005. The archive was moved from Ajamu's house in Brixton to the LMA in 2010.

Ajamu spoke about taking a strategic approach to working with institutions and eschewed the idea of binary control over cultural heritage, 'I think that there is different levels of control...and I guess it's kind of how you navigate the arts, cultural, heritage, archival sector'. His use of the word 'navigate' implies a deliberate maneuvering required by Black LGBTQ people to overcome potential barriers in the cultural heritage sector, while the 'different levels' indicates a spectrum; cultural heritage does not need to be wholly “in” or “out” of control of its community. This is exemplified by rukus! itself, which Ajamu explained has secure funding now that it sits within the context of 'London's history' at the LMA, but despite its institutional home Ajamu and Topher still have control over how it is managed.

An example of this is the requirement that permission must be sought from Ajamu or Topher to access the collection at the LMA. Ajamu stated that this is partly a matter of privacy, as some subjects in the archive 'were never out'. He emphasised that the rukus! collection was dealing with 'the complexities of where we are located around being Black and queer in the context of the UK', constructing the archive as more than just a collection of documents, but rather as a medium through which Black queer identity is being constantly worked through. Given that rukus! has this politicised purpose, it is perhaps not surprising that Ajamu and Topher negotiated 'the model that kind of works for us'. Ajamu expressed confidence in the LMA, attributing this to the fact that 'Richard and Jan get what we are doing'. He stated that due to this relationship, he has not encountered 'tension around the institution of the archive' and dismissed potential clashes with formal archival procedures as 'stuff I don't really need to know about', unless posing a threat to rukus! Ajamu's trust in Richard and Jan to uphold the unique character of rukus! challenges the discourse of hierarchal power imbalances between the community archivist and the
institution. Furthermore, the navigation of rukus! into a position where it can take advantage of the accoutrements of the institution whilst also retaining its integrity recalls Brockenbrough’s (2015) QOC ‘strategies of resistance’ (p. 30).

Another reason identified by Ajamu for retaining control over rukus! was because ‘we’re the ones that should tell our stories and our experiences’. He states, ‘the framework around rukus! is around aspiration and celebration’, identifying a deliberate challenge to the discourse around ‘needs and services’ frequently linked with Black LGBTQ people. As with the access permissions, when the LMA or an outside group wish to use parts of the archive for a project or exhibition, Ajamu says, ‘we’re consulted at every turn. I can say “yeah” or “maybe not”’.

The topic arose around rukus! being sought out by groups making clearly tokenistic gestures to diversity. Carter’s (2006) ‘use of silence as power’ (p. 227) was evoked by Ajamu’s statement, ‘I actually have no qualms about saying no. I’d rather not be included’. Again, Ajamu constructs the possibility of QTIPoCs navigating power structures in the LIS sector, advocating for modulated relationships, ‘I also don’t think that things can be totally open and totally shut, neither. I think there is kind of middle type of space, that we kind of move in between’.

Ajamu identified the fact that the LMA ‘have been doing the work’ around documenting both LGBT and Black history as one of the main reasons it was chosen as a home for rukus! At frequent points during the interview, Ajamu emphasised the importance of spaces in which Black queer heritage can be accessed, citing the loss of history for a younger generation of QTIPoCs as the ‘cost’ paid for ignoring intersectionality. He pointed to the ‘nationalist kind of politic’ of the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) as being ‘too narrow’ to embrace the multiplicities of the rukus! archive, specifically as the BCA does not collect queer histories, and his ‘fear of it going to a white archive would be that they would then have their “funky queer project”’. Ajamu utilises rukus! to provide a framework for Black LGBTQ people to tell their own story and not be subsumed within the hegemonic narrative of a larger institution.
Discussions around the digital environment did not engender much response from Ajamu, and the fact that digitising the rukus! archive is not a priority for the LMA was not problematic for him. While he said, 'I totally get why things would be digitised', his interest in 'the things that are more ephemeral around our experiences' made him cautious about placing too much importance in things that are 'all shiny and digital'. This skeptical take on the ability of the digital to capture the ephemeral was further emphasised, 'I think for me, digital is far too cold. There is a different kind of connection that I have with a piece of paper than I have with data...How do you create an archive that's living and breathing and that it doesn't feel distancing? It's got to come back to that tactility around the medium.' For Ajamu, the 'energy and character' of the rukus! archive is manifested physically. This disinterest in the digital environment is reflected in the limited online presence of rukus!.

Online documentation

Though the rukus! federation does have a website, it has not been updated since 2012 (rukus!, 2012a), and the Twitter and Facebook links do not work anymore. The website itself has a few digitised documents, but these seems to act as a “taster” to the collection at the LMA, rather than trying to provide comprehensive access.

The most recent addition to the website is the Heritage Lottery funded Sharing Tongues project (rukus!, 2012b), a series of videos and oral histories documenting the stories of Black LGBTQ people over 45. The preponderance of audiovisual material on the site perhaps points to rukus!’s founders attempt to construct the archive as 'living and breathing'.

