“A DROP OF RED INK”:
Creating the Archival Memory of Aubry Faulkner Jennings from Her Ordinary Personal Papers
ABSTRACT

‘A Drop of Red Ink’: Creating the Archival Memory of
Aubry Faulkner Jennings from Her Ordinary Personal Papers

by

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In 2014, the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, collectively approved the reprocessing of the Joe Jennings Collection as my capstone master’s degree project.1 I proposed the project after finding that the male-centric collection contained substantial personal papers that recorded the private life of Jennings’ wife Aubry Faulkner Jennings. The collection finding aid described the voluminous materials as documenting Jennings’ Bureau of Indian Affairs work from 1931-1957, without mentioning Aubry’s papers. The original processors scattered Aubry’s papers throughout the series without linking their provenance to her, thus, subordinating her papers to those of her husband. In this paper, I use the Jennings’ materials to illustrate the positivist-influenced archival theory and practice that actively shaped older collections to exclude female-authored materials and personal papers. I then examine the postmodern, interdisciplinary literature including psychological studies that inform and enrich the work of archiving private lives. Finally, I contend that as active agents in shaping archival collections, archivists must shed positivist traditions to access the archival value of personal papers.

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1 In the fall of 2014, Education and Outreach archivist Laura Smith discussed with me her insightful suspicions that Aubry Jennings involved herself with Cherokee affairs. This discussion led me to conceptualize and propose the reprocessing project. Archive Director Amy Collins, Collections Archivist Jennifer Bingham, and Ms. Smith reviewed and approved my plan. Ms. Bingham supervised the project. Many thanks to these staff members as well as archival assistant Selena Harmon for their unwavering support throughout this project.
Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. One knows their minds as easily as one knows their bonnets...They ride in the Park in the morning, and chatter at tea-parties in the afternoon.

--Dorian Gray, The Picture of Dorian Gray

Part I

An Old Script: The Illusion of Unmediated Fonds\(^2\)

In December 1936, living on the Sioux Reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, native Appalachian Aubry Faulkner Jennings penned a deeply personal piece of literature titled “Inferiority Complex” that she ironically placed on the back of her elementary-aged daughter’s practice letter addressed to friends back in Tennessee. Perhaps due to Aubry’s education as a high school teacher, her daughter’s letter bore the marks of her mother’s skilled corrections to the child’s sentence construction. But on the reverse, the forty year old mother and housewife wrote, “Among the fern clad hills of home I was somebody … here in this land of great spaces I am less than a prairie dog.”\(^3\) Continuing on she wrote, “I feel like a drop of red ink flung into a lake, thinning and fading until nothing is left of it.”\(^4\) After she died in 1971, the “Inferiority Complex” and Aubry’s other writings nearly faded into obscurity, hidden among husband Joe Jennings’ federal records in the Joe Jennings Collection at the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, thus suffering a fate jarringly similar to how she seemed to live life in the shadow of her husband.

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\(^2\) Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz’s image of the archivist performer whose work is dictated by a given script serves as the backdrop for my analysis of the two distinctly different theoretical treatments of the Jennings’ papers and records between 1988 and 2014. “Archives, Records and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance,” Archival Science 2 (2002): 172.

\(^3\) Aubry Jennings, “Inferiority Complex,” December 1936, Joe Jennings and Aubry Jennings Papers [hereinafter Aubry Jennings Papers], box 12, folder 23, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

\(^4\) Ibid.
Much like Oscar Wilde imbued the character of Dorian Gray with a disdain for ordinary women, revered archivist T.R. Schellenberg’s writings profoundly shaped twentieth century American archival collections by influencing generations of archivists to disregard personal papers, especially the everyday writings of ordinary women like Aubry Jennings in favor of governmental records—governmental records that by and large recorded white, male agency. But, when the curtain rose on the stage of postmodern archiving in the late 1990s, everyday life became fodder for archival memory as archivists began moving the documentation of ordinary, everyday experiences of women such as Aubry from the wings of the theater onto center stage.5 This paper recounts the making of archival memory for southern Appalachian housewife Aubry Faulkner Jennings through the rejection of positivist-influenced archival practices in favor of a postmodern construction of her personal fonds.6

Archival literature suggests that postmodern archivists increasingly connect archival work with the shaping of memory.7 Terry Cook argued that while archives continue to provide historical evidence, the “archives also preserve memory. And they create memory.”8 Similarly, in 2009, then Society of American Archivists (SAA) President Frank Boles emphasized the archivists’ power to shape archival memory through the work of appraisal when he declared, “We are selectors and keepers of individual and collective memory. What archivists remember

5 Cook and Schwartz, 171.
6 A fonds is a single collection of records or papers that originate from one creator organization, family, or individual and relate to a single intellectual source or function. In this paper, references to Aubry Jennings’ personal fonds indicates her privately and individually authored writings and papers as well as her accumulated papers. See Richard Pearce-Moses, A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology, (Society of American Archivists: Chicago, 2005), 173. http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/SAA-Glossary-2005.pdf.
will be remembered. What archivists forget will be forgotten.” 9 By selecting materials to be “remembered” in the archive through accessioning, arrangement, and description archivists play a powerful role in memory-making both in and beyond the archive. 10 In fact, the preservation of historical evidence as a passive archival activity has always been an illusion, for as soon as Schellenbergian archivists deselected material such as Aubry’s personal writings, the archivist became an active agent in shaping collections.

Archival memory includes the representation of an individual or family through preservation of privately created documents that recall details, memorialize events, and record thoughts or perspectives of those individuals or families. Personal papers necessarily contain seemingly mundane and ordinary details about everyday lives. But, until the late twentieth century turn towards postmodernism, positivist-influenced archivists and historians who focused on the preservation and use of government records over personal papers, marginalized, ignored, and silenced the documented experiences of ordinary persons in American archival memory, especially those of women like Aubry Jennings, constructing the archives instead as official administrative records. 11

As a feature of modernity, positivist theorists and practitioners affirmed that knowledge of the past required empirical, documentary evidence, the kind of evidence valuable enough to store permanently in a government archive—the kind of evidence that influential German historian Leopold Von Ranke equated to absolute or objective “Truth.” 12 In patriarchal Western

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cultures, white male-dominated social, economic, and political structures of power served as the record producers of that American documentary evidence and Rankean-trained historians authenticated grand historical narratives with these archival sources. As Thomas Osborne analogized, to positivist historians, “the archive is akin to the laboratory of the natural scientist.”

Early American archivists viewed archival work just as “positively” as historians if not more so with the systematic classification and categorizing of official records. Positivist archival pioneers such as Hilary Jenkinson and Schellenberg, who broadly influenced the archival program in the United States throughout the twentieth century, dismissed personal papers as possible archival material. Both Jenkinson and Schellenberg maintained the authority and truthfulness of administrative records over personal papers though for different reasons. Jenkinson focused on keeping records for administrative accountability and Schellenberg determined to keep records for historical value based on what he described as their evidentiary or informational value to the creating agency. In Jenkinson and Schellenberg’s view, administrative documents recorded the actual processes of systems and organizations thus linking authority, legitimacy, and value to the official capacity of the record. Jenkinson and Schellenberg’s theories of the archive as a physical place that stored government records

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13 Cook and Schwartz, 178.
reverberated through twentieth century practice. Schellenberg, who primarily trained as a historian, pioneered archival practice in government repositories across the United States and consequently shaped the contents of the archive in his time and for generations thereafter through his inaugural work in the National Archives.

