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User studies and user education programmes in archival institutions

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine user studies as well as user education within the context of public services offered by archival institutions. It highlighted some of the key aspects that constitute both concepts drawing from history in order to provide a better understanding in the context of current professional discussions.

Design/methodology/approach – The review analysed peer-reviewed articles ranging from the late 1970s to the present time to illuminate debates in the archival professional underpinning the current understanding of user studies and user education.

Findings – The paper outlined the different paths used in user studies to ensure data collection is exhaustive and provides a nuanced assessment of user needs. It also outlined the two related paradigms of structuring user education programmes, highlighted the points at which they differ and the rich discussions resulting from comparative analysis.

Originality/value – The paper demonstrated that there is a rich corpus of professional literature on both user studies and user education, expounding on different aspects that would ensure both are designed and implemented effectively.

Keywords Archives, Reference services, User studies, Public services, Public programming, User education

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

From the 1960s to the early 2000s the archival profession, especially in North America, engaged in evaluating its perception of services offered to the public (Brett and Jones, 2013). The debate was characterised by two schools of thought, on the one side the material-centred and on the other side the use-centred (Feliciati and Alfier, 2014, pp. 174-175; Sinn, 2007, pp. 52-53). While the material-centred school of thought was associated with the archival profession's past heritage, the use-centred school of thought was the result of a robust debate on the deconstruction and reconstruction of the basic tenets on which the profession has been based (Cross, 1997; Greene, 2010; Harris, 2010; Marquis, 1997/1998). The material-centred school of thought was identified with the truism of archivists traditionally seeing themselves as "keepers of records", and their primary task being to preserve the integrity of the documentary heritage within their sphere of responsibility. The risk in this exclusive view is the high likelihood of limiting provision of service to information seekers that were already in constant contact with archival institutions. The view sought by the use-centred school of thought was to shift the attention from the archival material to current and potential users and their needs, thereby justifying the preservation of the records (Murambiwa and Ngulube, 2011).

The views expressed herein are those of the author and should not be attributed to the author's current employer, the International Atomic Energy, nor any of the author's previous employers.

While this view prevailed in many of the discussions, there is need for balance in order for it to be purposeful and effectual. Several commentators noted that, at the very extreme end, the material-centred viewpoint may misunderstand the primacy of the need to protect the integrity of archival records (Eastwood, 1997; Todd, 2006, p. 184). Eastwood (1997, p. 28) added that Hilary Jenkinson advocated the primary duty of archival professions being to protect the integrity of materials and secondary duties being to make them available, highlighting that such primacy is just a sequential order.

Regardless of the school of thought one subscribes, it is imperative to ensure that one has a broad understanding of the main issues related to who uses the services of archival institutions and how users are best assisted in meeting their information needs. Within the tapestry of debate between the two schools of thought, a number of terms have been used interchangeably with the risk of obscuring an understanding of the main issues (Duff *et al.*, 2013). Eastwood (1997) argued that what had been defined as reference service was a component of public services offered by archival institutions, the other component being public programming and outreach (Cook, 1990). For purposes of this discussion, this author takes public programming and outreach to constitute user studies, user education, exhibition programmes and publications programmes as illustrated below.

Eastwood (1997, p. 29) described public services as aimed at "communicating knowledge of the mandate and holdings of archival institutions". Within this framework, the objective of reference services is to assist any user that walks in or has access to the archival institution's holdings through the "interaction between archivist and user […] encompassing everything from the registration of researchers to the design of search rooms, the circulation of materials, and the administration of copying and other services, including legal and security concerns in the reference rooms" (Eastwood, 1997, p. 33).