The dead social media links are not indicative of the activity of rukus! While Ajamu and Topher do not expend a lot of energy online, the rukus! archive is communicated through various in-person events, perhaps underscoring again Ajamu’s desire to celebrate the archive as ‘living and breathing’. The LMA’s Speak Out London project featured elements of the collection (gpbadmin, 2015), and Ajamu spoke about rukus! at the LGBTQ+ ALMS Without Borders conference (admin, 2016). Furthermore, as demonstrated in these tweets by Collective Creativity (2015) and Ifekoya (2016) young QTIPOC artists are utilising the material in art projects that continue rukus!’s goal of exploring 'being Black and queer in the context of the UK'.
Screenshot of tweet by Collective Creativity (Source: @qtipoc_CC)

Screenshot of tweet by Evan Ifekoya (Source: @evan_ife)
Vicky Iglikowski, The National Archives

(See Appendix for interview transcript)

Vicky is the Diverse Histories officer in the Advice and Records Knowledge Department. Her role includes outreach and education, as well as cataloguing.

'I work on Diverse Histories, which can be interpreted in many different ways but I see it as...traditionally marginalised histories, things that don't tend to reach the mainstream narratives'. Framing her role in this way Vicky highlights the power structures embedded within the remit of “diverse”, a term imbued with neutrality that masks the structural oppressions affecting the histories it includes, which Vicky lists as, 'women and gender history, LGBTQ history, Black and ethnic minority history, disability and mental health history'. Vicky's definition of her role positions it within the scope of social justice work, and her frequent use of the word 'mainstream' to describe the conceptual space that she would like these histories to shift into implies that this work will be done by centering marginalised voices in the archive. Vicky describes one of the goals of her role as 'finding new ways of engaging people...to really try and open up access to our collections', evoking Harris's (2011) democratising call to open the archive 'to those alienated, or estranged, in it and by it' (p. 104).

As Vicky points out, the National Archives (NA) 'remit is just the government record', so unlike other archives, there is no ability to fill gaps in collections or collect contextualising material such as oral histories. She says, 'a barrier for my work is that a lot of these records come from negative places, whether it's slavery or the criminalisation of male homosexuality'. The 'barrier' of having to highlight records of state oppression impacts on Vicky's engagement with community groups. Her lack of control over the content of the archive causes her discomfort specifically because the groups she works with are those traditionally marginalised by the state.

One event Vicky organised was based around documents in the archive relating to the Mangrove Nine, an early 1970s British Black Power group. Members of the original Mangrove Nine attended and spoke at the event. Vicky says, 'we were incredibly conscious
that we were showing records about people, about themselves, secret police reports', and describes feeling nervous, suggesting that she recognised the imbalance inherent in the fact that she had knowledge of, and the ability to provide or prevent access to, very personal information about people's lives collected without their permission. Vicky did not specifically say or allude to this, but as she is young and white, I wondered if there might have also been an implicit discomfort around her identity intersecting with her role as access provider to these documents.

With the event, Vicky tried to engender 'a space for open discussion'. Throughout our interview, she frequently used the word 'open' to talk of both space and dialogue, which perhaps reflects her wish to implicitly challenge what she describes as 'the views of the state in the past'. Though she maintains that 'as a civil servant I can't have political opinions openly', opening up access goes some way to redress the power imbalance implicit in the NA operating as an extension of the state. Vicky described how the event led to young Black participants drawing parallels between historical events and their own experiences, and 'they naturally came to some of those conclusions about things like Black Lives Matter'.

The dialogue produced by this event was discussed by Vicky in blogposts written on the NA blog which was open to comments. Despite being unable to voice opinions openly as an employee of the NA, Vicky utilised participatory digital media to centre the voices of those whose lives are affected by racism, and discusses the ways in which the younger generation are making sense of these histories. Though the remit of the NA means that the Black community does not have control over the content of the archive, these physical and online spaces allow people to have some measure of control over the narratives constructed from these documents.

Participatory elements of the catalogue are also offered in the form of community tagging. Vicky explained that official descriptions of material in the NA utilises the language of the time the documents were created, including historical terms that would be deemed offensive by today's standards, or which are obscure and unlikely to be chosen as keywords by users. Vicky showed me the National Archives research guides which are available online and provide lists of “alternative search terms” that may aide a user's search (for LGBTQ history some suggested keywords are 'character defect', 'deviant', 'immoral', 'pervert').
Despite the problematic connotations of these words, Vicky explains, 'to enable access, we have to say these are the kinds of terms that you would need to use... hopefully we provide enough context to try and give people an idea of why that is'. The provision of context is seen as a way to mitigate the “negativity” of the terms. Community tagging allows contemporary users to describe the material in ways that better reflect how they may view, for example, LGBTQ identities, and so aids information retrieval. Vicky acknowledges, 'we're obviously not necessarily the people that know the most about the language and how people choose to identify or terminology', positioning users of the archive as having more expertise and knowledge about their own cultural histories than the archive professionals, and allowing communities to define themselves.

Vicky does not directly deal with digitisation in her role, however, she acknowledged that there were restrictions around access to more recent LGBTQ material which may be 'frustrating but comes from an ethical place where it's important to not out people'. This ambivalence arose again when we discussed the redaction of OOB, and Vicky identifies, 'that tension between the importance of ethics and the frustration because you just want to promote the kind of history'. Ultimately, she placed the right to privacy of the individual over the potential public good that may come from having the material in the archive, acknowledging that this may lead to important research gaps in the archive.