While Aubry Jennings struggled to find meaning in her South Dakota life far from her Tennessee home, in 1936, Illinois archivist Margaret Cross Norton helped found the Society of American Archivists that championed Schellenberg’s theories about the supremacy of administrative records over personal papers as historical evidence of the nation’s past. The Society of American Archivists largely focused the archival profession toward the preservation of government records and away from writings such as Aubry’s “Inferiority Complex.” Even her private letters that detailed her experiences with government-run schools for American Indian children would not be contemplated in Schellenberg’s administrative records theories. Personal materials simply did not contain the official record of government activities and remained excluded from government archival programs.

Until the late 1990s, American archival theory in general and appraisal theory specifically focused exclusively on administrative records, because neither Jenkinson nor Schellenberg ever advocated for, or theorized about, the preservation of personal papers. Twentieth century appraisal theorists followed closely in Schellenberg’s footsteps never straying too far from theorizing about administrative records rather than personal records. Thus, the deep influence of positivism on the discipline of history and subsequently archival theory and practice

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18Aubry Jennings, “Inferiority Complex.”
encouraged historians to pursue and archivists to preserve a largely homogenized archival record that privileged organizational records over private papers, male-authored materials over female-authored materials, and the documents of whites over non-whites.¹⁹

As government archives ignored personal papers such as letters, diaries, private literature, household records, and memoirs, the management of private papers devolved into what archivists James O’Toole and Richard J. Cox described as a “scattered and uncoordinated affair.”²⁰ To the extent that collectors sought private papers, it seemed only the papers of the most powerful, such as the founding fathers or prominent wealthy families, held interest for historians and manuscript collectors.²¹ To positivist-influenced archivists, personal papers that documented ordinary life, especially the lives of women or persons of color, lacked authoritative accounts of the social, political, and economical structures of the nation. Thus, as twentieth century archival theory and methods rapidly developed with an eye towards administrative records, personal papers of ordinary persons simply faded from archival visibility—out of sight, out of archival memory. So was the fate of the papers of Aubry Faulkner Jennings.

The historian’s image of the federal government archives as the keeper of America’s official and unaltered documentary past eroded by the end of the twentieth century. By the 1960s, influential writings of philosophers such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault stirred humanities scholars to the idea of questioning many of the features of modernity such as the certainty of human progress, superiority of Western cultures, supremacy

¹⁹ O’Toole and Cox, 70. For a selection of essays that demonstrate the recent trend toward diversity and inclusion in the archival record see Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal’s _Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion_ (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014) and Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar, “‘Communities of Memory’: Pluralizing Archival Research and Education Agendas,” _Archives & Manuscripts_ 33, no. 1 (May 2005):146-174.
²⁰ Ibid., 61.
of white males, the veracity of grand narratives of the past, and the presence of an absolute truth.\textsuperscript{22} History became histories as historians such as Howard Zinn, fueled by the civil rights movement, clamored for new sources of “people’s” experiences awakening scholars to the documentary gaps in repository collections and questioned the sanctity of the government archive as unmediated sources of truth about the past.\textsuperscript{23} Race, class, sexuality, and gender gradually emerged as relevant categories of historical inquiry which demanded new source material for the historians’ laboratory, the archive. At last, the heroic made some room for the ordinary in the wave of postmodern scholarship.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1974, then Society of American Archivists’ President F. Gerald Ham famously called upon fellow archivists to “make an informed selection of information that will provide the future with a representative record of human experience.”\textsuperscript{25} Ham likely envisioned broader selection specifically in government archives when he called on archivists to document human experience, but he essentially heralded the growing cultural nature of the archival mission and opened new conversations about what types of materials an archive ought to collect for a “representative record.”\textsuperscript{26} Sensing a new emphasis on the function of appraisal as the gateway to the archive, American archivists joined their international colleagues in debating the meaning and method of

\textsuperscript{22}For influential philosophical works of postmodern thought see the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed November 5, 2016, http://www.iep.utm.edu/lyotard/


\textsuperscript{25} F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” American Archivist 38 (1975): 5. This article is a reprint of his 1974 Society of American Archivists Presidential address.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
appraisal. As Reto Tschan has written, archivists interested in broader documentation “rejected appraisal criteria based on Schellenberg’s historical research and Jenkinson’s administrative and legal accountability.” Instead, archivists expanded the boundaries of what types of records and papers could be selected to fill documentary gaps in archival memory. In other words, archivists began to openly acknowledge their power to shape or influence the record by challenging and even rewriting Schellenberg’s script.

In response to social historians’ demands, as much to the archival mandate of Gerald Ham, some federal and state archives focused on reclaiming the archival memory of marginalized persons. Official archives showed new interest in documenting experiences and perspectives of women, persons of color, immigrants, sexual minorities, laboring classes, and a host of heretofore silenced or ignored groups and identities whose experiences largely are documented in personal papers or oral stories. Still, government archival collections necessarily excluded women and other minorities because those very persons had been excluded from participation in those institutions. When members of these communities or identities realized federal and state archives could not meet the challenge, these communities and identities formed repositories to document those persons excluded, hence the advent of the postmodern archive—a privately formed archive devoted to documenting a particular community, region, or identity. Merging the broad concepts of a government repository and a private historical society, these postmodern archives became sites of archival memory, the documentary representation of those persons excluded from the Jenkinsonian government archive. As Jeannette Bastian and Ben Alexander described, “When a history is denied or made invisible, a group or a community may

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27 Tschan, 188.
sustain or recover that history … through activities like community archives.”

Nongovernment archives served as a site for the ordinary stories, the everyday lives, the personal, the feminine—a place of private memories as opposed to official state or national memories.

Whereas positivists believed the American truth lived in official records of the government archives, postmodernists came to see that many truths lived in many sources previously excluded from official archives. Documenting new truths and new narratives became the mandate of the community archivists motivated to close the representation gap between dominant institutions and the rest of society. As such, these sites of constructed memory challenged the grand narratives of the past with newly acquired collections of private materials and oral histories of previously marginalized individuals, families, and other social groups.

During the early days of this postmodern movement, the Archives of Appalachia originated in part as the Oral History Archives to document Appalachian folklore and music. In 1978, East Tennessee State University formally created the archive and expanded its mission to “acquiring, preserving, and providing access to records of historical and research value pertaining to political social, economic, and cultural development of the Southern mountains.” At that time, the archive aimed to collect “the papers of both prominent and obscure people in Appalachia.” Today, the archives stands as a “cultural heritage repository” that seeks donations

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30 Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, 73-74, Bastian and Alexander, 5.
31 Bastian and Alexander, 7.
34 “Acquisition & Collection Development Policy,” 2.
of personal papers to document the diversity of Appalachian life in the designated communities of south-central Appalachia.\textsuperscript{35} Even as the archives collected personal papers and oral histories, they continued to follow archival practices laid out by Schellenberg and institutionalized through the National Archives and Records Administration.\textsuperscript{36}

Since the 1960s, the discipline of history had engaged in inquiries through lenses of gender, race, and sexuality, among others but archivists lagged far behind in applying such categories to the task of archiving personal lives. Archival theorists would not develop a theoretical foundation for selecting, appraising, and processing the personal papers that populated archives such as the Archives of Appalachia for another forty years. Twentieth century scholarship in postmodern and feminist studies drove historians and other scholars to new theoretical territory. Community, regional, and identity archivists responded to their needs by documenting the increasingly previously marginalized persons. Practitioners eventually began fine tuning their cultural mission and collection goals, many of which had been written almost a half century earlier.\textsuperscript{37}