On the other hand, the aspiration in public programming and outreach is "instructing members of the public in the mandate, nature, holdings, and services of the institution or program" (Eastwood, 1997, p. 34). As Figure 1 illustrates, user studies and user education could be considered constituent parts of public programming, the other parts being exhibitions programmes and publications programmes (that may include brochures and school kits). Although reference service and public programming often work in tandem and invariably benefit from each other, the former is often viewed as more mundane and common in any institution's routine activities, while the latter is more "episodic" since it has to be specifically designed and implemented.
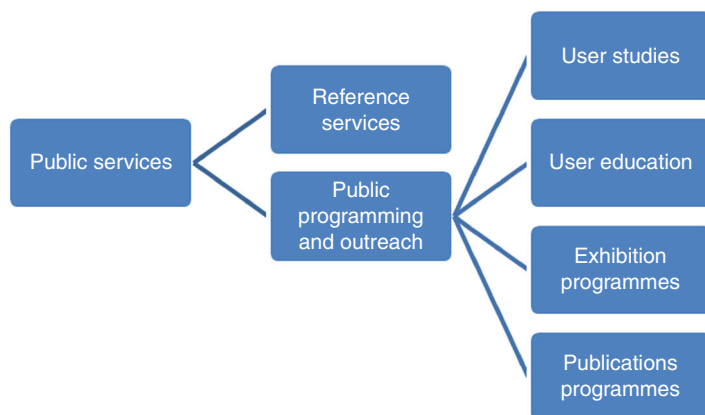

Figure 1.
Defining public
services

User studies

User studies are often considered as activities that involve the development of user profiles through the collection of information about institutions' clientele. However, the activities should include analysis and interpretation of that information for integration into other institutional programmes and services (Brice and Shanley-Roberts, 2009, p. 15; Cordell, 2013, p. 10). In the most elementary sense, users are those seeking information on archival materials (Conway, 1986, p. 395). But this simplistic definition may not serve any purpose in user studies since viewing information seekers in one large category means that the unique needs of individual groupings are not identified and addressed. Several commentators have argued that users do not come to archival institutions to use the historical material, but rather to address their own problems or satisfy their own curiosities (Blais and Enns, 1990; Freeman, 1985). Freeman (1985, pp. 89-97) used the analogy of people going to a hardware store to buy quarter-inch drill bits but in their minds they really needed to create quarter-inch holes, and if there was a better way of getting the desired results, they would no longer buy the quarter-inch bits.

There have been diverse views about how to characterise users. Pugh (2005) stated that there were two main categories of users, the vocational and avocational. In the vocational category, Pugh (2005, p. 37) grouped staff of the parent institution, professional users (who may include lawyers, legislators, engineers, urban planners) as well as scholars, students and teachers. Pugh (2005, pp. 41-43) argued that the avocational group consisted of genealogists and non-professionals as well as other hobbyists. Genealogists have formed a large percentage of avocational users in many countries in the Global North (Duff and Johnson, 2003; Little, 2008; Reynolds, 1996, p. 59) but are not as many in other societies in the Global South that live with the hybrid reality of both orality and literate knowledge production and use (Katuu, 2003; Mpe, 2002).

Wilson (1995) offered a more accommodating taxonomy constituting internal users, those within the institution generating the archival material, and external users being the full population outside the institution. Within these two categories are three general groupings: primary, secondary and passive users. Primary users would be those that use records whether they are onsite or remotely while secondary users are those who make use of records through the work of others, and passive users are those who "occasionally and perhaps without realizing it become secondary users" (Wilson, 1995, pp. 65-66).

These definitions have relied on the categorisation of users based on their informational needs. However, one aspect that has been marginalised is that of including users with special challenges, both physical and/or mental. Several commentators have outlined critical issues when dealing with users who are visually or aurally impaired or have mobility challenges (Fischer, 1979, pp. 463-464; Kepley, 1983, pp. 42-51). Any good user studies should be able to identify the special needs that an institution's users have; a necessary first step in the process of appropriately addressing such needs. Thus, the aim of developing a taxonomy of users is not to create a monolithic perspective to viewing users but rather to use this as a window that facilitates a nuanced assessment of users that already or could, in future, patronise an archival institution.