Online Documentation

Many themes from the interview are featured in Vicky's post on the NA blog, 'Transgender Visibility In our Collections' (Iglikowski, 2016). Posted on the International Transgender Day of Visibility, it connects current discourse around transgender identity with historical events expressed through documents chosen from the NA collection, a method reminiscent of the Mangrove Nine event. Her post sets out to 'highlight transgender histories it is possible to find in a government archive, in an attempt to increase the visibility of gender identity in the past, as well as the present day'. This resonates with how she described the purpose of her role in our interview: to centre marginalised histories, and position them in the mainstream.

In the blog post, Vicky explains she will, 'use the term trans as an umbrella term' to cover the spectrum of 'people who chose to question gender norms' to avoid imposing identities
onto historical figures and ensuring she is not “speaking” for them. Furthermore, Vicky uses the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' throughout the post when referring to individuals, once again ensuring she is not defining them based on her own assumptions, and opening up a space for dialogue amongst researchers of trans history about historical gender identities. Her use of 'they' conveys respect as it avoids mis-gendering people which contrasts with one of the comments made below her post by a contributor. The commenter explains they are in the process of cataloguing records relating to one of the individuals in Vicky’s post, Chevalier d’Eon, referring to them as 'he' throughout the comment despite the fact that d’Eon lived as a woman. Vicky's use of 'they' also contrasts with the Library the commenter was cataloguing for, the University of Leeds, which contains the largest collection of material on d'Eon and yet describes d'Eon as 'he' on their webpage of Administrative or biographical history (University of Leeds, n.d). This different approach highlights Vicky’s challenge to oppressive LIS discourses around the description of transgender people, acknowledging the institution should not be “speaking for” marginalised people.
Stefan Dickers, Bishopsgate Institute Library and Archive

(See Appendix for interview transcript)

Stefan Dickers is the Library and Archives manager. In 2011, the Bishopsgate acquired the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive (LAGNA) and its LGBTQ collections have grown exponentially.

A theme that Stefan frequently returned to in the interview was around creating an atmosphere of “openness” in the Library and Archives. He viewed his ability to do this as intrinsically tied to the autonomous status of the Bishopsgate Institute (BI) - 'it's an independent charitable foundation which is quite important' - which allows him to push against traditional archival boundaries to open up access to collections. He compared this freedom to other archives which are managed by local governments or universities and therefore have less flexibility. Critiquing the stricter access and collection policies of these institutions, which he described as intimidating to users and disrespectful to donors, Stefan says, 'that's not why I'm in the profession, I want to be helping people access stuff'. He further emphasises the way in which the BI challenges the power structures of traditional archives in his description of the historical development of the collection as, 'a very sort of bottom up history of London, rather than your Guildhall, top down history of London', and his current approach as 'very much a democratic sort of collecting, everyone's important kind of thing'. Stefan's use of the word 'democratic' and his description of the collection as 'a people's history of London' demonstrates the social and political role he views the BI as playing, which is manifested in his stance on access.

In 2011, LAGNA was taken on by the BI, and Stefan explains that this was the beginning of 'a new direction that I was pushing the Institute down...in terms of collecting stuff about LGBTQ history'. As with the other collections at the BI, Stefan sees his role not as a gatekeeper, but as one where 'you welcome people, you make it accessible, you tell them it's their history and they're welcome to come in and use it share it'.

Unsurprisingly given this approach to access, when the interview turned to the subject of the digitisation of the LGBTQ collection and potential issues around open access, Stefan
states, 'we have absolutely no qualms of making any of our material available whatsoever...I wouldn't close anything here, we have a very big policy about everything being open'. His comments about not closing things refer specifically to the large amount of pornographic material included in the LGBTQ collection at the BI, which Stefan justified as being 'a really important thing about body image, about sexuality, about how people enjoyed themselves, to put it bluntly'. Stefan described the inclusion of porn as another way in which the BI probably differs from other institutions, which he saw as another example of the freedoms available to him as the manager of an independent institution. He emphasises the importance of retaining the integrity of the collection, saying 'there is the potential that, you know, family historians are going to stumble across a man with his willy out, tied to a cross, but to tell you the truth, I don't really care, you know what I mean? This is what we collect here and these are the kind of histories we want to record'. Again, Stefan constructs his role as one that pushes boundaries with the aim of opening up access to information. His juxtaposition of gay S&M material with family historians suggests a defiant championing of LGBTQ histories in the face of conservatism.

This approach does have implications for what donations are accepted, 'we try to take collections in that can be open...there are some occasions when we do close stuff, when it's about people's real personal issues, but on the whole I try to make every collection I can open, as quickly as possible'. When the subject of the redaction of OOB was discussed Stefan concedes, 'I know what you mean about the ethics of the people involved'. However, when I asked him to expand further on what may lead to the BI choosing not to digitise pornographic LGBTQ material he said that it would be due to legal rather than ethical challenges, 'the concern would probably be the age thing rather than other stuff...we try and be very ethical but I would probably argue that...when the copyright was signed over...you could do it and put it up. And I would put it up, yeah'. He uses the example of the gay porn magazine Euroboy which he says he’d start digitising from the older issues 'mainly cause the copyright on Euroboy's still active [laughs] and then we’d get sued. But when it comes to it, we will go for it, and not worry too much'. For Stefan, the idea of restricting access to archival material seemed to evoke discourses about the censorship of marginalised voices, rather than potential concerns of the LGBTQ community, and this
fundamentally clashes with his desire to democratise the archive and fight against traditional archival silences.

