

Chapter 8. Digitally Preserving the Home through the Collective: A Communal Methodology for Filipinx-American Digital Archiving

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Land Acknowledgment. Our article relies on the importance of decolonizing methodologies toward revisionist histories and reclamation of land rights. As part of a culture that has been colonized for over three centuries and still struggles to undo the harmful effects of colonialism on our land and people, we are committed to both materialist and discursive approaches to decolonization, and thus acknowledge we are conducting research on Anishinaabe land. We acknowledge and support the sovereignty of the Ojibwe, Odawa and Botawatomi tribes.

The library of the Philippine American Cultural Center of Michigan (PAC-CM) would seem, upon first glance to the visitor, a storage room: papers hang off the shelves with faded post-its, cardboard boxes filled with documents press against the walls, some closed by the resting weight of tinkling bamboo sticks, and donated books with Catholic covers rest on every seating space. Filipinx American newsletters and history books are stacked out of order, the fate of their intermingling decided only by a donor's casual placement—a drop-off that hints to the conversational tenor of praise for the donated contents, their unanticipated accumulation, and the donor's dismay at being unable to keep them secure. The realized historical import that gradually weighed on many of the donors is another theme we often hear in these conversations at the cultural center. Yet for a center whose collections span the last two decades of Michigan's Filipinx American activity and inherited the previous decades of the community's planning documents, organizational minutes, event artifacts, letters, pictures, and collections from community leaders, the collection of the community's past had continued to both multiply and lay dormant. Their narratives lay in fragments, talking over each other and interrupted by the history of their neighboring artifacts, only remembered by the conversations and lives retained by the cultural center's members.

In 2018, affiliate members of the cultural center and the non-profit organization Filipino American National Historical Society—Michigan Chapter (FANHS-MI) spear-headed the digital archiving of the center's artifacts to preserve the objects' present integrity, as well as document and file them for accessible community use. This daunting multi-year project had to confront two critical tasks: how do we create an ongoing and sustainable working infrastructure for archiving such a large set of collections? Further, how do we also incorporate an equally large Filipinx American community in this process, since they are the holders, interpreters, and translators of these memories? Essentially, what these tasks required was a marriage of both an expert and informed approach to digital archiving as well as the expertise and experience of the local Filipinx American community.

Often, in traditional forms of digital archiving, the former eclipses the communal presence, resulting in distilled and "objective" archival narratives that drive decisions around what's deserving of attention based on Western-centric and institutionalized values. Much of what is considered "traditional archiving" today refers to the post-modern archiving methods from the 1970s onward which, though it recognized the pluralism of voices, identities, and histories in our society, "ultimately involved an imposition of the archivist's expertise on records, records creators, and records users" (Cook 11). To address this imbalance and meet our community's needs, many of our methodological answers came from prioritizing the behavioral and value-driven mechanisms of the Filipinx collectivist mentality and localized socio-cultural patterns that were already in place. Though some Filipinx American archives have grounded these cultural values and patterns in a controlled material space, such as a cultural center, we found digital space and methods could also accommodate and resolve our preservation and access needs without sacrificing our local collectivist patterns. What resulted has been a culturally informed working infrastructure for digital archiving exemplifying a community-engaged praxis that adds to a diverse stream of research methods. More specifically, this infrastructure informs approaches to digital archiving that make space for local community dynamics and ecosystems.

Computers and writing as a field has seen an upswing in such archival work and studies, with Kathleen Blake Yancey suspecting that writing studies may be getting serious about an "archival turn" (364). A wide range of research in the field has covered the pedagogical use of archives in the composition classroom (Daniel-Wariya and Lewis; Enoch and VanHaitisma) and developing archival methodologies (Ramsey et al.). The need for methodologically incorporating local contexts and actors who produce archival collections has become a critical focus, a way to correct weak historiography from depending on secondhand readings and postmodern critiques, and instead supply emerging archival practices on which our revisionist histories depend (Ferreira-Buckley 581-82). As studies of archival methodology have shifted from a focus on institutional to social practice (Friedrich 422-23), communal archives that had been previously peripheral

to archiving's Western-centric roots have gained more recognition in producing visible histories with culturally distinct archival practices.