Purpose of user studies

According to Maher (1986, pp. 15-16), there are several reasons for studying users: in order to justify institutional programmes; or in order to develop information products

used either for internal administrative purposes or other institutional operations; or in order to foster a research understanding among the institution's staff. Maher (1986, p. 16) argued that many administrators and decision makers do not readily understand the intangible benefits of investing in managing archival institutions. Therefore solid data on use of archival material could be employed in the process of making requests for expanded resources or advancing policies that support the institution's activities. For these reasons user studies could be instrumental in programme justification. This is particularly necessary in the Global South where national archival institutions have historically suffered constrains in financial and human capacity resources (Barata *et al.*, 2002, p. 85; Katuu, 2009, p. 139) as they face the challenges brought about by the new digital age (Jimerson, 2003; Katuu, 1999). While those challenges are not unique to Africa, for instance, they are most critical in the continent which has also faced a myriad of challenges including economic hardships, socio-political tensions, as well as less than adequate human and physical resources (Abbott, 1999; Mazikana, 1997; Ngoepe and Keakopa, 2011). Commentators added that the public in Africa, in particular, have very little awareness of the resources available in their archival institutions (Kamatula *et al.*, 2013; Mnjama, 2004).

However, Turnbaugh (1986, p. 27) cautioned that although "[u]ser studies provide archivists with a useful tool for internal planning and analysis, but they are less reliable when used to justify program to authorities outside the archives". Turnbaugh (1986, p. 27) added that the process of programme justification can be deceptive because "[w]hile persuasive argument can indeed be made on the basis on user studies, persuasive arguments can be made on many other grounds as well. In many instances, such justifications are more a formality than a reality". Since the planning process in archival institutions depends on numerous components, user studies often contribute minimally in decision makers' discussions because the studies often demonstrate evidence of past patterns rather than contributing to the prediction of future patterns (Taylor and Parish, 2009, p. 194; Turnbaugh, 1986, pp. 30-32). Therefore, regardless whether an archivist is in the Global North or the Global South, it would be foolhardy to assign any exaggerated role to user studies in the planning process. For these reasons, user studies need to be conducted with measured sense of realism.

By the end of the 1990s, Eastwood (1997, p. 32) noted a dearth of data on uses and users "even if much can be gleaned from the intuitive observations and experience of archivists and from the raw numerical data reported by archival institutions and programs". Conway (1986, p. 393) noted that a reluctance within the archival profession to "develop a better understanding of users […] [seems] less a problem of will than a problem of method". This reluctance was true in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. However, the 2000s saw more user studies conducted using different methods, some more elaborate than others. While some studies were designed to yield quantitative information, others have yielded qualitative information that provides data in a linguistic form that is not translated into a location on a numerical scale (David and Sutton, 2004, pp. 35-37). The interest in qualitative information is to explore micro-intentions and personal meanings, providing depth rather than just breadth of information (Eldridge, 2014, p. 306). Maher (1986) demonstrated that by using different types of user studies, different information could be elicited and therefore provide varied perspectives.

Designing user studies

Conway (1986, pp. 394-395) argued that while archivists have, historically, known the value of user studies, they have been less sure about how to design useful studies

and especially who and what should be studied, when and where studies should be conducted as well as how to gather information systematically. Traditionally, archivists had used orientation and exit interviews to query researchers but they have been unable, for a long time, "to develop a comprehensive approach that links the basic objectives of a user study program and a practical way of gathering and recording valid, reliable information from users" (Conway, 1986, p. 395). There have been extensive studies made in library and information studies on user needs and behaviours (Wilson, 1999). This includes studies within library institutions (Fidzani, 1998; Wilson, 2006) as well as studies on web visitors to memory resources such as the Mandela Portal (Katuu and Hatang, 2010). However, the lessons that offer immediate applicability for archival institutions are limited to explaining the differences between the types of users, the kind and the way information is sought and how that information is used.

Conway (1986, p. 397) designed a framework for studying users in archival institutions represented through a matrix as shown in Table I.

It is apparent from the content in the matrix that it was published in the mid-1980s when technological developments were not as sophisticated as they are currently. For instance, microforms are now generally considered relics of the past and the web has revolutionised institutional engagement with users (Kriesberg, 2014; McLeod, 2012; Sinn, 2012). Nonetheless the principle of having five stages of user engagement identified in the structure is technologically neutral and therefore remains valid. Many

