

Documenting Disciplinary History

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Most anthropologists would probably identify "the anthropological record" primarily as the documentation of what anthropologists do in their research. Our professional socialization places greatest importance on data collected during fieldwork, which is undertaken at least in part to record the diversity of human cultures through time and space and to make possible comparison of their empirically attested variabilities to arrive at human universals or cross-cultural regularities.

Few anthropologists would dispute the need to preserve the primary documents from fieldwork as evidence potentially crucial to assessing the validity and reliability of theoretical writing based upon them. The genre of ethnographic writing assumes that readers cannot literally share the experience of the anthropologist who "was there" in the field; the claim to authority incumbent upon that experience has to be made, in one way or another. Clifford Geertz (1988) has suggested that the basis of this claim is one of rhetorical strategy, taken at considerable distance from the substance of the ethnography as such. But professional readers, among them fellow fieldworkers, can and do require that particular evidence be adduced for particular claims. Such evidence both adds verisimilitude to the "having been there" and attests to the scientific character of the relationship between evidence and interpretation, method and theory, experience and inference.

Field notes are our primary data, and they have an almost mystical reality. The identity of the anthropologist, as well as that of the people studied, is encoded within them. Jean Jackson (1980) approached the question of the role of field notes in the social construction of anthropology as a discipline by asking seventy colleagues (chosen without systematic sampling) how they felt about their field notes. Her interviews revealed two common themes: first, most of the anthropologists queried felt very strongly about their field notes, and second, this feeling was often highly ambivalent. To expose one's field notes to public scrutiny was widely perceived as involving great vulnerability, a potential challenge to professional competence, perhaps even personal veracity. To write a theoretical paper that might be critically received did not have the same emotional valence.

The intensity of this association between the fieldwork experience, the personal biography of the anthropologist, the field notes, and the published ethnographic reports calls into serious question the idea that anthropologists' documentation of their fieldwork is somehow

"objective," a "mirror" of what goes on in the real world. The defensiveness of anthropologists about their field notes is itself evidence of the need for documentary fieldwork of a different kind, that is, among the tribe of anthropologists. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that most of us know, deep down, how problematic and contingent our understandings are, how indirectly and tenuously they are based in "facts" and observations. The turn toward such reflexivity in contemporary anthropological theory is at the core of the "experimental moment" hailed by Clifford and Marcus (1986). Many anthropologists who do not embrace the strong form of this critique nevertheless share the conviction that the relationship between theory and evidence, including the experience underlying it, is a necessary part of interpreting any anthropological argument.

Epistemological paradox appears to be inherent in our disciplinary practice; the seemingly opposed stances of participant and observer in our hybrid fieldwork method of "participant-observation" is perhaps the most striking example. Dramatically different modes of interpretation and writing often alternate within the corpus of the single anthropologist, or even may be combined in a given work.

Although it is hardly surprising that the initial efforts toward preserving the anthropological record (as documented in this volume) would assign first priority to the field notes of anthropologists, the second challenge is to record systematically the "history of anthropology for anthropological purposes" (as Silverman puts it in the Introduction). Clearly, these two tasks are interdependent. Anthropologists' reflections on fieldwork and field notes should persuade us that the data provided about "other" cultures are never fully separable from what the researcher brings to the fieldwork, in the form of both professional training and biographical experience.

If it is the case that whatever we learn or say about another society is necessarily arbitrary, it becomes essential to be able to specify the context of observations and interpretations. This means treating the history of anthropology as a problem in anthropology, a problem of ethnographic context that can be documented by fieldwork among ourselves. Such an effort is feasible, since most cultural anthropologists, at least, are already familiar with the methods of archival research and interviews within an orally transmitted culture, be it professional or tribal.

As a social science, anthropology is committed to the idea that there is something out there in the world ("culture" or "society") that can be described and interpreted in various ways. Although few would claim that any given interpretation remains "true" for all time to the preclusion of alternative interpretations, most of us remain convinced that it is possible to evaluate better or worse interpretations, at least in relation to particular purposes. And, of course, these purposes change over time, throughout the history of the discipline and of our society more generally.

A generation after the original research was carried out, the interpretative context in which the work was done — a context that was

easily available to contemporaries — will require reconstruction. Such a task will only be possible if documents about the anthropologist, his/her research, and the professional milieu of the time have been preserved. Thus, records usually thought of as part of the history of anthropology are also crucial to the interpretation of primary documents from fieldwork.