In 2012, the Archives of Appalachia staff drafted a new acquisition and collection development policy that included an increased focus on collecting materials that illuminate the experiences of women and minorities in its designated communities.\textsuperscript{38} As the staff of cultural repositories like the Archives of Appalachia refine collecting policies to increase documentation of previously marginalized persons, the processing decisions evident in older collections may appear to conflict with postmodern documentation goals for neglected communities and identities. For example, some older collections such as the Joe Jennings Collection may reflect

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35}“Acquisition & Collection Development Policy,”. 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{36}“Ibid.,” 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{37}Mike Featherstone, “The Heroic Life and Everyday Life,” \textit{Theory, Culture & Society}, 9, 1 (1992): 159.
  \item \textsuperscript{38}“Acquisition & Collection Development Policy,” 3.
\end{itemize}
positivist-influenced archival practices that subordinated female creators to the male creators, thus marginalizing material created by and about a woman’s experiences—a subject matter important to today’s collectors. This is the dilemma I encountered with Aubry Jennings’ papers. Sifting through the materials, I found that a significant collection of an Appalachian woman’s papers happened to be buried in an existing collection valued for its material pertaining to Joe Jennings’ work with the Cherokee who lived within the Appalachian region.

Joe Jennings served as a superintendent with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) from 1931-1957; for the nearly ten years between 1945 and 1954, he worked in western North Carolina with the Eastern Band of Cherokee.\(^{39}\) In 1988, the archives acquired the bulk of Joe Jennings’ papers, arranged the materials with a focus on the BIA even though it contained Aubry’s personal fonds, and opened the collection for research in 1989. The final arrangement left Aubry’s materials scattered and inaccessible, minimally described, and marginalized within the collection. The archival processing or construction of the original collection shaped the materials in a way that elevated Joe Jennings’ federal agency experiences over the private experiences of Aubry Jennings. By reprocessing the collection, both Joe and Aubry’s materials could be visible in the collection.

Given the focus of postmodern archival theory on moving women’s and minorities’ materials from the margins of collecting, reshaping the Jennings collection offered the archival staff an opportunity to strengthen both the Jennings collection and the repository’s holdings on Appalachian women. But, with what script does an archivist step onto the postmodern stage to shape archival memory from personal papers such as those of Aubry Jennings?

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\(^{39}\) Biographical note, Finding Aid, Joe Jennings Collection file, Archives of Appalachia.
Part II

The New Script: All the World’s a Stage

Discovering the magnitude of materials belonging to Aubry Jennings hidden by archival processes within her husband’s collection, underscored to me that appraisal continues to be, as Frank Boles claimed, the “professional tool that defines remembrance and forgetfulness.”

The appraisal process set the framework for all decisions about the Jennings’ materials, such as which materials would be accessioned, and how the accessioned materials would be arranged, described, and presented in the collection finding aid. In the original appraisal of the Jennings materials, the archivist linked the provenance of the entire collection to Joe Jennings and his career—all of the materials and even Aubry Jennings herself. Perhaps this was based in part on the donor, the Jennings’ daughter who described the materials as her “father’s papers,” but clearly the material contained a substantial number of the donor’s mother’s materials as well.

While the collection file contains almost no documentation as to what led the original archivist to subordinate Aubry’s papers to Joe’s papers, it was the power or actions of the archivist that “forgot” homemaker Aubry Jennings, while simultaneously remembering her federal agency employee husband Joe Jennings. Likewise, it remained within the power of later archivist to reshape the collection to “remember” Aubry again. As well-known postmodernists Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz recognized, the active role of archivists in selecting materials

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41 A foundational principle in archival practice, the principle of provenance dictates that records of a given creator are not to be intermingled with the records of another creator. Intermingling records of different creators will affect the succeeding archival decisions, such as arrangement and description. See Gregory S. Hunter, Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives, 2nd ed. (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc, 2004), 114.
42 Notes on telephone conversation with Jean Jennings O’Brien, August 2, 1988, Joe Jennings Collection file, Archives of Appalachia.
for archival processes sets the stage for continual making and remaking of modern memory by the end users of archival collections.\footnote{Cook and Schwartz, 171.}

Reshaping the Joe Jennings Collection through a reappraisal process required significant professional and ethical consideration before moving forward, even for a change as desirable as bringing visibility to Aubry Jennings’ personal papers.\footnote{The Archives of Appalachia adheres to Society of American Archivists best practices. Acquisition & Collection Development Policy, 2.} Archival scholars, practitioners, and users of archives long have expected the immutability of accessioned materials. After years of debate, the Society of American Archivists sanctioned reappraisal and deaccessioning as “part of the continuum of archival practice and principles.”\footnote{The guidelines contain an annotated bibliography of supporting literature on reappraisal. Peter Blodgett, Jeremy Brett, Cathi Carmack, Anne Foster, Laura Uglean Jackson, Chela Scott Weber, Linda Whitaker, and Marcella Wiget, Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Reappraisal and Development Review Team, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, May 2012, accessed May 2, 2016, http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForReappraisalAndDeaccessioning-May2012.pdf (2012).} Adopting the Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning, the society relied on peer-reviewed standards to formulate a conceptual framework for utilizing reappraisal and deaccessioning as collection management tools.

The Guidelines review team identified specific objectives that provide a rationale for engaging in a reappraisal project under the society’s professional and ethical standards. Two of those objectives supported the reappraisal of the Joe Jennings Collection: to improve overall access to materials, namely Aubry Jennings’ materials, and to correct a “faulty appraisal at the time of acquisition.”\footnote{On users’ reliability on immutability in the archives see Blouin and Rosenberg, Processing the Past, 35 and Frank Boles, Selecting and Appraising, 116.} A reappraisal allowed for processing that recognized materials of differing provenance and the subsequent archival decisions that would make those materials visible in the collection. My review and identification of the materials yielded two fonds; personal papers belonging to Aubry and Joe, and BIA federal records collected by Joe. I separated the federal

\footnote{Blodgett, et al., 8.}
records and arranged those in a collection titled the Joe Jennings Bureau of Indian Affairs Records.\footnote{The Joe Jennings Bureau of Indian Affairs Records opened for research in 2016. The staff removed fifty-seven document boxes of mostly BIA publication material from the original Joe Jennings Collection for possible deaccessioning.} I grouped the remaining personal papers belonging to Aubry and Joe in a family collection titled the Joe and Aubry Faulkner Jennings Papers with series titles that reflected the individual creators of Aubry and Joe Jennings.