	Stage 1. Registration (all users/always)	Stage 2. Orientation (all users at selected times)	Stage 3. Follow up (sample users/ selected times)	Stage 4. Survey (random sample)	Stage 5. Experiments (special groups)
Quality	Nature of task Definition in terms of subject, format, scope	Preparation of researcher Experience Stage of defined problem Basic/applied Anticipated service	Search strategies and mechanics Search order Positive/negative search Who recommended Time spent searching Time spent talking	Expectations and satisfaction Styles of research Approaches to searching Levels of service	Access and non-use Frustration indexes Perceptions of use
Integrity	Identification Name Address Telephone Agree to rules	Knowledge of holdings and services Written sources Verbal sources	Intensity and frequency of use Collections used Time spent with files	Alternative to physical use Value and use of microforms Value of use of databases	Format independence linkage with information creation Technology and information
Value	Membership in networks Group affiliation Can we contact you? Can we tell others?	Intended use Purpose in terms of function and product	Significant use significant info Importance of archives Other sources Valuable information Gaps in information	Impact of use Increased use Citation patterns Decision making	Role of historical information in society Total potential demand Community network analysis

Table I.
Framework of studying the users of archives

of the components of this framework were incorporated in the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) Reference Manual that outlines the stages of a user study as:

(1) choosing the question to be studied;

(2) defining the population;

(3) deciding the research method to be used, i.e. census, survey, panel study, case studies, focus group interviews or field experiments;

(4) gathering and analysing data; and

(5) reporting, circulating and using findings (Pugh, 2005, pp. 102-104).

The first two stages of a user study in the SAA's Reference Manual are similar to any research process that involves identifying a question or a set of questions, "collating and integrating current knowledge on the topic; designing a method to collect information to inform the research question; and finally developing new conclusions from the evidence" (Hickson, 2008, p. 3). The third, fourth and fifth stages of a user study require the utilisation of tools that could be used in the interactions that archivists have with users as shown in Table II (Pugh, 2005, p. 104).

Table II cites seemingly related data gathering tools such as Initial Interviews, Exit Interviews as well as Telephone Follow-up. Data gathering tools such as the Reference Log could be used to easily track and record information on researchers at different points of the service continuum with a view to consolidate activities (Conway, 1986, p. 401). The curious inclusion of records management as a method of indirect contact presumably relates to drawing from records that already exist based on previous direct contact opportunities. Commentators have noted that records management should not just be considered a source of information about users but also about the types of archival material the users accessed (Anderson, 2007; Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

User education
One of the ways in which user studies can be incorporated into the services of archival institutions is through user education. User education is aimed at increasing public understanding, appreciation and utilisation of archival material, benefiting from knowledge gained from user studies (Kemoni, 2002). Several commentators including Freivogel (1978, p. 147, footnote 2) and Phillips (1995, p. 99) have noted that the concept of user education had often been used interchangeably with other public programming activities such as the exhibitions programme (whether in-house or travelling), or the

Point of contact	Method of contact	
	Direct contact	Indirect contact
Pre-visit (getting potential users)	Community analysis	Citation analysis
	Focus groups	Records management
Actual contact	Reference logs	Call slip analysis
	Registration	Photocopy requests
	Initial (or entrance) interview	Time motion studies of staff
	Exit interview	
	Observation	
Post-visit	Telephone follow-up	Citation analysis
	Follow-up survey	

Table II.
Resources used in
collecting user
study information

publications programme (whether designing brochures or school kits). However, over the last few decades there has been a differentiation of these concepts (Dewey, 2001; Ruan and Sung, 2003, p. 83). In user education, the archival professionals will identify a target audience and their level of sophistication, think of how to present the institutional mandate and activities in formats that best suit the users' needs, and prepare a venue and time for training them (Freivogel, 1978, p. 150; Vilar and Šauperl, 2014). User education, therefore, contrasts with exhibition programmes, for example, where the archivists will prepare and display archival material and may target a specific type of audience but do not necessarily dictate who will visit the exhibition (Gelfand, 2013; Gordon, 1994). In publications programmes, brochures and leaflets may be used to package and disseminate information on the archival mandate and activities but these are often broadcast as opposed to being targeted to a specific audience (Cook, 1990; Myres, 1979).