Calls from the digital humanities (Posner) and digital rhetoric (Poudyal) to interrogate and rebuild digital archives from its elitist ties have reflected the steady emergence of new archival models (Kurtz; Bastian "The Records"). These non-Western forms of digital archiving have contributed to a growing number of heterogeneous practices for researching and conducting archival work based on a variety of community practices. Many of these culturally curated archives—by nature of their community-centered approaches—have also answered technical communications' call for a collaborative alliance between designers and users (Haas 304; Agboka 4) to further combat erasure, misrepresentation, and dehumanization of marginalized communities within digital writing and rhetoric. Similarly, cultural rhetoricians have argued the methodological importance of including community stakeholders in the digital archiving process by re-centering cultural processes of knowledge-making (Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod; Cushman). What has often resulted are archival methodologies that not only blur the lines between archivists and users, but ultimately rely on a network of participant-archivists who record, preserve, and make meaning of their own histories within their communal and cultural logics.

In the following sections, we provide the research backdrop within which we situate our own Filipinx American archival process for our cultural center in Michigan, a process which strives for dynamic preservation and access policies that reflect the community's values and practices. By looking at the methodological nature of research and archival processes in the broader fields of digital rhetoric and archival studies, and Filipinx American archiving specifically, we begin to establish how our cultural center's particular archival process contributes to emerging and diverse practices as well as distinct forms of Filipinx American archiving as fitted for localized contexts.

Community Archives in Rhetoric and Archival Studies

Given the influx of diverse forms of community archiving processes, community archives—or autonomous archives created, managed, and sustained by communities often apart from mainstream or institutionalized archives—have marked the most recent paradigmatic shift of archival identity. Diverse archival processes have broadly exposed the imperial logics of traditional Western-centric archives, a process Ellen Cushman outlined as operating through a Western tradition and timeline, and de-contextualized methods of collecting and viewing artifacts that reinforce a subject/object dichotomy (121). At the core of this exposure is a re-consideration of Western standards of legitimacy and validity. The community-participatory model has interrogated and revised archives and archival processes to specifically question what archivists consider to be legitimate authentication of evidence through such long-standing methodological factors such as evidence, memory, and provenance (Cook 114-115).

For example, one major impact of the community archiving model has been its reexamination of the term *provenance* which ties notions of authenticity to original order. According to the International Council of Archives, provenance refers to the “agency, institution, organization, or individual that created, accumulated, and maintained records . . . prior to their transfer to a records centre/archives” (qtd. in Sweeney 194). Typically a means of grounding claims of legitimacy, terms like provenance have been transformed by varied claims of authentic order and origin within the hands of communities. For instance, ideas of authenticity have shifted to incorporate Indigenous voices through parallel provenance (Hurley), descendants of records (Bastian), cultural networks (Battley 61) and ethnicity (Wurl). Like provenance, other processual practices and principles such as appraisal, collection development, arrangement, and access have typically leaned into newer democratized forms dictated by each community archives’ own terms (Poole 663). As a result, looking merely at the records of a community archive does not provide the full picture of the value networks guiding and assessing cultural objects (Battley 60). Instead, taking stock of the localized rhetorical process which ascribes a particular logic of order, value, and legitimacy to archived objects can tell researchers, archivists, and users of object meanings within the cultural systems they are situated.

Today, community archives with their own systems of archival method/ologies have shown to achieve several goals in line with social justice and activism work, the root motivation that had spurred community archiving movements in the 60s and 70s (Poole 658; Flinn and Stevens 6). Based on their social politics, these archives have addressed and filled gaps in historical records, addressed unequal representation in the landscapes of our national memory, and grounded priorities on the collective memory and concerns of the people. In interviews with 17 community archive participants, for instance, Cifor et al. found most community archivists wear many hats such as activists, advocates, and community organizers as they stay close to public engagement and ethical and inclusive orientations to archival methodologies. Finally, community archives have shown to generate “representational belonging” for communities, a form of empowerment through representation that serves as a counterweight to what Michelle Caswell termed *symbolic annihilation* from memory institutions (Caswell et al. 75). The field of cultural rhetorics has explored similar affordances to community-driven archival work, with notable methodological examples and commentaries on such community archives as Cherokee digital archives (Cushman), a Samaritan digital archive (Ridolfo et al.), and the Lesbian Herstory Archive (Narayan).