Much of the contemporary reevaluation of "writing culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986) has revolved around rereading the disciplinary canon, perhaps an indication that anthropology is becoming more introspective. Certainly, there are not enough traditional cultures to go around these days; one anthropologist can no longer expect to remain the sole interpreter of a culture to the larger world. Moreover, members of so-called traditional societies increasingly claim the right to speak for themselves and see no need for an anthropologist as mediator. Even more importantly, anthropological self-interrogation is more comfortable at a distance; to assess the work of Malinowski or Boas or Lévi-Strauss is not so personal or threatening as to assess the basis of one's own ethnography. In any case, many of the questions being asked in today's introspective rereading of the disciplinary canon are those long posed by students of the history of anthropology, involving the teasing out of interpersonal networks, professional trainings, institutional frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and personal experiences brought to fieldwork and other disciplinary practices.

To take one example, the field notes and, above all, the diaries of Bronislaw Malinowski have provided invaluable traces of how the mystique of fieldwork as a rite of passage entered professional anthropology (and of how British functionalism came to be seen as its backbone). But the publication of the diaries demonstrated that the anthropologist as hero had feet of clay, with moments of personal despair, distaste for his work, and — by the standards of our time rather than his own — expressions of racism, sexism and ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, it is the diaries rather than the ethnographies that Geertz (1988) took as representative of Malinowski's reportative strategy. Malinowski's reputation as the master of first-hand fieldwork and empathetic evocation of cultural difference had to change in order to incorporate the insights his diaries brought to his ethnographies. The fieldwork and the fieldworker were inseparable.

It is fashionable these days to read earlier works, and some contemporary ones as well, "against the grain." Geertz claims that his book about several major anthropologists (1988) is a contribution to the theory rather than the history of anthropology, implicitly rejecting any critique of his interpretation based on what Malinowski (or any of his contemporaries) thought he was up to. This is a blatantly ahistoricist stance.

Nonetheless, Malinowski left behind sufficient documentation of his life and his fieldwork to allow serious reevaluation of both his career as an anthropologist at a particular point in the history of the discipline and the adequacy with which he represented the culture of the Trobriand Islanders at the time. To use this available information within the canons of responsible historicism does not, of course, invalidate present-day

revisionism. It simply distinguishes the context of the original life and work from the one within which it is interpreted anew. And it insists that existing documents of fieldwork and personal experience are relevant to contemporary interpretation of Malinowski's life and work.

These theoretical debates make it clear that there is now an interest and a need for documentation of our disciplinary history. Our theory tells us that knowing the context of our practice is just as crucial to understanding how we do our work — in the field, the library, and the classroom — as it is to understanding the classic work on which the discipline is based. Reflexivity has become part of anthropological practice. The observers are observed and observe themselves.



Staff of the Department of Anthropology, U.S. National Museum in 1904. Standing (left to right): Edwin H. Hawley, George Maynard, Ales Hrdlicka, Thomas W. Sweeny, Walter Hough, Henry W. Hendley, Richard A. Allen, Edwin P. Upham, Paul Beckwith, Immanuel M. Casanowicz, and Joseph Palmer. Seated (left to right): Miss Malone and Miss L.A. Rosenbusch. SI OPPS Negative 42012.

Who Writes Disciplinary History?

Taking seriously what can be learned from documents in the history of anthropology is not entirely new. We have an honorable disciplinary tradition of doing so, beginning with the question of whether that history should be written by historians or by anthropologists. A. Irving Hallowell (1965) pioneered in this endeavor, insisting that the history of anthropology should be approached by anthropologists using the same standards of evidence and argument that they bring to their work as ethnographers of other cultures. Hallowell wrote both personal

reminiscences of the discipline and document-based histories of the early Americanist tradition. For him, the history of anthropology was, in the first instance, "an anthropological problem." The archival skills of historians were necessary to all anthropologists, whether they were writing disciplinary history or ethnohistory or contemporary ethnography. The history of anthropology was interesting primarily insofar as it drew on the reflexivity of participants assessing their own traditions and ongoing practices. Taking up Hallowell's challenge, Darnell (1974) privileged readings on "History from Within the Discipline," a series of reflexive papers by anthropologists for anthropologists.

Although historians and historians of science certainly have legitimate interests in anthropology and other social sciences, this is a far different problem than the relationship between data and observer that arises from within the reflexivity of anthropologists. For one thing, historians who turn to the history of anthropology are more likely to distance themselves from their subjects than anthropologists reflecting on the accumulated wisdom and beliefs of their own tribe. This point was made by Hymes (1962) with a parable.