Appraising and processing the personal fonds required a departure from Schellenbergian theory, which offered no insight in the nature and purpose of personal papers for the archive. Personal papers as the subject of archiving only entered archival discourse in 1996, when the Australian scholarly archival journal *Archives and Manuscripts* devoted an entire issue (number 24) to matters related to personal archives. The issue included essays by Adrian Cunningham, Graeme Powell, Sue McKemmish, and Chris Hurley, all of whom offered the first appraisal theory aimed at private papers. Subsequent scholars who worked extensively with personal papers credited these earlier essays with igniting considerable further work among archivists working in the realm of personal papers.\footnote{Rodney G.S. Carter, Rob Fisher, Carolyn Harris, and Catherine Hobbs, “From the Guest Editors: Perspectives on Personal Archives,” *Archivaria* 76 (Fall 2013): 2.} The landscape appears far different in the realm of personal papers as contemporary scholars claim archivists have a “robust core of work examining the issues of personal archives.”\footnote{Ibid., 1. Recent articles from archivists signal the growing integration of personal papers into the profession and the efforts to develop archival principles suited specifically for processing personal materials. See Heather Beattie, “Where Narratives Meet: Archival Description, Provenance and Women’s Diaries,” *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, 44 no. 1(2009): 82-100 and Jennifer Douglas, “Towards More Honest Description.”} Yet, out of this core, there is almost no literature addressing the appraisal of privately created materials and indeed archivists internationally have yet to find a consensus on an appraisal method or even a strategy with which to consider personal papers.
Identifying and valuing Aubry’s papers required a departure from the traditional Schellenbergian approach. Aubry’s materials include intimately kept papers such as her diaries spanning seven years, hundreds of letters covering a more than forty-year period, many dated and undated personal notes, articles, poems, and essays that recorded her thoughts and activities related to her private life. The Society of American Archivists defines personal papers as documents created or acquired by an individual during the course of their daily affairs. Aubry’s personal archives include two primary types of textual material: 1) accumulated papers created by others but saved by her, and 2) papers authored or created by her. Many of her accumulated papers represent documents created by civic or governmental agencies, business entities, or organizations (birth certificates, bank statements, educational records) but retained by her because the documents held some value to her or her family members. These official records contain objective or static information that often reflect legal, commercial, or transactional value to the possessory individual and may also at times serve a functional value to the owner during that person’s lifetime. For example, Aubry’s teaching certificate, an official record created by a state agency, functioned as evidence of her education and enabled her to obtain teaching work in 1916. The teaching certificate contained objective information about her credentials to teach; in other words, no one need consult Aubry about what it meant because its meaning was determined by the agency that created the document. Long after Aubry used the official document for its agency purpose, she kept the certificate presumably because the document held

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50 “Some archivists carefully distinguish between archives and personal papers, but others do not.” Pearce-Moses, xv. On the historical difference between records and personal papers see O’Toole and Cox, Understanding Records and Manuscripts, 10. In this paper, records refer to documents produced by an organization while papers refer to individually or privately created documents.

51 Campbell County Teaching Certificate, 1917, box 10, folder 11, Aubry Jennings Papers.
value beyond its evidentiary or functional value. Just what Aubry valued about the document remains unknown but did not change the information contained in the document.

Besides the accumulated papers, Aubry’s materials include her individually authored papers that contain highly subjective material. Subjective materials contain idiosyncratic information that originates in and derives meaning from the individual. These records often take the format of diaries, scrapbooks, journals, letters, and other kinds of miscellaneous personal literature. Archival scholars have said little about personal documents that contain subjective information but other scholars offer archivists a theoretical framework for understanding subjective materials. For example, literary scholars such as Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray refer to privately created documents such as diaries and journals as “life writing,” wherein as they describe, “things immediately seen, heard, smelled, and felt become potential textual grist for that day’s entry.” In literary studies, life writing serves as a genre of personal literature created by individuals to document or textualize their lived experience, in other words, to create a record of their everyday life.

The interdisciplinary work of scholar Rita Felski who draws on literary, feminist, and cultural studies also illuminates the concept of the ordinary, everyday life. In her monograph *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, Felski analyzes earlier scholars’ concepts of the ordinary and the everyday, especially in terms of writing and the production knowledge to offer her own view of the elusive concepts. Felski ultimately rejects the everyday and ordinary as the often-cast unique qualities of being woman. As she shows,

53 Ibid.
twentieth century philosophy scholars frame the ordinary and everyday as concepts characterized by repetition, home, and habit or routineness which are were tied to women. While Felski agrees that these are indeed qualities of quotidian, she rejects, in particular Lefebvre’s personification of the everyday and ordinary as gendered qualities emerging from the homebound status of women.\textsuperscript{55} Likewise, Felski rejected resistance to ordinariness as a masculine symbol of the public sphere envisioned by Michel de Certeau.

Instead, Felski theorizes that everyday life transcends public and private spaces; that sameness and routineness are part and parcel of being human, that it happens at home, at work, and in between; that it is not confined to a class, gender, or ethnicity; and that it crosses every social and political class.\textsuperscript{56} While the cyclical nature of women’s bodies further encouraged philosophers to attribute the everyday specifically to women, she notes, daily life affects everyone, for “no one escapes the quotidian,” and “every life contains an element of the ordinary.”\textsuperscript{57} Men, too, she said, have a cyclical and repetitive nature to their lives regardless of their biological differences or even their vocation or lack thereof.

Felski accepts that some groups are more likely to be identified with ordinariness than others. Those whom patriarchal systems have oppressed or who remained in the domestic sphere, or the working class be they men or women oppressed by the forces of capitalism have been cast as the embodiment of ordinary or everyday and somehow antithetical to modernity and progress. To struggle against oppression then is to be out of the ordinary and even postmodern.\textsuperscript{58}

Here, Felski points to Lefebvre who noted that the everyday or the ordinary is often defined

\textsuperscript{55} Felski, 81.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 83.
negatively and to oppose the everyday positively or as a sign evolution and progress.\textsuperscript{59} Thomas Osborne also argues, “the principal of mundanity should not be limited to the realm of ‘lower’ or ordinary life, the lives of the so-called ordinary people,” a constraint he attributes to social historians who frame certain history in hierarchical terms as from “below” as if it were somehow less than or subordinate to history from the “above.”\textsuperscript{60} Historically, historians have characterized the repetitious and mundane nature of wage and domestic labor as ordinary while going to the battlefront, governing a state, or running a business has been cast as extraordinary, and thus worth remembering.

Felski noted some feminist scholars reject the categorization of daily routines as a byproduct of being woman and instead propose that the nature of routines should be linked to one’s relationship to power.\textsuperscript{61} Thus, for example women who possessed little economic or political power in the early twentieth century American system of capitalism wrote about being consumers and victims of political decisions while men wrote about being entrepreneurs and political deciders and these roles are reflected in the content of their private papers. Of course, American capitalism excluded certain men from political power also.

Felski acknowledges that many scholars as argued by archivist Mike Featherstone, categorize everyday life as “the sphere of women, reproduction, and care” and that gender-bias has played an important role in developing ideas of everyday life.\textsuperscript{62} Felski explains that to these scholars, everyday life embodied the feminine drudgery that the powerful gleefully escaped through forays into art, philosophy, or political action. Conversely, the masculine heroic or

\textsuperscript{59} Felski, 86.
\textsuperscript{60} Osborne, 59.
\textsuperscript{61} Felski, 80.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., Felski also acknowledged that some feminist scholars embrace the gendered notions of ordinariness citing it as a source of unique knowledge not available to men.
extraordinary life occurs in, or because of, science, politics, and social power—the intersections where history is made and recorded.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, in positivist archival tradition, the documentation of ordinary, everyday activities with its ties to female perspectives has not been the subject of the archive leaving the record bloated with male dominated perspectives.\textsuperscript{64} Indeed, this hierarchy can be seen in Aubry’s life and in the earlier subordination of her papers. Certainly, in the Jennings’ lives, Joe held a position of relative power as an agent in governmental affairs and in his marriage and family life; thus, not surprisingly his position of power transferred to the archival collection where he and his federal records took center stage while she and her personal papers moved to the margins.

Archivists need not accept such a gendered view of a person’s documentation. Everydayness has a cyclical nature that occurs amid the linear human life, thus no one escapes the everyday and the ordinary. To move through space and time, individuals establish daily patterns to negotiate that space and time. Felski rightly observes that “repetition is one of the ways we organize the world, make sense of our environment, and stave off the threat of chaos.”\textsuperscript{65} Repetition, routines, and habits link both men and women to an identity, helping them understand who they are; repetition and everyday activities allow individuals to bring order and meaning to their life. Routine then is a feature of humanity, not gender. Every person leaves evidence of an everyday life within the context of that individual’s position of power in society.