Purpose of user education

User education programmes, like other public programming activities, are necessary in order to increase public awareness of the archivists' profession since "[m]any archives are neither as well understood nor as heavily used as they could be" (Eastwood, 1997, p. 34). This is not only common in the Global South where the public have very little awareness of archival institutions and their resources (Kamatula *et al.*, 2013; Mnjama, 2004), it is also common in the Global North (Cotton and Sharron, 2011, p. 14). Through education programmes, the public get a broad view of the different services archival institutions have to offer in order to expound on the number and variety of ways of exploring archival resources depending on users' information needs. The intention is to have an enlightened public that better understands an archival institution's legal, physical and intellectual access policies, why they are justified and how they are administered within the institution.

Design of user education

There are a few published instances of archival education programmes in institutions (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 60). Wurl (1986) shared a rare example of the development of a user education course at the University of Toledo's Division of Continuing Education. The course was aimed at assisting members of the public to recognise, appreciate and understand issues related to the basic historical records found in their homes. The course was offered over five two-hour long sessions with each session acquainting the users with a specific aspects of the overall theme (Wurl, 1986, p. 184).

An assessment of literature reveals an evolution of perspectives in user education from a traditional to a newer participatory paradigm. In the traditional paradigm archival institutions consider user education programmes as "episodes or events" (Freivogel, 1978, p. 148; Kemoni, 2002). Traditionally, user education sessions have been conducted through special public lecturers, workshops, seminars or mini-courses on certain aspects of archival holdings or services (Collis, 2008, p. 184; Eastwood, 1997, p. 34). With the advent of the web in the 1990s, it became possible to develop online educational courses that would be available to the target users at the time and pace of learning at their convenience. This helped overcome the limitations of physical space, availability of instructors and other resource needed for face-to-face education opportunities (Katte, 2002). Regardless of the extent to which there is use of technology,

the traditional paradigm holds user education programmes as events. Therefore, the approach to such interventions is often well delineated. Freivogel (1978, p. 151) argued three options in designing user education programmes: hiring an external consultant, working through a network in order to share resources (e.g. professional educators may also hold joint positions in archival institutions or specially trained archival educator holding joint positions in different institutions) or a do-it-yourself approach (where the institution engages the talents and interests of staff). Either one of these options will depend on the amount of financial, human or material resources that is at the institution's disposal, the identified needs and the preferred means of meeting those needs.

An additional characteristic of the traditional paradigm is users being viewed as recipients of knowledge from archivists. Users have often viewed archivists, at one extreme, as being "infallible" or, more moderately, they have relied heavily on archivists' knowledge (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 67). Wurl (1986, pp. 184-186) argued that as users become familiar with creative ways of exploring and exploiting archival material and, by extension, advance their understanding of "the value and relevance of archival institutions" and their holdings, archivists should communicate the fact that these user education programmes only acquaint rather than train the public. This cautionary statement is necessary lest the users are led into a perilous sense of overconfidence with the knowledge they have. Wurl (1986, p. 186) argued "[a] little knowledge is sometimes more dangerous than none". In this paradigm knowledge flows from archivists to users.

In contrast, within the participatory paradigm users are not merely recipients of knowledge from archivists but are also active contributors in the education process. In this paradigm there is an acknowledgement that users can contribute to archival processes because they come with certain levels of expertise but also have certain responsibilities and, therefore, are expected to contribute in the education process (Huvila, 2008; Yakel and Torres, 2003).

As active participants, users are acknowledged to having expertise in different domains. According to Yakel and Torres (2003, p. 52), the first domain is subject knowledge which is "an understanding of the topic being researched". For instance, a user that has expertise in an aspect of local history would visit an archival institution to enhance their knowledge on that particular subject of inquiry. Archivists would need to assess the level of subject expertise through users studies in order to provide the appropriate assistance. For instance, elementary school students would not have the same subject expertise as other archival users and, therefore, their education programmes would have to be delivered differently (Gilliland-Swetland *et al.*, 1999; Huntley, 2013).

Beyond subject expertise, Huvila (2008, p. 16) argued that users need to contextualise both "records and the entire archival process". Users may want to look at individual records and satisfy their information needs from the content they provide. However, contextual information about how those records were generated and maintained over time adds different dimensions to the outcomes of archival research. If such records are generated in a digital environment then there are additional invisible aspects that impact creation and maintenance. For these reasons, Cunningham (2001) argued for incorporating metadata generated before records are transferred to archival custody. Yakel and Torres (2003, p. 52) see these aspects of the records and the entire archival process constituting what they term as artifactual literacy, which is "the ability to interpret records and assess their value as evidence".