Filipinx American Historiography and Community Archiving

Filipinx American communities have added to these culturally distinct and community-centered forms of archival models, and their epistemologies have driven unique models that not only break from Western institutional archiving processes,

but also provide diverse method/ologies from within Filipinx or Filipinx American contexts. Many Filipinx American community archivists have emphasized their methodological approach, underscoring that the process be taken as seriously as the product (see Stoler 83; Ruskin). Grounding more resources within community perspectives, Filipinx and Filipinx American researchers' methods have often involved the consultation of oral histories, Filipinx publications, personal family histories, decolonized interpretations of Filipinx psychology,¹ and proposed history-writing in Filipinx language.² For archives specifically, Filipinx and Filipinx American community archivists have reclaimed the documentation of their histories through various rhetorical strategies around narratives and place/space.

Narratives

Following the direction of more Filipinx-centric histories and narratives, the broader impulse of Filipinx historiography in the last five decades has leaned on *Pantayong Pananaw*, or the “for-us-by-us” perspective, which involved Filipinx cultural perspectives for documenting Philippine history to respond to a number of predominant themes, such as colonial influence, discovery, reaction, and the “first Filipinos” (Reyes 243). In the U.S., projected themes around Western contact have carried into Filipinx American collections and archives which are often read in terms of the influence of colonialism, the attendant cultural loss, and a multiculturalism which “presumes the centrality of the U.S. nation-state” in incorporating different groups (Fujita-Rony 4-5). Filipina researchers such as Dorothy Fujita-Rony have suggested lenses to nuance and problematize the assimilationist-leaning themes of Filipinx archival readings. For instance, she offers the lens of “militarized rupture” to show ways in which imposed war and militarization complicate the seemingly positive social scientific narratives. Similarly, the Manilatown I-Hotel Archives resurrects Filipinx American narratives around the anti-eviction movement of San Francisco’s International Hotel (I-Hotel), an erased chapter of *manong* and Filipinx American history documenting the community’s fight against corporate displacement (Wong et al. 124). Both approaches to Filipinx American archives allow for fuller and reclaimed perspectives on these narratives from the community.

Place/Space

Filipinx American community archives have continuously pushed against institutional and Western archiving roots not only in the way they seek to be narrativized,

1. See *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement, which revised literature on Filipinx psychology from Western authors to account for Filipinx ontology.

2. See the *Pantayong Pananaw* movement, which stressed “for-us-from-us” historical perspectives written in Filipinx language.

but also in imposing their own terms around space, particularly on the grounds of access and autonomy. Often to address the common community archiving challenges of balancing sustainability and autonomy (Poole 672-73), many of these Filipinx American community archives have partnered with academic and library institutions who serve as custodians of the collected materials, but with the insistence that the gathering of materials stays autonomous for the community. Filipinx American community archives such as the *My Baryo, My Borough* project housed at Queens Library, and the Archiving Filipino American Music in Los Angeles (AFAMILA) project housed in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive are examples of institutional partnerships who use major institutions to archive and house materials collected by communities' digital copy donations (Schreiner and de los Reyes 2) or gathered by Filipinx American graduate students who serve as community liaisons (Ruskin). Similarly, UC Davis's *Welga Digital Archive* which is housed in the Bulosan Center for Filipino Studies is run by an entirely Filipinx American personnel, and the center's archivist inputs digital copy donations from local Filipinx Americans. Though the sustainability and legitimacy of these archives are bolstered by institutional partnership and its attendant formalized space for collections, the partial autonomy has also led to issues of limited access and use from the very Filipinx American communities that contributed the majority of the collections (Ruskin).