Both Joe and Aubry Jennings experienced the everyday and the ordinary; both observed routineness, repetition, and mundaneness but in different spheres and the differences will be reflected in their respective documentation. Aubry’s routines emanating from her roles as a

\textsuperscript{63} Felski, 80.
\textsuperscript{64} Heather Beattie, “The Texture of the Everyday:” Appraising the Values of Women’s Diaries and Weblogs,” (master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2007), 10.
\textsuperscript{65} Felski, 84.
middle-class housewife, mother, and social club member; Joe organized his routines around his employment and his status as head of the household. Gender certainly may influence what the ordinary and everyday looks like in each of their lives, but both have an ordinary aspect to their lived experiences. I contend that the ordinary life of both the powerful and the less powerful intersect and give each other context, thus both belong in the historical record, however, archivists reluctant to depart from Schellenberg’s preference for administrative records rarely have an opportunity to contemplate the nuances found in private, ordinary experiences.

Despite the archives exclusion of private materials, social historians looking for broader historical sources than those offered in administrative records sought out diaries, journals, and other writings that recorded everyday and ordinary details. Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich famously used a little known woman’s diary in her Pulitzer prize-winning historical work *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* published in 1989, the same year that the Jennings collection opened for research. Known but largely dismissed by archivists for its jarringly mundane entries on Ballard’s delivery of New England babies, Ulrich’s successful use of such an ordinary record illuminates the critical need for archivists to recognize the value of diaries and similar materials during acquisition and appraisal and make those materials visible in the archive.

With the archive’s historical focus on administrative records, the “everyday” as an analytical term of inquiry has been neglected in archival discourse, but, with the proliferation of community archives wherein archivists are increasingly dealing with texts of everyday life and oral records, the profession would do well to incorporate the concept into archival theory.

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66 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 9. The late Maine State Library law librarian Edith Harry who played a pivotal role in the history of the diary said prior to Ulrich, the diary had been known but to a very “limited circle” of genealogists and local historians. “Bob and Cyn McCausland on transcribing the Martha Ballard Diary,” accessed on September 26, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0sptdGTKd0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0sptdGTKd0).
Turning again to Rita Felski for insight, a definition of everyday life seems deceptively simple, for as she stated, “Everyday life is the most self-evident, yet the most puzzling of ideas.”\textsuperscript{67} She goes on to describe everyday life as “synonymous with the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane,” but she astutely observes that the everyday resists efforts to theorize because “the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to critical scrutiny.”\textsuperscript{68} Certainly, now that scholars have scrutinized Martha Ballard’s diary, it no longer seems ordinary at all, and neither do Aubry’s papers and on the whole both sets of materials are quite extraordinary. But, these materials do retain the everydayness in content, and the characterization of meaning is left to the one who accesses the material. Elusiveness as to what constitutes ordinary may complicate the study of the everyday, but it is a concept due for scrutiny by archival scholars.

Even as, beginning in the 1960s, literary scholars, sociologists, and social and cultural historians increasingly made use of ordinary writings found in personal papers, archival scholars continued to bypass the entire realm of personal papers whether considered to be ordinary or not until the late 1990s.\textsuperscript{69} Archivist Rob Fisher aptly observed, “private archives are a poor cousin to government archives in the family of archival theory.”\textsuperscript{70} The lack of archival theory related to personal papers and their ordinary content certainly affects how archivists treat and promote personal papers, including private diaries, correspondence, and other kinds of private writing in the archive. For example, referring in part to the anonymity of Martha Ballard’s diary in the

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\textsuperscript{67} Felski, 77.
\textsuperscript{68} Felski, 78. Felski finely synthesized the long history of writing on the everyday among philosophers and sociologists but in her view, these works have had little impact on feminist studies. Neither has it had an impact on archival studies.
\textsuperscript{70} Fisher, 6.
Maine State Library and Archives, Ulrich observed that, “much of the best material [by and about women] is still found buried in improbable places” both in and outside the archives.\footnote{Ulrich, “Of Pens and Needles: Sources in Early American Women’s History,” \textit{Journal of American History} 77, no. 1 (1990): 201.}

To be sure, it is unlikely a researcher would have encountered Aubry Jennings’ materials absent a sustained effort. Similarly, African-American women’s studies scholar Ula Taylor expressed difficulty locating and identifying the personal papers of Amy Jacques Garvey, the wife of the 1930s African American activist Marcus Garvey. In the early 2000s, using the Marcus Garvey Memorial Collection at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, Taylor sifted through the entire collection to find Garvey’s wives personal papers, because the still-used 1970s finding aid did not separate and describe the women’s material within the collection.\footnote{Taylor, “Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Profession,” \textit{Journal of Women’s History} 20, no.1 (Spring 2008): 189. The Marcus Garvey Memorial Collection, 1887-1940 can be accessed at \url{https://www.fisk.edu/assets/files/bv/garvey-amymemorialcollectiononmarcusgarvey1776-1971.pdf}. Since I first used the online finding aid, the Garvey collection seems to have been renamed the Amy Garvey Memorial Collection on Marcus Garvey, 1776-1971 on the university webpage, but the original finding aid remains available unchanged.} Consider, too, the writing of Jonathan Edwards’ wife Sarah, who used the back of his sermon notes for writing paper; yet the Yale University archivist did not note in the published finding aid that the collection contained some of Sarah’s writings.\footnote{“Guide to Jonathan Edwards Collection,” Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, undated, accessed September 26, 2016, \url{http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.edwards}} The lack of theoretical perspectives and discourse related to personal papers, especially those of women that contained everyday information surely affected archivists’ practice in receiving and describing personal papers like those of Ballard, Garvey, and Aubry Jennings.

Prior to Pollard and Hobbs 2001 contributions, archivists largely applied administrative records theory and practice to appraising and processing personal papers (as had been the case in the 1996 Archives and Manuscripts issue 24). Pollard and Hobbs argued in their respective work that rather than applying appraisal strategies and methods derived from administrative records theory, archivists must first understand the nature of personal papers and how that nature differs from administrative records and then develop appraisal strategies suited to personal papers.

In “The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review,” Pollard offered a critical assessment of the state of archival thinking on personal papers. Pollard noted that the literature to that point reflected that archivists appeared to be in a ‘cart before the horse’ kind of mode trying to theorize about appraising and processing personal papers without appreciating the nature of personal papers. Pollard offered notable Australian scholar Sue McKemmish’s work as an example. In Pollard’s assessment, McKemmish adapted Schellenberg’s administrative records theory for use in assessing personal papers. McKemmish theoretically linked the creation of personal records to the social conditions of society. In short, McKemmish asserted that the social conditions in which an individual lived motivated and shaped private record keeping therefore, the value of personal writings links to the social conditions that produced the writings. In Schellenbergian theory, society could then be thought of as the creator much in the same way an agency is the creator of administrative records. In other words, society and its conditions essentially compelled private individuals to create certain personal records the same way an agency compels its members to create records.

Pollard acceded that McKemmish’s application seemed a natural theoretical step, but argued that kind of adaptation actually short circuited the theoretical process of considering the
individuality of private papers. Even though Pollard indicated that the social context in which individuals created records may indeed be useful in some way, she concluded that all the literature up to that point “avoids discussion of the nature or understanding of the information that the contents of manuscript collections can provide” about the individual who create the documents. Pollard concluded that McKemmish missed the opportunity to develop a definition of personal papers because she worked from the base of administrative records theory.