450

Yakel and Torres (2003) argued a third domain is archival intelligence that comprise three aspects:

(1) knowledge of archival theory, practice and procedures;

(2) the ability to develop strategies to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity; and

(3) intellective skills.

While archival intelligence is related to artifactual literacy, it differs because it "refers to knowledge about the environment in which the search for primary sources is being conducted" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 52).

The first aspect of archival intelligence is "the researcher's knowledge of archival principles, practices and institutions" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 52). For instance, researchers would do well to be educated about records existing within a hierarchy of contextual frameworks that move from the general to the specific: juridical-administrative, provenancial, procedural, documentary and technological (InterPARES 2 Project, 2007; MacNeil, 2004; Rogers, 2015). This hierarchy of context could be demonstrated in archival concepts such as provenance and functional analysis (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 77). This knowledge would enhance the researcher's knowledge base about how archivists process archival material in appraisal as well as arrangement and description and eventually develop finding aids used to assist in information search. Waiser (2015), drawing from his experience as a professional historian accessing archival services over four decades, argued that users needed a basic understanding of how archival institutions worked in order to better utilise the services.

The second aspect of archival intelligence is "the means for developing search strategies to explore research questions" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 52). The ability to search archival collections is often dictated both by the quality of archival finding aids and the expertise of users to exploit those finding aids. However, not many archival institutions have completed their arrangement and description projects or developed complete and exhaustive finding aids (Greene, 2010, pp. 191-192). In addition, the challenges of managing digital records have prompted practitioners to explore innovative ways of fulfiling their archival mandate in processes such as appraisal (Conway, 2015, p. 65). For instance, Lemieux (2015) argued that visual analytics could be included as a tool for supporting archival arrangement and description. While visual analytics experimentation in the archival profession is still at a nascent stage, "an archival future in which interactive visual tools help archivists perform archival analysis and assist researchers to explore archival documents is both achievable and likely to be at least one answer to realizing a more sustainable archival future" (Lemieux, 2015, p. 46). The use of technologies such as visual analytics could offer "strategies for reducing uncertainty and ambiguity when unstructured problems and ill-defined solutions are the norms" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 54).

The third aspect of archival intelligence is intellective skills or "an understanding of the relationship between primary sources and their surrogates" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 52). This entails the "ability to understand the connection between representations of documents, activities, and processes and the actual object or process being represented" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 54). Intellective skills are essential in a world where professionals are questioning the fundamentals on which theory is built, and, particularly in the context of digitisation projects, differentiating digital surrogates to their original sources (Conway, 2015; Huvila, 2008). Lymn (2014, p. 397) argued that surrogacy is a purposeful act that is not just about making a copy but "about making something that

stands in and has the function of the thing that it is 'surrogating' […] [and] isn't necessarily an exact copy of the material". For records that are part of the analog-to-digital transformational processes, practitioners have acknowledged that archival surrogacy has certain challenges "when there is a distinctive, transparent, and documentable connection between source documents and digital copies that themselves are subjected to the mediating forces of imaging technologies, routinized physical manipulation by human agents, and image file processing algorithms" (Conway, 2015, p. 65). Some or all these "mediating forces may also exert themselves in the context of born digital archival records" but often manifest in different ways in digital environments (Conway, 2015, p. 65; Lymn, 2014, p. 397).

From the perspective of the participatory paradigm, user education programmes need to acknowledge the expertise levels of users. On the one end are users with much lower subject domain knowledge; for instance, those in elementary school, while on the other end are experts with a high level of subject domain expertise. In addition, users may have varied expertise in artifactual literacy or archival intelligence. User education is therefore not just merely orienting users on how to conduct research within specific environments, it has to acknowledge their needs and provide a "broader and deeper curriculum" (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 77). For expert users, the user education programme may include:

> […] the vocabulary of archives and the meaning embedded in that vocabulary including higher-level archival concepts such as provenance and functional analysis. Instruction in formulating search strategies to reduce ambiguity and developing tactics for navigating analog and digital access tools is also a critical element in archival literacy. Finally, researchers need to understand the primary source representation relationship (Yakel and Torres, 2003, pp. 77-78).