Indeed, anthropologists are still uncomfortable being subjects of study rather than students of others. We would prefer to speak for ourselves about what it is we do. The epistemological position of the anthropologist as fieldworker has not generally been considered reversible. To paraphrase Fabian (1983), we deny coevalness to the peoples we study when we assume that "we" are analysts and "they" are not. A genuinely reflexive history of anthropology would have to make room for alternative readings of the documents available in the anthropological record, both by insiders and by various kinds of outsiders (not only historians, but also those we have traditionally studied).

Anthropologists writing about their own history have also differed from historians in that they have privileged the data of the discipline. Historians usually do not have the same enthusiasm for the minutiae of ethnographic description that fascinate most anthropologists. When anthropologists define their responsibilities to preserve the record, it is their deeply ingrained respect for ethnographic documentation that colors the way the task is set — the field notes get first attention, and only afterwards the papers of the anthropologist in his/her full professional and personal capacity.

There is a relationship between professional socialization and approaches to disciplinary history. Anthropologists of the Americanist tradition tend to emphasize the importance of the individual in the emergence of culture. Moreover, the historicism of the early generation of anthropologists in North America lent itself to the collection of life histories, including personal memoirs of their own lives as anthropologists (e.g., Lowie 1959; Kroeber 1950, 1956, 1959; Mead 1957, 1972). The methods of studying other cultures were applied to studying the culture of anthropology; personal experiences were significant because culture was to be understood in relation to the

individual. British social anthropology, in contrast, has tended to emphasize social structure over the individual within it. This view went along with a structural, intellectual approach to the history of British social anthropology, which lacked an interest in reflexive continuities to contemporary practice.



Group portrait of Oxford anthropologists, 1910. Standing: Wilson Dallam Wallis, Diamond Jenness and Charles Marius Barbeau, all students at Oxford. Seated: Henry Balfour of the Pitt Rivers Museum; Arthur Thomson, professor of anatomy and physical anthropologist; and R. R. Marett, who was appointed about this time to a chair in social anthropology.

Linguists, who in North America have had close historical ties to anthropologists, have an established tradition of autobiography and personal documentation (e.g., Sebeok 1963; Davis and O'Cain 1980; Koerner 1991). Linguistic fieldwork with a few fluent speakers of endangered Native American languages may have drawn linguists toward the personal in their sense of disciplinary history. At least in the case of Edward Sapir (Darnell 1990a), this led to an awareness of the unique integration of culture in the mind of each speaker, which in turn led Sapir to move theoretically between grammar, life history, and what he called "the impact of culture on personality."

In contrast, sociologists, our disciplinary neighbors in another direction, have been socialized professionally to study impersonal social forces. Autobiography is minimal and, when it occurs, not personal. The proper role of the sociologist is as witness to forces of sociological concern. For example, there is an enormous literature on the history of the Chicago School of Sociology but very little biography and almost no gossip in the sense so beloved of anthropologists (Darnell 1990b).

The Documentation of Americanist Anthropology

North American anthropology is relatively well documented in part because of the socialization of anthropologists to value the role of individuals in creating and transmitting culture over time. Work in the history of the discipline has not been seen as utterly different in kind from work in other cultures. This has led to a commitment on the part of many individuals to preserve their personal papers as well as their field notes.

Moreover, a few major institutions have established extensive collections of anthropological papers. As described by Ruwell, the National Anthropological Archives holds both the records of the Bureau of American Ethnology and the personal papers of anthropologists associated with it from the 1870s on, such as John P. Harrington and J.N.B. Hewitt. The American Philosophical Society holds a significant collection of documents on American Indian linguistics, ethnology and ethnohistory, as well as the papers of Frank Boas, Edward Sapir, A. Irving Hallowell, Frank Speck, William Fenton, Elsie Clews Parsons, and others, which document much of North American anthropology in this century.

Several other institutions have substantial archival resources for disciplinary history. North American anthropology through the end of the Second World War was centered in a few cities, generally in collaborations between universities and museums (Darnell 1969). The University of California at Berkeley has the papers of Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie. The University of Chicago holds the records of Robert Redfield, Fay-Cooper Cole, Fred Eggan, and Sol Tax, with additional documents located at the Field Museum. Clyde Kluckhohn's papers are at Harvard University, and documents important to archaeology are at the Peabody Museum. The University of Pennsylvania Museum has a substantial archive. The Library of Congress has the papers of Margaret Mead. Yale University has extensive documentation on Edward Sapir, Bronislaw Malinowski, George Peter Murdock and others involved with

the Institute of Human Relations. In New York, the American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University hold significant collections of anthropologists' materials. The Canadian Museum of Civilization (formerly the National Museum of Man) in Ottawa has the administrative papers of Edward Sapir, Diamond Jenness and Marius Barbeau.