Merely trying to create elasticity in Schellenberg’s administrative papers formula by linking the provenance of personal records to society or a social condition instead of an individual context simply could not work. Social context may, and likely does inform the content of personal records, but social conditions cannot not compel individuals to create records in the first place in the same way that agencies cause records to be created. For example, Aubry may write Joe a letter detailing her loneliness while he works on distant reservations, her frustration about feeling unimportant while she shuttles children and makes beds, or her desire to teach pottery or she may not; it is totally within her privilege as a private individual whether she writes the letter. Thus, Aubry did not write letters because her social condition obligated her to do so, but rather something within Aubry’s psyche prompted her writing which included references to her social conditions. In my assessment, both Pollard and McKemmish would agree that the social conditions in which Aubry lived influenced much of the content of her private correspondence and other writings. In summary, even though Pollard found social context to be an important element in evaluating the content of personal papers, she suggested that social conditions alone cannot serve as a basis for appraising personal writings. Instead,

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75 Pollard, 139.
76 Ibid., 146.
77 Aubry Jennings to Joe Jennings, 1933, Aubry Jennings Papers, box 16, folder 1.
archivists needed further conceptual understanding of the nature of the creation of personal papers.

For the most profound work on the theoretical nature of personal papers, archivists can turn to Canadian scholar Catherine Hobbs. Working as a Literary Manuscripts Collector at the National Library of Canada, Hobbs provided the first conceptual framework for understanding the individual nature of personal papers. Her work proved to be the key to framing my interaction with Aubry’s papers. Hobbs rejected the long-standing practice of borrowing from administrative records theory and instead conceptualized private records without recourse to Schellenbergian theory. Drawing on her library work in dealing with the fonds of authors, Hobbs contended that archivists accustomed to working with governmental or institutional archives lack the necessary conceptual understanding of personal papers and private archives to articulate how personal documents differ theoretically from organizational or agency records and public archives. She noted that recent debates about the nature of appraisal remained focused on “organization-based strategies,” which she said simply do not apply to privately created records. The long shadow of positivism had allowed archival theory related to administrative records to become a comfortable place for archivists to concentrate attention.

Hobbs’ essential question, “what then makes personal archives different from other types of fonds?” required her to set aside traditional archival theory and instead focus her analysis on considering what personal fonds mean to their author and creator. Only then, she suggested, could archivists ponder the necessary follow up questions, including those related to the broader social context as envisioned by McKemmish. From Hobbs’ scholarship, I extrapolated three

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78 Hobbs 127.
79 Ibid. For a discussion on the so-called appraisal wars of the 1990s, see Boles, Selecting and Appraising Manuscripts, 19.
80 Hobbs, 127.
useful insights on how to conceptualize private documents or a set of personal fonds: first, personal fonds differ from administrative records in that the text documents an individual’s activities of daily life, in other words private papers reflect what she termed “individual character.” As Hobbs explained, “the fonds of an individual is a site where the personality and the events of life interact in documentary form.” This intersection may seem obvious, but she astutely asserted that it is this very quality that makes personal records incompatible with archival theory based on administrative records. As she explained, from the individual’s perspective, personal fonds document a unique experience because every individual has a unique life experience originating in the individual nature of a person. Administrative records, however, document the same missional activities again and again. Even though the particulars and authors will vary, the organizational mission that drives the production of the records remains unchanged. For any given set of personal fonds, the author never varies but the details always vary as the progressive commentary in personal fonds records an individual’s daily life relationships and the events occurring around them.

Hobbs did not explicitly say so, but I contend that understanding the individual character of personal papers represents the starting point with which to evaluate any set of personal papers. In other words, Aubry’s personal diaries, letters, and other writings represent a symbiotic relationship between her and the text; the text relates only to her and only she could produce that text. Hobbs focused on the idiosyncratic relationship between the author and the personal document much as Schellenberg had focused on the administrative relationship between the agency’s mission and the production of the record. As Hobbs observed, there is an “intimacy in the personal archive not present in the collective, corporate, formalized record-keeping system.

81 Hobbs, 128.
82 Ibid.
These intimate elements reflected not only in the content and organization of personal records, but come into play in the archivist’s direct interaction with the creator/donor during appraisal.”83

This intimacy manifests itself in the transfer of the individual’s unique and singular experience to text.

Aubry’s papers typified the necessity of considering her private documents for their personal and individual nature, rather than from administrative or organizational demands. Aubry’s papers contain intensely personal thoughts and reflect her unique character much as Hobbs theory predicted. Although Joe Jennings’ life and work with the BIA provided context to the content of Aubry’s papers as he played a role in her lived experiences, her textual record relates only to her perspectives on her lived experiences as only she could relate them. For example, in one of her 1930s letters written from Pine Ridge she writes about a pottery class that she taught at the Sioux reservation and, also her efforts to research Indian liquor laws.84 Placed by a previous archivist in folders labeled “Bureau of Indian Affairs activities,” these letters did not document Bureau activities, but rather Aubry’s individual activities within the context of the patriarchal social institutions of marriage and family and the federal administration of minorities. Thus, the individual character of private papers suggests that their provenance should be linked to the individual, not a social condition such as marriage.

Secondly, Hobbs perceptively recognized the self-serving nature of personal documentation. The understanding that creators keep personal documents to serve their own needs quite simply severs personal papers theoretically from administrative papers that have purposes defined by the organizational mission. As Hobbs describes, “an individual creates records to serve his or her needs or predilections or personality, not because some law, statute,

83 Hobbs, 128.
84 Aubry Jennings to Joe Jennings, circa 1930s, Aubry Jennings Papers, box 15, folder 5, Hobbs, 127.
regulation, or corporate policy says so.”

Personal records then reflect something about a person’s private motivations and thus do not lend themselves to a systematic and ordered approach the way administrative records do.

Hobbs’ effort to understand why individuals create records hearkens back to Terry Cook’s observation a decade earlier that archivists lacked “a general theoretical overview of records creation in society” on the scale that the profession developed towards administrative records creation. Hobbs’ profound, but seemingly obvious observation that individuals create personal documents to meet their own personal needs, must inform an archivist’s appraisal or evaluation of personal records. Certainly, Aubry’s correspondence or her musings about her fear of disappearing like ink in a lake served her own needs and not the needs of the BIA or Joe Jennings. I can only imagine, right or wrongly, that these writings helped her cope with her social conditions, but that also the writings always stemmed from her own volition.

Richard J. Cox offered additional insight into the self-serving nature of personal documentation in his monograph *Personal Archives and the New Archival Calling*, in which he described personal papers as the signification of a person’s struggle for meaning. For example, a saved journal, a diary, or letter acts as a referent to a person’s individual being and how that person related to the world around them. As Cox describes, personal texts or life writing record the “unrelenting passage of time” for individuals as they pass through life. As an example, marking the passage of time for Aubry can be seen in both the repetitious daily diary entries and in the sole poem addressed to the heavens marking the death of her mother.