Some Filipinx American archives have taken to digital platforms as a means of using virtual space to solve the issue of sustainability and autonomy. In one example, The Manilatown I-Hotel Archives, run by grassroots activists, their cultural networks, and the non-profit Manilatown Heritage Foundation, did not have a physical space to safely house their materials on the I-Hotel anti-eviction movement. So, they showcased their materials on a *blogspot* to make it accessible to the Filipinx American public. Prioritizing public engagement and easy access, the group also took to social media to highlight the materials and spark discussion of a Filipinx American movement that has often been erased from the history books (Wong et al. 125-26).

Though the above Filipinx American archives have faced different affordances and limitations in terms of physical and digital spaces, one of the leading models that resolved these issues of sustainability and autonomy comes from one of the largest and well-known Filipinx American community archives in America. The National Pinoy Archives (NPA), founded by Dr. Fred Cordova and affiliated with the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) formed in 1982 (Fujita-Rony 12; Monberg 197). Communal and participatory archiving serves as the foundation of the NPA, and the community archive's main principles for sustainment include remaining independent and locally accessible. Determined to stay housed within FANHS' Seattle office for accessibility reasons, the archival material on Filipinx American history includes hundreds of oral histories, newspaper clippings, and boxes of objects labeled by subject. As part of its communal participatory approach, Filipinx Americans are invited to visit the archives, as

well as create their own files to contribute. According to Terese Monberg's interview with Dr. Fred Cordova, the NPA's materials are ninety-nine percent derived from community members whose contributions far outnumber those of academic contributors. To keep it community driven, Cordova insisted on specific terms of access and space:

To be community-based, in Fred's eyes, means that community members have physical access to one another's research, artifacts, and publications. No institutional affiliation or identification card is required, no minimum age applies, no user's fee is charged—though donations are encouraged. This community-based model is enacted through the National Pinoy Archives (NPA), housed with the FANHS National Chapter in Seattle. Here, students, community researchers, and other folks interested in Filipino American history not only have full access to the archives, they are led through the archives by community researchers who know the materials, their origins and interconnections, exceptionally well. These archives facilitate the kinds of sharing that is central to the philosophy behind FANHS. The archives become a physical, social, and virtual space for sharing and networking. (Monberg 197)

The NPA remains an exemplary model of Filipinx American methodologies that incorporate autonomous, accessible, and entirely community-run participatory archiving, and much of these features are facilitated by communal logics and considerations.

Each of the above examples add to a tapestry of methodological approaches that are anchored on localized contexts and needs, while also feeding into an interdependent network of constitutive possibilities for more responsible archival infrastructures. Amongst the wide array of community archival models and research, Filipinx American community archives, driven by their collectivist values, have provided some localized methodological solutions to key challenges consistent to community archiving. Alex Poole's review of community archives research spanning from 1985 to 2018 highlighted several common issues, some of which included the lack of sustainable resources, outreach, and intracommunity and intercommunity tensions. In response to these challenges, Filipinx American archives have implemented institutional partnerships bridging expert and community ties, thus tapping into more sustainable resources and grounding stakeholder relationships on mutual trust and rapport, as well as creating their own autonomous and Filipinx-run collections powered by internal cultural networks. We add to the current literature on community archiving methodologies by discussing our FANHS Michigan chapter's distinct approach to communal digital archiving. We offer insight as to how our chapter addressed the above challenges through our own approach to local collective-driven decisions around narrative

and place/space. More specifically, it is our choice of digital methods that allows an excess of voices in our collection, overlaid by a communal approach to tagging and metadata, as well as our unique grounding of archival content and participation through the physical space of our cultural center. Further, our methodology also offers pathways to address other common challenges to community archives more broadly, such as outreach, sustainability, and succession.