Stefan acknowledged that the BI did not have a lot of QTIPoC material, citing a few examples of where material might appear as part of collections such as the Feminist Library. He described the skew in LGBTQ archives, stating they, 'tend to be mainly gay white men, because it's gay white men that mainly put them together.' His approach to filling gaps where communities are underrepresented is to 'provide openness, provide welcome... encourage, but don't “try” and capture it', nevertheless he stated that there was an 'issue' around the lack of collections at the BI relating to the local Bengali population. Stefan explained that donations were frequently obtained by making, 'one contact and they know someone who knows someone else who knows someone else. But I do a lot of approaching', so relationships seem to be important and perhaps this points to a need to strengthen relationships with communities of colour.

Online documentation

I investigated the extent to which Stefan's desire to present the BI as accessible was replicated in the information presented online. The *Special Collections & Archives* Leaflet (Bishopsgate Institute, 2016) indeed opens with the words: 'Free. Independent. Open to all', a statement that unequivocally sets the agenda of the BI as a library “for the people”. Furthermore, the language used throughout the leaflet is friendly, for example on the 'Who we are and what we offer' page is the statement '[t]he purpose of our Special Collections and Archives is to inspire, educate and entertain. The collections document our shared history and are open to all.' The use of the words 'entertain', 'shared' and 'open' construct an environment that is non-hierarchical and 'welcoming', as Stefan stated is his is aim. The following sections suggest material that may be of interest for a variety of user groups, broadly: 'designers', 'writers', 'researchers' and the delightfully nebulous 'curious', a group which is expanded upon in a surrounding word cloud as 'nosy parkers', 'inquisitive minds' and 'armchair enthusiasts'.

The 'curious' section of the leaflet assures users that they will not be questioned about their reasons for using the archive, and constructs a non-judgmental, challenge-free experience wherein people may 'just turn up and give us an idea of the subject area that interests you'. The team will then help to find relevant items and then 'leave you in peace...to learn at your own pace'. The language used in this leaflet belies the seriousness and formality that usually go hand-in-hand with 'Special Collections and Archives' and presents the Library as an aid to Adult Education, in line with the original intention of the Institute as a whole.
Polly Russell, British Library

(See Appendix for interview transcript)

Polly Russell is the Lead Curator for Contemporary Politics and Public Life at the British Library. She managed the project to digitise the British feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, first published in 1972, which went live mid-2015 as an open access collection. In June 2016, 'around 20% of the content' (British Library, 2016a) was redacted due to feedback from various trade bodies regarding what they viewed as inadequate copyright clearance.

Polly articulated the balance that the British Library maintains when implementing projects like *Spare Rib*, 'we're the national library, we have to...make sure...that we're doing innovative, interesting things...but that we're also doing those things with regard to the legislative structures that are around us, the ethical frameworks that should drive all our work'. Polly suggests that as the 'national library' there are particular pressures which accompany being in the public eye. She constructs her role as one that must grapple with the intersection of law, ethics and innovation, maintaining that the BL is 'not so risk averse that we don't do things'.

Having previously worked on Women’s Liberation Movement projects such as the *Sisterhood and After* (British Library, n.d) oral history project, Polly was in a strong position to form networks with the *Spare Rib* community. She emphasised that this was fundamental to the project, 'from the get go, we were working very closely with members of the *Spare Rib collective*', describing this as something 'we were always very invested in'. Members of the *Spare Rib* collective were on the advisory board and acted as 'a stepping stone' to aid the BL in contacting other members. Throughout the interview, Polly did not use the word “relationship” but rather “working together”, and emphasised the practical advantages of including members of the *Spare Rib* collective. This contextualises the interactions as professional and suggests it is a very deliberate approach by the BL.

Polly explained that *Spare Rib* used a collective publishing model which meant that 'the copyright was held by the individual contributors', numbers of which ran to the thousands. The BL adhered to permissions procedures that took into account this collective structure,
Polly says, 'we were very keen to locate contributors. So, I think that that's quite different from the *On Our Backs* project'. She underscored that that the institution 'spent a lot of time and resource in trying to engage and communicate with the Spare Rib community'. Her narrative constructs the BL as an institution that considers 'community' interests and forming ethical partnerships as part and parcel of its digital projects rather than solely focusing on the output, but also quantifies the experience as having an impact on resources.

Digitising *Spare Rib* was a unique venture for the BL, due to this collective publishing model. One of the factors that increased its viability was the Orphan Works legislation that came into practise in 2014. Polly explained that some of the contributors 'just disappear off the radar', and given the enormous numbers, the BL was unable to locate everyone. The new legislation states that if copyright holders cannot be found after a 'diligent search' has been carried out, cultural heritage institutions can 'make an orphan work(s) accessible to the public' (Mendis, n.d). As such, Polly describes digitising *Spare Rib* as, 'as a sort of pilot or test project' for the BL.