The traditional and participatory paradigms of user education, if seen as being at two ends of a continuum, have no hard boundaries. Therefore, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This means that a user education programme could display aspects of either paradigm to different degrees. Nonetheless, regardless of whether user education programmes lean towards one or the other paradigm, they are fundamentally about addressing the information needs of users.

Concluding remarks

Commentators have lamented a dearth of archival literature on both user studies and user education (Eastwood, 1997, p. 32; Yakel and Torres, 2003, pp. 53-54). This paper attempted to highlight some of the key aspects that constitute both concepts drawing from history in order to provide a better understanding within the current professional discussions within the context of public services offered by archival institutions.

For user studies, the paper highlighted that it is essential to develop a taxonomy that acknowledges the nuanced assessment of user needs. In order to do this it outlined five stages of user engagement (Conway, 1986, p. 397), as well as five stages of conducting user studies (Pugh, 2005, pp. 102-104). The result of this process is a taxonomy of users and their needs. However, this should not result in a monolithic perspective of the users but opens a window that facilitates a nuanced assessment of users that patronise an archival institution.

The paper highlighted that user education is about equipping users with the ability to exploit archival resources to meet their own information needs. A review of the literature revealed two related paradigms of structuring user education programmes.

The traditional paradigm has user education programmes that are largely events based and where the flow of knowledge is from archivists to users. The participatory paradigm is characterised by a more interactive approach with an acknowledgement that users have a level of expertise. Therefore, the focus on user education is not just on "assisting researchers to use a specific repository for a particular project" but to leverage user expertise in enhancing archival research (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 54).

Both user studies and user education programmes occur within a larger institutional and professional context. For instance, there are backlogs in a significant number of archival institutions (Prom *et al.*, 2007; Santamaria, 2015). There are different suggestions on how to address the backlog challenge. One option has been to introduce minimal processing solutions such as "more product, less process" methodology (Greene and Meissner, 2005). In many instances minimal processing solutions have resulted in less detailed finding aids. However, user studies have shown that there are users who want to have more detailed finding aids (Duff *et al.*, 2004). Echoing this perspective, Lemieux (2015, p. 26) argued that while minimal processing solutions may increase archivists' productivity they are "unlikely to generate finding aids that enhance scholarly research processes or protect the authenticity, security, or integrity of archives".

Another example of institutional backlog is with appraisal of archival material. Turnbaugh (1986, p. 30) argued that user studies should not be used as a tool for appraisal since "the point of user studies is to help an archive develop an atmosphere of realism on the part of the staff, to teach it to cope with situations as they are rather than as they might be or as one would like them to be". However, more recently a contrary view has been posited. In a study that targeted archivists and records managers in different state archival institutions within the USA, Rhee (2011) argued that most research participants had positive attitudes towards the feasibility and value of utilising user studies in appraisal practice. In this study, the few research participants that had actually executed user studies for appraisal had proved their viability and worth.

Another professional debate relates to having curatorial responsibilities "shared between archivists (or information managers) and the participants in an archive" (Huvila, 2008, p. 25). Several commentators see the users' partial or full contribution to archival description as enhancing finding aids (Duff and Harris, 2002; Evans, 2007; Greene, 2010). However, for these contributions to positively enhance rather than disrupt archival processes, users would need to be competent in archival intelligence including knowledge of archival principles and practices (Yakel and Torres, 2003, p. 52).

Finally, this paper began with a brief outline of two schools of thought that characterised debate in the archival profession for more than four decades. The discussions on user studies and user education have also been coloured by the differing schools of thought, albeit not as overtly. For instance when Lemieux (2015, p. 26) argued that minimal processing solutions were unlikely to generate "finding aids that […] protect the authenticity, security, or integrity of archives" this reflected the concerns of the material-centred school of thought. On the other hand, Huvila (2008, p. 25) suggested shared curatorial responsibilities between archivists and users and thereby reflecting the use-centred school of thought to challenge basic tenets of the profession. This paper used the touch points of user studies and user education in order to demonstrate these differing perspectives and the nuances that exist.

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