We begin by discussing the background history, partnerships, and working infrastructure of our community archive. Then we outline the model's successes and challenges, followed by a discussion of implications for community archival practices. For the Filipinx American culture whose knowledge production is often inherently communally-centered, our *Filipinx Americans in Michigan Historical Archive* demonstrates a digital archival model that continues to push against archives/databases that are written *about* racial communities rather than *with* them, allows communities to engage with their own histories in ways that align with their own epistemologies and localized contexts, and contributes to a heterogenous history of decolonizing practices for ethical digital cultural heritage production.

The Collections of Filipinx American History in Michigan

The conception of *The Filipinx Americans in Michigan Historical Archive* began in 2018 when discussions between staff and elders at the Philippine American Cultural Center of Michigan (PACCM) and members of FANHS–Michigan Chapter (FANHS-MI) identified the need to preserve and organize the large collection of historical documents sitting in PACCM's library and offices, which, at that point, had largely been in the care of the center's elders.

Officially opening in Southfield in 2001, PACCM was a near seven-decade pursuit by the Filipinx Americans of Michigan to find a centralized space for gathering and sustaining their heritage. Given the decades-long, cumulative effort, which included a tremendous amount of volunteer hours and the sacrifices of board members, youth, Filipinx American community, presidents, and fifty-one Filipinx American organizations, PACCM gained its own building and now serves over 4,000 community members of every age who are looking to get closer to Filipinx heritage and find community with other Filipinx Americans in the state. PACCM remains entirely volunteer-run, including their culture and language program, Paaralang Pilipino, which teaches classes to youth and adults every Sunday. It also serves as a shared and centralized space for Filipinx American college groups, organizations, folk dance groups, and social justice organizations to hold meetings and events.

Many of the documents were donated or compiled throughout the center's years, much of which predate the center and encompass the decades of multi-organizational planning for a centralized space for Michigan's Filipinx American communities. Michigan's only Filipinx cultural and language school, the multiple

Filipinx American organizations that formed, fell, and spawned newer organizations, and the collection's vast assortment of minutes, letters, historical photographs, brochures, personal notes, sketches, newsletters, and mini biographies provide an intimate history of Michigan's Filipinx American communities from the 1940s to the present day.

The Need for a Digital Community Archive

Initial ideas for the collections' preservation included organizing the library so the collections would be displayed and easily navigable, but given the limited space of the library in comparison to the number of boxes and donations, as well as the already visible signs of aging and wear from the repeated handling of the documents, our members realized we also needed better protocol for preservation. Not only was there a need to preserve the quality of the documents, but also the stories and meanings behind them, many of which were lost due to poor organization and labeling of boxes. The center's elders often provided this context, but with the rapidly aging population of our center's elders, we were further pressed to find a way to preserve the material and document their communal meanings.

The most immediate answer to the above needs became the idea of digitizing the documents and housing them in a digital archive. Though a digital archive couldn't replicate the material artifacts, it could preserve digital surrogates of the documents in their present quality and provide promise of greater participation and access to the Filipinx American community.

Our Positionality

A critical part of this history and project's methodology requires a reflection and acknowledgment of our—James and Stephanie's—positionality as members and researchers and how that affects the nature of involvement in the archival project. We take seriously such questions as our impetus to speak and commitment to accountability, or more precisely, what LuMing Mao asks us to question: "What right, for example, do scholars have to represent this or that culture and its rhetorics? From what vantage point do they position themselves, and how does their position in turn shape and influence the outcomes of their studies?" (42). Asking such questions of ourselves and the possible epistemological effects of bringing in our lenses, ideologies, and individualized contexts, whether consciously or unconsciously, was the first critical step in prioritizing the community's values, especially in our representation of them.

James is a Filipino American adoptee who came to the center in 2007 during his late adolescence to get closer to his roots. He enrolled in the language school, Paaralang Pilipino, and eventually went on to become the director of Paaralang Pilipino, lead facilitator for Filipino Youth Initiative (FYI), and secretary of FANHS-MI. The complexities of his transracial experience, cultural disconnect and upbringing,

and identity affects his relationship with his position at the center. As someone personally impacted by estrangement from his Filipinx roots and community due to the colonial dynamics intrinsic to transnational adoption processes, he leads the center's Filipinx youth in weekly digital archiving of our center's artifacts with a commitment to decolonizing and reclaiming our own cultural approaches to empowerment, knowledge-making, and historiography. He also brings to the project an intimate knowledge of the center's local culture, the needs of the community, and history of many of the center's members, activities, and donated collections.