The potential for opening up access to collections through digitisation was recognised as 'massive' by Polly, 'we know that it's getting out to audiences that we know we wouldn't get into the Reading Rooms'. However, she emphasised the digitisation of *Spare Rib* was not based simply on this idea, but was also considered to align with the original aims of the magazine, 'its ideal was for mass distribution to convey the message about equality, feminism, Women's Liberation Movement, that's what it's purpose was at the time...So that doesn't seem at odds with the project to digitise it and disseminate it'. This suggests the BL had a holistic understanding of the initiative, rather than succumbing to 'digital archive fever' (Kim, 2014), and evokes a similar rationale to that of Egan (2015) regarding the digitisation of the Cork LGBTQ Archive.

Polly expands further on the BL's approach, 'we were thinking all the time about what are the ethical implications about...re-publishing this material', ensuring that the wishes of certain contributors who wanted their work redacted or anonymised were respected. Polly describes the concerns of these contributors as 'legitimate' and 'personal', displaying sympathy with these contributors. Despite these procedures being followed and the assurances of the new Orphan Works legislation, feedback was received from certain trade
bodies which led to the redaction of 20% of the material. Polly states, 'in hindsight...we'd made more material available than we should have done', but also points to the fact that, 'the legislation was very, very new and the advice around the legislation was still being worked out'. She confirmed that unlike the criticism of the digitisation of OOB, the Spare Rib redactions were solely based on legal issues, and had 'less to do with the individual contributors than it was with the concerns of particular trade bodies'. Polly did not say whether she felt the concerns of the trade bodies were legitimate, again maintaining the professional distance of the BL.

Screenshot of Spare Rib digital archive, showing redacted content in 2016 (Source: JISC)

Throughout the interview, Polly returned to the idea of the “balance” that the BL must maintain, illustrating this by presenting multiple “angles” to digitisation projects. Both the rights of the individual and 'dissemination, sharing material' are positions that Polly said she was 'passionate' about, though they were 'often at odds with one another'. She constructed the conundrum as based on moral rather than legal issues, citing for example the concept of the “right to be forgotten”, which open access can work against as it 'does raise the possibility of people being thrown into the limelight where they didn't want to be'. She says, 'what we've done with Spare Rib in the end is try and reach compromise and a balance',
which has meant taking a stricter approach to deciding what constitutes an Orphan Work whilst ensuring the collection remains a 'meaningful resource'. Polly again returned to the “cost” of undertaking a project such as this for the BL, saying,

One cannot underestimate how complicated this terrain is, in weighing up the different sort of rights and needs and demands of different types of groups, all of whom have a quite legitimate investment in these debates and these discussions, and that is very challenging for institutions and organisations who are wanting to do things with modern, in-copyright content.

She frames the experience as requiring a risk assessment, and, perhaps understandable given the difficulties the BL encountered post-launch, focusses on the perspective of the institution. As such, her description is based on professional concerns, constructing the situation in terms of a methodical, ethical, formalised BL procedure.

Online Documentation

The BL’s Spare Rib webpages reflect the focus on the balance between ethics and legality that featured in Polly’s interview. The Ethical Use (British Library, 2016b) page draws users’ attention not only to their legal responsibilities when re-using the material, but also to the 'moral rights' of the creators. The statement goes beyond simple adherence to the letter of the law, which is particularly emphasised in the final paragraphs, '[t]he Library respects intellectual property rights, as well as ethical, moral and traditional knowledge concerns. This usage guide is based on goodwill. It is not a legal contract. We ask that you respect it'. This demonstrates a broad understanding of many of the issues that impact re-use of digital content, the reference to 'traditional knowledge concerns' suggesting that the institution recognises potential cultural differences in information sharing which are not covered by UK copyright law. Further advice is also given for the re-use of material with a Creative Commons (CC) Attribution license, including the missive 'use of the work should always be done with respect', which suggests that the BL does not assume a CC license speaks for itself and may require further context. The word 'respect' is used four times in this ethical guidance, conveying a sense of mutuality, constructing the BL, creators and users of Spare
Rib as part of an information sharing community that relies on generosity and understanding, which also reflects the collective nature of Spare Rib’s publishing model.
Comparison of themes

A range of discourses associated with the ethical management of collections sourced from marginalised groups can be identified in the data taken from the five interviews and selection of online resources. Despite the differing roles and contexts of the interview participants there were many thematic cross-overs.

