**Course Learning Objective Analysis Paper**

Evaluating the role record creators play in the construction of social memory

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infost 650g-201 an introduction to modern archives administration

# **Evaluate the Role the role that records creators play in the construction of social memory.**

Records creators play a vital role in the construction of social memory because not only are they preserving records, but they are also enabling a community to voice their recollection of social memories surrounding historical events. To appreciate the vital role records creators, have, we must establish a definition of social memory which functions as a collective group memory. Wikipedia describes collective memory as the following:

**Collective memory** refers to the shared pool of memories, knowledge and information of a [social group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_group) that is significantly associated with the group's identity.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_memory#cite_note-:0-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_memory#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_memory#cite_note-3) The English phrase "collective memory" and the equivalent French phrase "la mémoire collective" appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. The philosopher and sociologist [Maurice Halbwachs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Halbwachs) analyzed and advanced the concept of the collective memory in the book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_memory#cite_note-4)

Collective memory is shared and passed on by large and small social groups. Examples of these groups can include nations, generations, communities, among others.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_memory#cite_note-:0-1)[[1]](#footnote-1)

An example of collective or social memory preservation in the article Community Audio Archiving, which talks about founding the Mixtape Museum as a community-based memory institution with the goal of advancing public understanding of the role and evolution of mixtapes in Hip-Hop culture. Hip-Hop history begins with mixtape history, and preserving that history requires close work with the communities who created and retain mixtape recordings. [[2]](#footnote-2) The community acting as the creator of records is echoed in the article A Critique of Social Justice as an Archival Imperative: What Is It We’re Doing That’s All That Important? A quote from South African Verne Harris states, a “strong correlation between oppression and thorough recordkeeping” is axiomatic. Since, as he sees it, “the exercise of political power hinges on control of information,” he can also follow Foucault in accepting that “‘The archive is the first law of what can be said. . ..’ And when it can be said, how, and by whom.[[3]](#footnote-3) The idea of the role of the record keeper as an activist recorder of history is expounded upon in the article. We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are’: Archival Appraisal Past,  
Present and Future and the following idea from this article echoes this sentiment:

The focus of archivists shifted from being centered around archives as  
‘truth,’ evidence, authenticity, defending the integrity of the record, to archives as  
story, as narrative, as part of a societal and governance process of remembering and  
forgetting, of concern about power and margins, in which the archivist consciously  
embraced a more visible role in co-creating the archive, not just being the curator of  
what was left over

All three articles evaluate the role of the record creator as paramount in the construction of social memory for communities. The articles as record creator to record this history of communities who may hot have historically held a dominant voice, or in the case of the Mixtape Museum, go straight to the community who created Hip-Hop and collect materials that can be curated in a museum.

# **Who has the impact of shaping social memory?**

The record creator or archivist and the community has an impact on shaping social memory. For example, the Mixtape Museum is a collaboration between archivist and the community: MXM was founded on the principle that mixtape memories are essential to archiving Hip-Hop culture and that a participatory approach is needed to preserve these community-based artifacts, which originated and remain in the hands of private collectors, creators, and fans.[[4]](#footnote-4) Hip-Hop is over fifty years old and the museum is a way to shape the social memory of a local and musical global phenomenon. Cook believes that record creators can impact social memory by becoming community truth tellers:

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Record creators who must bear witness to truth about the society that surrounds them must do so according to the Greene article because, “Societal power is a double-edged phenomenon: power is used for restraint and for liberation, for repression and for redemption, power is productive and destructive. Records too are both “instruments of oppression and domination” and “enablers of democratic empowerment,” [[5]](#footnote-5)

Social memory often boils down to historical records, therefore, the record creator is burdened with the task of making the conscious decision to shape social memory accurately by creating records that speak truth to power. If a community’s voice is wrongfully oppressed, the record creator should record who makes up the community that is silenced and who makes up the community of silencers.

**How do each of these parties shape social memory and what could be the results?**

For McCoy, the answer is simple. Collecting Hip-Hop mixtapes is a way of preserving a legacy.Hip-Hop history begins with mixtape history, and preserving that history requires close work with the communities who created and retain mixtape recordings. As Gray explains, “We can’t archive Hip-Hop without the community; they have all of the receipts.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Preserving a legacy through the preservation of history, even if the history is not ideal is what Green calls for: “There is no black and white when it comes to records of oppression and records of social justice. Records are what we make of them, and sometimes the recordkeeping of the most hated regime will become the most valuable tool of social justice.” Green and McCoy are on the opposite spectrums of who record creators can shape social memory for whether the record is celebratory or painful, the point is to create historical records whose merits can be debated by future generations. Green and McCoy are record creators who understand shaping social memory is part of being a record keeper for the local and global community. Therefore, it is important to record social memories of the community in an accurate manner. McCoy’s results are tangible: a museum with an abundant physical and expanding digital collection that has users from across the globe. Cook realizes the archivist has to embrace the community as a co-creator of records: “Community archives initiatives of various kinds – mentoring or participatory; independent or partnerships – are now seeking actively to make these  
voices, those community archival records, part of our broader archival heritage,  
including recognizing that some of our principles, rules, standards, and definitions  
about what makes archives ‘authentic’ may be irrelevant or, at least, require  
significant rethinking.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Common denominator in all articles**

The articles by Cook, Green, and McCoy share a similar ethos in the fact that they all view record creation as a vital way of connecting with community to give voice to them to and create social memory. Every article views the role of the record creator as one of activism on behalf of the community. The community also has a vital role in record creation which fosters social memory, and each article does an excellent job of reminding the reader of this fact. The articles clearly state the community must be asked to contribute to the creation of their records. A collaboration between the community and archivists is an ongoing relationship of mutual respect.

# The articles also point out the power of social movements and their effects on communities. The articles encourage archivist to always take the moral high ground: It isn’t the job of the archivist to lead the social justice crusade.84 But it is his or her job to pursue, acquire, and make available the records that will, among other things, allow social justice crusaders to show that injustice has occurred. Without the work of the archivist, it would be impossible to present proof. If we believe in the goal of something called social justice, we can be proud that our profession ensures that relevant documentation survives. If we do not believe in social justice so-called, we can still be proud that our archives preserve memory and meaning for all facets of society.[[8]](#footnote-8)

# All three articles do not rely on social memory as the sole reason to act as record creators and focus more so on story telling and truth telling. Social memory is always going to be the result of record keeping for the communities described in the articles. However, the perspective of social memory for a community’s legacy is a profound reason to become better and record creators. The community may not realize they are engaging in providing social memory to their future family, friends, or global citizens, but the fact that their voice is their own and not the voice of someone else is excellent work. Social memory is not always about activism but can be part of the overall goal to record a local movement, such as Hip-Hop, that became internation but was the result of so much local talent. The inspiration that social memory provides to the community through the reflection of looking back is inspiring.

# Finally, the articles really stress how the role of the record plays in the construction of social memory will always evolve based on what is going on in the local and global communities. All articles strive to let the reader know that passivity will not yield any results and that the record keeper must take an active role in fostering communities to create and protect social memory.

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