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85 Hobbs, 128.
87 Cox, 6.
88 Ibid., 115.
In her diaries, she recorded such quotidian details as the weather, times and foods she ate; she listed her comings and goings on routine errands, and even the cost of the dry cleaning or repairing shoes, all of which were ways she uniquely connected to the world around her. In a poem written upon the passing of her mother, she clearly attempted to process grief over her mother but perhaps also grief her own lost children. Hinted in the poem was the deeply personal loss of a child or perhaps two: “stretch your hands to her and laugh, Cherubs, for your grandmother is here.” In a single line in the same poem, she also writes of the possibility that the “apostle Paul” might have “changed his mind” on women. Was women’s equality on her mind in 1953, even as she said goodbye to her mother? Or did she somehow connect the need for female equality to her mother? Why Aubry recorded these details over others may never be understood. In fact, perhaps these writings were not even meant to be read by others, for at least one saved journal cover indicated that she meant to keep some writings private by marking it with “Private Keep Out, This Means You.”

In 1956, a year after Joe Jennings suddenly resigned from her beloved Cherokee, Aubry kept a diary for the first time while living temporarily in Washington, D.C. She noted in her diary that “This is the first year I have consistently kept a diary,” but she did not explain exactly why she began to do so. Both Cox and Hobbs points to the role of the individual psyche in personal records creation that never can be known fully to a future reader. I suspect very often individuals do not record or even perhaps know their own motivations for documenting personal experiences. Still, that personal writings emanate from the individual is a key consideration for archivists when appraising such papers.

89 “For God Took Her,” 1953, Aubry Jennings Papers, box 12, folder 22.
90 Ibid.
91 “A Good Time Book Cover, Aubry Jennings Papers, undated, box 11, folder 5.
92 Diary, January 1, 1956, Aubry Jennings Papers, box 11, folder 6.
Thirdly, personal fonds contain collective information filtered through an individual perspective. The information in private documents emanates from the individual psych, not from a collective organizational consciousness. Hobbs, who rotates her view of personal papers away from the society through the individual and back to the individual outwards to society, understood that even though individuals create private documents from an individual perspective, the documents reflect the social context from that person’s time and place. Thus, personal papers may shed light on how one individual experienced the systems and structures within a given context or time and on how that individual creator negotiated those same systems and structures. Hobbs recalls Michel Foucault’s argument that individual bodies move through life within the social structures of their existence; consequently, personal writings will contain information about the social norms and constraints of the time. Thus, Hobbs posits quite strongly that personal writings reflect individual character but she concedes that personal papers reveal something an individual’s social experience. Richard J. Cox similarly describes this concept observing that personal archives represent what he called a personal “documentary heritage” or a trace of the self, but of the self in society.

To illustrate the point using Aubry’s papers, her writings reveal much about the social conditions of her time. She existed within a traditional marriage in which her spouse worked away from the home while she remained tied to the gendered work of keeping house and raising children. Aubry’s marriage and living arrangement was replicated in households across America. In letter after letter and diary entry upon entry, she recounts the repetitious activities

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93 Hobbs, 127.
of cooking meals, shopping for groceries, purchasing a suit, or making a set of curtains all activities tied to her status as a homemaker. Tucked in with these quotidian details, she wrote on ways she created intellectual space in her life by involving herself in Joe’s work of developing tribal constitutions, or researching the rights of Cherokee, or inventing ways of interacting in educational or social activities at the reservation school. Certainly, historians and other scholars, even popular writers, can access information about the American social system that shaped women’s lives during Aubry’s lifetime, at least from Aubry’s recorded perspectives.96

When read together in a personal collection, rather than randomly placed throughout a set of administrative records, Aubry’s papers speak to her efforts to relate to the world around her, but also offer illumination on the social institutions within which she negotiated her life. Scholars may not draw broad conclusions from her musing about how minorities lived but details about Aubry’s lived experiences among minorities do contextualize the broader historical record. Such a personal perspective on her social conditions rarely can be extrapolated from the formal nature of administrative papers. Thus, the distinctive nature of life writings such as diaries and letters, occur in the intimate expression that emanates from an individual psyche, but in the presence of the experienced social context.

Part III

The Postmodern Script: Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder

Instead of accessing administrative records theory, archiving personal papers requires archivists to consider an approach tied to the individual nature of private documentation. Appraising personal papers requires archivists to interact with deeply private expression that emanated from an individual psyche; and for this reason, I contend that archival theory benefits

96 Caryn Radick, “Romance Writer’s Use of Archives,” Archivaria 81 (Spring 2016), 36.
from the insights of the discipline of psychology. Both Hobbs and Cox emphasized the psychological terrain of personal recordkeeping, noting that privately created documents textualize the individual psyche. I contend that determining the value of privately created texts is a highly subjective archival process. Instead of relying on statutory requirements or agency regulations to determine the archival value, as is the case for administrative records, appraising personal papers requires significant imposition of human judgment on the part of the archivist. The disciplinary field of psychology and its concern with the relationship between the human mind and behavior has not yet been widely used by archival scholars in developing theory. I suggest that appraising and working with personal records, especially “life writing” texts, requires in part a psychological orientation from the archivist (and the end user, I suspect) to evaluate the documents.

By psychological orientation, I mean approaching the documents from the perspective of trying to reconstruct some of the workings of the author’s psyche through an interrogation of the text. An archivist might ask such questions as who was the author and what was her background, what were the relationships in her life, what roles did she play in public and private life? What were the social mores, norms, and customs within which she lived? What did she say were her motivations for creating her personal documents? As Hobbs observed, by asking these personal questions of the text, it is “natural for the archivists to feel a personal connection or to develop a personal and often empathetic opinion” of the person who created the records.97

Australian archivist Margaret Henderson who archived activist Merle Thornton’s private papers also observed an emotional and psychological dimension to archiving another person’s papers. This emotional connection between the archivist and the creator of private documents

97 Hobbs, 132.
that Henderson experienced is absent when working with organizational records. Positivists emphasize the administrative and technical functions of archiving but Henderson describes the process of “metamorphosing” a life into an archival collection as the emotional work of knowing, learning, and establishing attachments about the person being archived. I experienced this phenomenon of connecting to the person being archived by reading Aubry’s private thoughts, undertaken to get to know her and establish a context for the experiences she wrote about.

The interaction of the archivist with personal papers and the required personal investment places the archivist in the role of judging the value of another person’s recorded experiences to the socially constructed archive and the centuries ahead. As noted earlier, appraisal is the process of identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned or retained in the archive. Unlike an appraisal of administrative records, which identifies documents that reflect transactional value to the organization, the process of identifying personal materials of value places archivists in the position of determining what makes a person’s documentation culturally valuable. But, what happens psychologically when one person judges another person, especially if the two individuals are very different from each other? What guides this process other than professional standards, of which there are few related to personal papers?

Since the early 1960s, psychologists have been researching the factors at play when humans evaluate or judge each other and then make decisions based on those judgments. In the field of social psychology, Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Carl Hovland developed social

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99 When the archives acquired the Jennings’ materials, the staff included a white female director and two male archivists. There is not enough documentation in the collection file to make definitive conclusions about the personal views or processing decisions of the original archivists who handled the Jennings’ donation.
judgment theory arguing that “people activate self-knowledge when making social judgments.” Sherif, Sherif, and Hovland proposed that a person’s self-identity plays a crucial role in how a person constructs attitudes and judgments towards others in the same social environment. Social judgment theorists focused research studies on understanding how subconscious ideas influenced perceptions and decisions about other persons.