Officers of American Association for the Advancement of Science at the Ann Arbor, Michigan meeting in 1885. The Rev James Owen Dorsey (1848- 1895), Vice President of the Section on Anthropology, is standing third from the right. Erminnie A. Smith is seated in front. National Anthropological Archives, Photo Lot 33. Inventory 02872300.

Some individual anthropologists have chosen to leave their papers to institutions closely tied to their personal careers. Ruth Benedict's materials are at her alma mater, Vassar College, while Leslie White's are at the University of Michigan. Alexander Goldenweiser left some papers at Reed College (now copied in the Fenton papers at the American Philosophical Society), while Edward Spicer's are at the University of Arizona.

For some individuals, there are gaps in the record. Edward Sapir, for all the quantity of materials in his administrative files and among the personal papers of his contemporaries, did not leave behind personal correspondence. For Paul Radin, Alexander Goldenweiser and Morris Swadesh, there appears to be no single major collection that forms an easy starting point for the potential biographer. Their activities must be reconstructed, partly through what was preserved in the papers of other individuals and institutions.

In general, archived documentation on the history of anthropology has become much more systematic, careful and accessible over the last two

or three decades. Unsurprisingly, this is the same period during which anthropologists have become more interested in their history in relation to their practice. As a researcher in the history of anthropology in the 1960s, I had numerous experiences of being pointed to a file cabinet in a corner or being handed several cardboard cartons of unsorted paper and asked to report on what was there. More recently, I have returned to such collections to find professional archivists eager to demonstrate new systems of cataloguing. Moreover, technological developments have made cooperation among archives easier and awareness of the location of documents more widespread.

Still, much of this information is available only by word of mouth. Some newsletters (*History of Anthropology* produced by George Stocking, the *History of Archaeology Bulletin* published by the Society for American Archaeology), as well as *Museum Archivist*, are beginning to publish announcements of the location and composition of anthropological record sets, including the papers of individual practitioners. Unfortunately, there is as yet no centralized online or published location finding aid.

While a wealth of documents is available to write the history of anthropology in North America, how they are to be used and how this effort relates to the rest of the discipline remain in question. Some researchers proceed by systematic search for very particular materials. Others (and I confess to being among them) turn over each sheet of paper in search of the document not predicted from the catalog or from the identity of the collection. From the latter kind of reading comes a sense of the overall context of anthropological research in a given period. Within this context, the pieces make more sense.

The would-be anthropological historian should expect that almost any subject (personal or ethnographic) will lead from one archival collection and one city to another. Correspondents may have preserved items that do not exist in the papers of the original subject. Correspondence involving a series of persons remarking on the same topic may help to clarify relationships among contemporaries. There is, of course, never a cut-off point at which all documents have been located, but sufficient materials may be available to follow a trail for given individuals.

In the efforts of historians of anthropology to justify their work as a legitimate professional specialization, there has been great emphasis on archival documents and methods. It should be remembered, however, that the history of professional anthropology in North America has a remarkably short time depth. Many practitioners are still living who knew the prominent elders: Boas, Kroeber, Lowie, Sapir, Benedict, and others. Their stories do not always agree with the archival record, and they are certainly colored by their own later experience and points of view. But they are links to the tradition of the elders, in a way that those of us who have studied oral traditions have long understood. The historian of anthropology is obligated to use and preserve the records of oral history as well as written materials. Anthropologists are accustomed to sorting out the personal experiences and anecdotes that form part of a larger picture of a culture or an era or a kind of anthropology. The personal goes far beyond mere gossip, reflecting a network of

interrelated individuals and events. Historical accounts and interpretations based on oral as well as written records have an added reality and immediacy.

The history of professional anthropology in Canada has an even more shallow time depth than that in the United States. Edward Sapir established the Division of Anthropology under the Geological Survey of Canada in 1910. Academic anthropology began with Thomas F. McIlwraith at the University of Toronto (and the Royal Ontario Museum) in 1925. Many of the elders are still living, although most are now retired. The history of Canadian anthropology would seem, thus, more accessible than that in the United States two to three decades earlier.

In practice, however, the limited time depth has worked against a perception of disciplinary history as being important for contemporary practice. I spent the 1976-1977 year seeking out documents in the major regional centers in Canada. When I first discussed the history of Canadian anthropology in relation to questions of Canadian identity that were salient at that time, I was told frequently, especially by graduate students, that anthropology in Canada had no separate identity as a national tradition (Darnell 1975). My efforts to problematize the issues of that history reflexively fell on deaf ears.