The theme of “relationships” was salient for both Jan at the LMA and Polly at the BL, but was constructed very differently. Both expressed the ethical importance of developing strong connections with groups providing archival material, however, while Jan frequently used the word ‘relationships’ and spoke of the founders of rukus! in informal terms, Polly used phrases relating to the idea of “working together”, evoking a more professional distance from the Spare Rib community. Polly also highlighted the Library’s resource expenditure required to maintain the relationship. This suggests that the BL is likely to be selective and only initiate projects that the Library deems viable, and, as Polly said in her interview, that the public have an ‘appetite’ for. For QTIPOC and other marginalised groups, then, institutions such as the LMA potentially have fewer barriers to navigate, and perhaps provide more opportunities to maintain control of their collections through continued involvement with the institution. The bespoke conditions under which rukus! is held at the LMA is an example of this, as is the LMA’s engagement with community groups via the use of social media. The LMA’s approach recalls the community partnership approach advocated by Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd (2009) which allows communities greater ability to construct their own identities. In contrast to Polly and Jan, Stefan at the BI did not speak about forming active “relationships” per se and instead focused on the need for the institution providing a ‘welcoming’ environment to attract engagement.

Using a ‘queer of colour critique’ (Brockenbrough, 2015) Ajamu emphasised some of the strategies QTIPOC communities can use to maintain control over their cultural heritage. He challenged the traditional discourse which suggests that collections donated by marginalised groups are necessarily “subsumed” by the power of the institution, and suggested an alternative in which QTIPOCs can utilise the resources of the institution to improve preservation and access to their collections. He and Topher chose the LMA after much research, taking into account the institution’s work around intersectionality, and
extent to which the rukus! founders were able to apply conditions around the use of the collection. For Ajamu, it is extremely important that Black LGBTQ people can tell their own stories through their cultural heritage. This is a challenging prospect for larger, national institutions. Vicky at the NA explained that as a civil servant she is constrained from having public opinions about the content of the Archives which often contains examples of oppressive practises by the state. However, she has found ways of ensuring marginalised groups can tell their own stories through community engagement and the use of participatory digital media. The “control” these groups have over documents pertaining to them is manifested in their ability to use these documents to construct and publish narratives from their own perspective. This recalls Ajamu’s description of 'different levels of control' which evokes a spectrum of possibilities that enable QTIPOCs to challenge oppressive discourses generated from and within the archive, even if they do not have control over the content of the archive itself.

Despite institutions committing to respectful relationships with community donors and providing alternatives to the traditionally imbalanced relationship, there can be difficulties balancing the formal archival procedures of these institutions with the often organic, non-hierarchical, DIY and ephemeral nature of the queer and feminist collections they seek to hold, especially if these collections in fact seek to disrupt dominant discourses around archival procedure. Ajamu’s statement that he 'didn’t need to know about' potential issues arising from the nature of the rukus! archive causing difficulties for the archivists at the LMA is interesting when compared with Richard at the LMA narrating the challenges he faced trying to accommodate rukus! Ajamu expressed confidence that the LMA abides by the conditions he and Topher set, that Richard and Jan 'get' what they are doing and thus the integrity and character of rukus! is maintained. Due to the good relationship he has with Richard and Jan, he has been spared the administrative formalities that are part and parcel of the institution. The cost to Richard was repeatedly returned to in his narrative, as explained the extra work required to adhere to the conditions set around the rukus! archive. He intimated that given a chance to do it all again, he might be tempted to insist on certain things occurring to make the collection conform to a more traditional model and therefore sit easier within the procedures he must follow. Similarly, the collective publishing model that *Spare Rib* was based on meant that the BL had to expend much time and
resource ensuring they contacted as many of the thousands of copyright holders as possible. Because much material produced by marginalised groups during the *Spare Rib* years was published collectively (Nye, 2015), this project was, as Polly stated, an important pilot for the BL in which best practise could be developed. Further digitisation projects of collectively published material could open up resources relating to marginalised communities. However, though the BL took an ethical approach to the project, involving members of the *Spare Rib* community and performing a diligent search of copyright holders, redactions still took place. In this instance, we see an example of the law working against what Polly described as the desire of the majority of the *Spare Rib* community to have this resource fully available open access. This signals a warning for future projects that seek to digitise other alternative publications, which has implications for the dissemination of queer cultural heritage given that is often comprised of such material.