Over the last twenty years, social psychologists refined the theory to apply the role of self-knowledge in social situations. As social psychologists David Dunning and Andrew Hayes concluded in a 1996 study, the self plays a persuasive role in how individuals form judgments of others both in their private and professional lives. Dunning and Hayes found that individuals ascribe more meaning to self-identified traits and characteristics than they do to unshared traits of others. This finding led researchers to consider the important implication that individuals compare others to themselves as part of their judgment process. In 2014, Clayton R. Critcher, David Dunning, and Sarah C. Rom’s further clarified the 1996 study concluding that not only do individuals consult internal knowledge to form judgments, but they also access this information as a first line of information in the judgment process. Once individuals access self-knowledge, they then measure others compared to their own prioritized traits. Critcher, Dunning, and Rom found that people engaged in this self-identification and comparison subconsciously and before consulting any external messages, such as those learned from education or training. They concluded, “our understanding of others is contaminated with our understanding of ourselves.”

Critcher, Dunning, and Rom posited that in a social environment, individuals use this self-

102 Dunning and Hayes, 213.
consultation to gain information with which to make decisions. Ultimately, they concluded, “self-perception colors social perception” which then informs action.\textsuperscript{104}

Critcher, Dunning, and Rom’s research also confirmed earlier studies that concluded that adjusting away from internal perceptions requires concerted effort with the degree of successful adjustment being very small.\textsuperscript{105} As a woman who also made choices about family, education, and work, it took little persuasion for me to appreciate Aubry’s papers. I recognized similar qualities in her that I valued in myself. I am intimately familiar with the real and ongoing struggle in women’s lives to balance personal desires and social pressure. But to what extent did these qualities influence how I interacted with her papers?

If it is true that the knowledge we derive from our selves establishes the framework for how we perceive and make decisions about others, and that this self-knowledge is largely persuasive, then this psychological phenomenon may have significant implications for how archivists assess the value of personal papers during an appraisal process. For example, this concept of self as a first source of knowledge implies that archivists form initial perceptions about value based on their own identity even before accessing training or education. To complicate matters, the extent of training or education needed to overcome initial perceptions remains unknown. Just how an archivist will evaluate the documentation of others, especially if the subject matter is unfamiliar or distasteful to the archivist, may largely depend on the positive or negative values ascribed to the traits assessed to be in the donor or creator of the materials.

In the field of advertising, communications theorists Marianne Dainton and Elaine D. Kelley noted that “social judgment theory proposes that people make evaluations (judgments)

\textsuperscript{104}\textsuperscript{104} Critcher, Dunning, Rom, 108. 
\textsuperscript{105}\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 214.
about the content of messages based on their anchors, or stance, on particular topic messages.”

Applying this concept to archival appraisal suggests that archivists also access internal knowledge about topics and persons involved in the materials to make value judgments about a collection. It is unknown to what extent internal perceptions affect archival decision-making as no studies yet have been conducted in an archival setting. These psychological insights invite archival theorists to consider just where is the archivist’s starting point in ascribing value to another person’s documentary heritage.

The work of both Hobbs and Cox reveal that the deeply personal nature of private writing challenges the process of archival appraisal which has long been focused on the nature of administrative records. Even as Hobbs advances the conceptual framework of the nature of private documents, how to value these records remains to be developed by archival theorists and practitioners. All personal records contain value to their creators but to the watchful eye of a space conscious collections archivist, as Dorian Gray might ask, what private fonds will capture our archival imaginations a century later? What is beautiful to one archivist may not be so to another. As Hobbs cautions, “Archival theory has not yet grasped the significance of what might be called the flotsam of the individual life.”

Hobbs successfully argues that personal records have individual character or psyche, originate as self-serving documents, and contain collective information but from an individual perspective. Based on my work with Aubry’s papers, I concur but likewise suggest that archivists also have an individual character and often, archiving, especially the act of selecting and valuing might also be self-serving, and may also reflect the social structure or context of the

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107 Hobbs, 131.
time and place. Constructing Aubry Jennings’ personal fonds reflects more than my archival education; it also reflects my individual character and personal motivations in creating archival memory for Aubry Jennings.

\textit{Part IV}

The Final Act: Mediating Fonds, Creating Archival Memory

A thoughtful reappraisal under professional guidelines and bearing in mind postmodern thinking on the accession of materials resulted in two related but distinct collections; one for the Jennings personal papers and one for the BIA records. Shedding positivist traditions that necessarily marginalized Aubry’s papers in the collection allowed me to appreciate the individuality present in Aubry’s papers. I spent many months reading Aubry’s private materials attempting to learn who she was and what role she played individually, in her marriage, and in society. I connected to Aubry Jennings through her letters and diaries and it was that connection that allowed me to move beyond the technical processes of archiving to transforming her past into a usable textual record—in other words to construct an archival memory from her private materials.

This approach pioneered by archivist Margaret Henderson in processing the Merle Thornton papers does not seem to be a method prescribed by standard texts in the archival profession. However, in the words of Randall Jimerson, “concern for ‘voiceless populations’ should lead archivists to adjust their procedures for all basic archival functions.”\footnote{Randall C. Jimerson, \textit{Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice} (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009), 299.} No archival function should be so sacrosanct as to escape regular evaluation for its role in marginalizing persons in the archival record. Indeed, my female archival colleague indicated it just made common sense that Aubry’s materials should be accounted for in the collection and, indeed, I
hope going forward more archivists will be informed by such an egalitarian attitude towards others but also with the awareness that archivists play a key role in the outcome of archival material.\textsuperscript{109} Surely, the positivist tradition that focused on administrative records as sources of knowledge about the past should not function as a barrier to processing the documented experiences of ordinary, everyday, women such as Aubry Jennings.

The reappraisal and rearrangement of the Jennings materials illustrated that both the government records of Joe Jennings and the seemingly ordinary personal papers of Aubry Jennings contained different, but sufficient, archival value when viewed through recent developments in understanding the nature of personal papers that contain largely ordinary material. The new appraisal, arrangement, and description of the materials resulted in making archival space for the documented experiences of the previously excluded person of Aubry Jennings. Informed by my self-knowledge, education, and training I realized Aubry’s papers demanded space in the archive alongside those of her husband, not in spite of her writings that originated from her ordinary, private life, but because her writings originated in and documented her private, everyday gendered experiences—experiences largely shaped by the patriarchal society in which she lived.

Aubry’s documentation serve as a cultural memory site for her uniquely American experience in, and tied to, southern Appalachia between 1914 and 1971, and it is this aspect of her documentary heritage that presented the opportunity to reconsider the very foundation of what it means to archive, to be archived, and whether the everyday, ordinary, experiences of private persons such as Aubry should be remembered or simply left in their own century, as Aubry said, like a drop of red ink flung into a lake to fade and thin away. As Rita Felski

\textsuperscript{109} Jennifer Bingham, Interview by Jean Rushing, April 13, 2016.
observed, “the everyday cannot be opposed to the realm of history [or archives] but is rather the very means by which history is actualized and made real.”

Aubry’s documentation offers a window into her private life as a white middle-class homemaker who struggled with subordination to her husband. Aubry’s and other personal papers offer nuanced historical perspectives but more importantly contextualize and balance institutional and administrative records. Are archivists really unwilling to embrace the growing awareness that personal documents are as vital to our documentary heritage as administrative records? When archival scholars elevate personal papers on a par even with administrative records in terms of theory and practice, and when historians stop referring to ordinary as from below, all the world really does become a stage in the drama of archiving. Even the seemingly ordinary women such as the Aubry Jennings of the world can live on in archival memory through the active work of archivists. Arlette Farge has artfully said that “the archival document is a tear in the fabric of time, an unplanned glimpse … in the lives of ordinary people.”

The best that I can hope for is that the reappraisal of the Jennings’ papers left a tear in the fabric of time for Aubry Faulkner Jennings and that future archivists will not judge me too harshly for making that tear.

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110 Felski, 84.
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