I found considerable numbers of documents in the archives of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and was able to document anthropology in Ottawa, particularly during the Sapir years, 1910-1925 (Darnell 1976). Other potential repositories either had no records, had records that were not catalogued, or had odd constraints on their use. There were ethnographic archives but not personal ones; the institutions and networks of the discipline simply had not made it into archives yet. Undeterred, I sought out interviews with living elders, most of whom were polite and helpful but generally uninformative for issues of disciplinary history. Catalogs of names and dates were offered, along with anecdotes. There was much concern for protecting any potentially disruptive "gossip" from harming reputations, even of those deceased. The attitude of historicism was absent.

In the years since, there has been some progress, but the intense reflexivity about the disciplinary past that characterizes contemporary anthropology in the United States is still missing. A current project to document the histories of academic departments of anthropology in Canada addresses some of these concerns by letting participants in various local developments speak for themselves. But there is still a concern for propriety before history, including a glossing over of events that I as a participant remember to have been far more disputatious than in the retelling.

Contemporary Preservation Issues

This paper has concentrated on documents that are currently available and on their uses in contemporary practice of anthropology. However, without a recognition of the need for evidence of our disciplinary past for the sake of the future, no project to preserve anthropological documents

will be successful. Reflexivity, the key to much of our theorizing these days, argues strongly for the significance of such preservation. Anthropologists who value the documents available from preceding generations should have a commitment to the preservation of materials in their own possession. This will ensure that a history of the anthropology of our time will be left behind for our successors.

Indeed, there is some question about the documentation that will be available in the future, given our modern technologies. Many anthropologists conduct their careers by telephone and, today, electronic mail. These are largely ephemeral media. It is not even clear that the computer hard disks and backup files of those who still write letters will survive or be readable beyond their immediate utility. And in these days of instant cross-country and cross-continental transportation, many of us wait to see colleagues and talk things over rather than write a letter.

Although these are serious concerns, there is much that can and should be done by all practicing anthropologists. Minimally, some arrangements need to be made for personal papers, as well as for field notes and other research materials. There are a number of possibilities; the best choice depends on individual circumstances.

Ideally, the anthropologist who nears retirement, moves to a smaller home or office, or finishes given phases of his/her career will consult an archivist about how to arrange these materials and will discuss in advance where material in his/her possession would be appropriately housed. For some individuals, given the contemporary complexity of professional careers, this may involve more than one archives or institution. If an individual is or has been employed by several institutions, it is unclear whether any one of these would have a commitment to the collection as a whole. Local institutions in the area of one's fieldwork may also be candidates as archival repositories. An effort should be made to keep materials somewhere that will be accessible to scholars, preferably where similar materials are to be found.

Many anthropologists believe that their papers will be of limited interest to the discipline because they are not major figures. Most of us, however, have research materials of potential value, as well as correspondence with other people whose careers, collectively or individually, are of concern to the discipline as a whole. What seems unremarkable to the participant may be crucial and compelling a generation later.

It is, of course, possible to exert control over what is preserved as well as where it is preserved. The anthropologist who sorts through his/her own files before delivering them to an archive can ensure that intimately personal materials are removed, or restrictions placed on access to them. Such preliminary work is invaluable to the archivist who will eventually work with the collection.

Appointing a literary executor, whether a family member or a colleague, is another way to ensure that one's wishes are carried out. Without specific instructions, families may simply do nothing with documents left at death, resulting in their loss to future researchers. It is a professional

responsibility to preserve appropriate documents for future colleagues' use. There is nothing immodest about doing so.

More and more anthropologists seem to be becoming aware of the importance of preserving documents of their careers and their participation in larger events within their discipline. This self-awareness has produced an enthusiasm for archival documentation of personal careers comparable to the better established commitment to preserving field notes. The present effort to preserve the anthropological record is timely, both in the increasingly widespread appreciation of the value of this record and in the need to save documents that will be lost if individuals do not take responsibility for materials in their possession or control.

Summary

- The history of anthropology should be treated as an anthropological problem, an integral part of anthropology's study of human cultures in time and space.
- The personal papers of anthropologists are crucial documents for the interpretation of field notes and other data records, for understanding the context of research and theory, and for tracing the intellectual and professional development of anthropology.
- A computerized database and finding aids are needed to document the location of anthropological papers in archives.
- All anthropologists should make arrangements for the appropriate archiving of their own papers and other materials in their possession.