Attitudes towards digital open access were vastly different for Stefan at the BI and Polly at the BL. Whereas Stefan was very enthusiastic about collections, including pornography, going online and remaining as open as possible, Polly explained the painstaking procedures that the BL took to ensure they were legally and ethically able to digitise *Spare Rib* and make it open access. This clearly has much to do with the status of the institutions; the BL, as the national library must strictly adhere to the law and formal procedures, whereas Stefan stated that the independent nature of the BI allowed him to be flexible. Both Polly and Stefan stated they were anti-censorship, however, Polly tempered this by saying that she did understand there were legitimate reasons for some material not being made available open access, for example, individuals' 'legitimate' concerns about privacy. The Ethical Use of *Spare Rib* web page also takes care to define the boundaries around the CC license. Stefan's discourse, on the other hand, emphasised the idea that 'information wants to be free' (Sheffield, 2016). He was forthright about not concerning himself too greatly with issues around whether an item should or shouldn't be digitised, and suggested his position was a challenge to the conservative suppression of LGBTQ material. Ajamu, however, provided reasons for the conditions of access to the rukus! archive which relate to the intersectional experience of the archive's subjects. Viewed through a QTIPPOC lens then, it seems that a nuanced and careful approach should be taken when considering digital open access projects.
As previously mentioned, my attempts to encourage discussion around the intersection of digital LIS practises and the sociopolitical conditions of marginalised communities donating collections to institutions did not generate much text. Indeed, as can be seen in my Literature Review, much of this kind of discussion seems to be happening outside of the UK. Ajamu characterised the digital environment as 'cold', and emphasised that the specific purpose of rukus! is to investigate the 'ephemeral' aspects of Black LGBT experience which he did not think could be captured digitally. Furthermore, though Jan from the LMA talked about the ways in which the institution was using digital media, the discussion centred around the problematic issues of the networked environment. By contrast she became passionate when relating some of the “in real life” events that have taken place at the LMA which have provoked interesting 'conversations that I don't think we've ever seen in that space'. Similarly, though Stefan from the BI was enthusiastic about the access potential of digital media and confirmed the BI would be expanding in this area, he also related an anecdote about the group Gendered Intelligence bringing a group of young trans people to the BI, who Stefan described as thinking 'what the fuck are we doing at a library?' you know, but by the end they had cuttings out, they had books out, some of which they were wetting themselves at, 'trans in the 1950s!'. He tied this anecdote to the idea of making the BI a welcoming place to encourage use, and emphasised that this tangible experience could not be done away with. Vicky from the NA also took care to stress that the digital environment was important in terms of access and reach, but went on to describe the emotion of the Mangrove Nine event, saying 'there is something very powerful about, definitely, about the physical contact with the document', and evoking the importance of creating a multigenerational space for dialogue. Cvetkovich's (2003) assertion that the queer archive resides in everyday lived experience is instantiated in these examples of intangible, ephemeral responses to the archive. As well as the experiences of donors and users of the archive, these examples also show archivists themselves experiencing significant emotional moments, and this may go some way to explain, beyond resource constraints, why there not been such an emphasis on experimenting with the potentials of the digital environment.
Conclusion

Towards the end of our interview, I asked Ajamu, co-founder of the rukus! archive, whether he had anything else he wanted to add that we hadn’t already covered. His response was, ‘archives are too important to be left to archivists. That’s my quote. Yeah, so I guess it comes back down to who is left out of queer histories, and usually it’s Black and brown people’ (see Appendix). Ajamu’s concern, that of the accessibility of QTPOC histories via cultural heritage, is similar to that of Burin and Ahaiwe Sowinski (2014) quoted in the Introduction. His implicit assumption is that in the current LIS climate, professional archivists are either not QTPOCs themselves, or if they are, they do not sufficiently challenge oppressive discourses underpinning archival procedures. With this statement, Ajamu also implies that the input of non-professionals, such as grassroots archivists and community groups, is essential when dealing with the QTPOC archive, as they stand outside of the traditional archival discourse. Given that Ajamu donated rukus! to the LMA, his statement may be viewed less as an attack on formal archival procedure per se, and more as a provocation, a desire to shake up institutional assumptions based on white heteronormativity, or as Derrida (1996) would have it, the archive as an apparatus of the state which serves to further the oppression and omission of people not of the dominant social group.

If we view QTPOC archives such as rukus! through the lens of Cvetkovich’s Archive of Feelings (2003), understanding that they are ‘composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history’ (p. 268) the urgency of Ajamu’s statement makes sense. The non-traditional, often ephemeral documents frequently comprising LGBTQ and POC archives, as well as the emotional resonance and the political stakes that are unable to be divided from their marginalised status render them more than just collections of documents that may be dispassionately managed by LIS professionals who perhaps have little understanding of the personal and sociopolitical context from where they came. Taken to its logical conclusion, Foucault’s (1972) statement that archives are the ‘first the law of what can be said’ (p, 129) demonstrates that archivists have the power to defuse or enunciate the power of a collection, and thus, if LIS professionals are invested in democratising the archive
or otherwise challenging hegemonic narratives around history and identity, there must be critique around who “gets” to manage the archive, and the practises that are employed.

If the LGBTQ, POC or QTIP0C archive is constructed via the lived experience of its subjects, then it is an example of Derrida’s archival violence (1996) to force them to submit to dominant archival epistemologies, or utilise “one-size-fits-all” archival procedures. The consequences of doing so can be seen in the critique and subsequent redaction of On Our Backs (OOB), wherein Reveal Digital, a company that ostensibly views open access (OA) as a public good (its tagline ‘Help Reveal...a Library’s Hidden Collection’ constructs its goal as one of collective enlightenment) can find its mission perceived as ‘an act of aggression and oppression’ (Hathcock, 2016). The digital archive fever that drives such projects has the unfortunate effect of masking the specific political contexts marginalised collections sit within.

Eschewing the archival discourse of “recovery” wherein diversity “gaps” are identified and filled by merely adding the collections of marginalised groups to the archive as an afterthought is an important step to challenging the hegemonic practises of formal cultural heritage institutions (e.g. Kim, 2015, Thi Nguyen, 2015). A participatory approach built on reciprocal relationships between institutions and community groups/grassroots archivists is a means by which the archive and access to it can be democratised (Flinn, Stevens, Shepherd, 2009).

This approach is exemplified by LMA’s emphasis on building strong relationships with community groups, identified by Jan and Richard of the LMA and Ajamu as vital to maintaining non-oppressive dynamics with donors such as rukus!. Though there are occasional clashes between the requirements of formal archival procedures and the democratic relationship between the two parties, all three interview participants viewed the partnership in a positive light. When viewed via a QOC critique (Brockenbrough, 2015), what is salient is the extent to which the rukus! archive can maintain its purpose and integrity within its institutional context whilst utilising what the institution has to “offer” to become accessible to a wider audience, a clear example of a QOC strategy of resistance. Instead of digital archive fever taking over, what is seen is akin to Withey’s (University of Kansas IDRH,
2015) ‘slowing down’ of archival procedures, as founders Ajamu and Topher are consulted about every aspect of the use of the collection.

However, as we can see in the case of the British Library’s (BL) redaction of some of *Spare Rib*, even if the institution commits to an ethical relationship with community groups/donors as the BL did with the *Spare Rib* community, aspects of copyright law may still conflict. In this example, we see a mismatch between the democratising potential of digital information technologies which are developing rapidly, and copyright law which struggles to keep up. While the intentional redactions of indigenous information in the *Digital Dynamics Across Cultures* database is rooted in ethics and the desire to provoke discourse around the power dynamics of the production of knowledge, the redactions of *Spare Rib* arose from an over-zealous adherence to intellectual property by various trade bodies in a move that failed to understand the social justice intention of the producers of the material or the material itself. By extension, we can perceive this as problematic for other queer and feminist collections, given the non-traditional, collective nature of many publications arising from these communities that mean they will not sit neatly within the confines of UK copyright law. These two examples of redactions are not two sides of the same coin, and indeed recall Withey’s (University of Kansas, IDRH, 2015) assertion that the language of “censorship versus OA” often serves to occlude understandings of diverse ethical systems underpinning information sharing.

Stefan Dicker’s advocates a “just do it” approach to opening up access to collections, including digitisation, constructing this stance as a radical challenge to conservative discourse which may seek to suppress LGBTQ voices. However, as Brockenbrough (2015) suggests, ‘bringing race, class, and culture to bear on politics of queer visibility’ (p. 37) is vital for the ethical management of QTIPoC cultural histories, and as such it cannot be assumed that OA is appropriate for all LGBTQ collections. This emphasises the importance of an intersectional analysis, and will require cultural heritage institutions dealing with QTIPoC collections to become ‘intimately acquainted, if they are not already, with the sociohistorical realities of historically oppressed groups’ (Bowleg, 2008, p. 318). This may demand institutions relinquish assumptions about the importance of expert professional knowledge and archival procedure in favour of incorporating epistemological stances that
are more in keeping with the nature and source of the collections, ensuring collections are
dealt with on a case by case basis rather than as one of many options for digitisation.
Though most of the interview participants acknowledged that intersectionality was a
feature of many of their collections, my research only led me to one collection that was
explicitly understood by both the institution and the donors as intersectional, (rukus!). This
points to the need for further exploration by the LIS sector regarding intersectional
identities and how they may impact on collections and formal practises.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are by no means fixed, and indeed, as
mentioned in the Methodology chapter, a theory has not been developed from the data.
Rather, themes have been constructed which may signpost future research. One of the
difficulties with this study was that, as previously mentioned, only one of the institutions
included had the resources to conduct large scale digital information management projects
(the BL). For that reason, much of the text used for my analysis was based on theoretical
assumptions made by participants who had not necessarily had the opportunity to test the
overlapping sociopolitical forces that shape the ethical boundaries of the digital
management of QTIPOC collections. The fact that my questions around the digital
information environment did not engender much response from participants suggests that
this is an area that has not provoked much analysis in the UK yet. However, given the
exponential growth of discussions happening in the US and elsewhere (as demonstrated in
the Literature Review) it is clearly an area in urgent need of investigation to mitigate the
possibilities of future unethical practises being applied as cultural heritage institutions
expand their digital collections.

Even so, many of the power structures determining the ethical, legal and technical issues of
digital information management were also found to be present in discourses around
physical collections. An investigation into participatory relationships of other LGBTQ or POC
community groups/donors with cultural heritage institutions would serve to contextualise
the LMA/rukus! partnership, identifying how unique that relationship is, and whether there
are overlapping aspects which could be extended to the construction of ethical guidelines
for cultural heritage institutions to follow when obtaining collections from marginalised
communities.
Further exploration into the spectrum of control of marginalised communities may have over their cultural heritage would also be useful to identify various strategies that these communities employ, again feeding into potential ethical guidance for cultural heritage institutions. Approaches such as those taken by the National Archives to involve communities in participatory metadata and social media should be investigated from the perspective of users. This would provide a counterpoint to my research which only presents the perspectives of employees of the institution who do not necessarily embody the identities reflected in the collections they manage.

Finally, the interplay between ethics, legality and technology is a complex one, but cannot be extracted from the context of the collections and the communities they are sourced from if access to the archive is to be democratised. How might this bespoke approach be managed by cultural heritage institutions frequently bound up in traditional practises and pressures of their governing bodies? And how can QTIPoC and other marginalised communities ensure that they harness the possibilities offered by digital information technologies and resist hegemonic archival practises to retain control over their own cultural heritage?
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