A relatively new member, Stephanie joined the cultural center in 2017 while attending graduate school in the writing, rhetoric, and American cultures program at Michigan State University. As a *mestiza* (half white, half Filipina) and part of the 1.5 generation of Filipinx Americans who were born in the Philippines but later immigrated to the states, she continuously negotiates how much space she takes up in Filipinx American spaces like the cultural center. Three features of her positionality directly affected her decisions to responsibly enter the cultural center's space and eventually develop methodology and consult on the archival project. The first was her Filipinx American identity from which she inherited specific cultural experiences and collectivist values in line with the PACCM community's heritage and values. It is also an identity marked by a commitment to decolonization. After witnessing her mother, a Filipina immigrant and fierce journalist who advocated for Filipinx in the Philippines, experience shame and erasure of her Filipinx heritage in her new American life, Stephanie devoted herself to teaching and service that contributed to the cultural empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized communities to help counter this common dynamic.

The second and third features of her positionality that affected engagement in this process include her white identity and identity as a temporary resident of Michigan. As someone who is half white and an academic—both privileged identity markers in the Filipinx American community—and as a non-local to Michigan and metro Detroit, she resolved to not taking up leadership space at the center and within the archival project, except in a supporting and consulting role. As a result, she has worked as a grant writer, website developer, and guest speaker for PACCM and FANHS-MI, working closely with both groups to support their mission and goals and incorporating feedback loops on all projects so that the community signs off on all representations of themselves. Additionally, acknowledging she's not native to the area and the center, and anticipating she would move again after graduation, Stephanie limited her role on the archival project to that of researcher and consultant as it's a role that can be continued remotely without violently impacting the community and project upon abrupt departure.

The Working Infrastructure of Our Community Archive

As a historical society, FANHS-MI led the project of digitizing and archiving PACCM's collections. After PACCM and FANHS-MI member—and then, doctoral stu-

dent in rhetoric and digital humanities—Stephanie consulted with staff at Michigan State University’s digital humanities program about feasible next steps, FANHS-MI board members decided to move ahead with the suggested platform Omeka, as it was well-known, accessible, and affordable for our immediate needs. Omeka allowed our community to easily upload scanned documents, create multiple user accounts to archive and input metadata, privatize the collection from the wider public, and immediately generate a searchable collection based on tags before curating exhibits for later archiving stages. Omeka’s pages for generating metadata followed the standard Dublin Core model, which we decided to adopt because of its simplicity and familiarity to mainstream archivists and librarians who we anticipated needing for guidance, and for the possibility of partnering with a larger repository in the future should we be unable to financially sustain the digital archive.

In the project’s second phase of development, we created a training process for collectivist-driven archiving on Omeka which would gradually decentralize authority and distribute expertise to Filipinx American members of the PACCM community. We decided on a training model that began with training FANHS-MI board members first, who consist of academics, young professionals, and long-time Filipinx American metro Detroit residents of all ages. In July of 2019, Stephanie led the archival training of the board members, and the group archived their first few historical documents while working through decisions around standardizing the metadata for consistency. The FANHS team then created a Google Drive to upload scanned documents before archiving, to keep community-established archiving instructions, and to serve as a back-up repository for surrogate copies. The Drive also became an easy way to track which uploads were archived by having the participant-archivist move the uploads into collection folders once they’re archived into Omeka.

By January of 2020, board members trained the youth from our Paaralang Pilipino school and Filipino Youth Initiative (FYI), who would then consult with the elders on 1) which materials needed to be archived, 2) the stories surrounding the archived objects, and 3) the description and purpose of the archive for curation of the landing page. Led by James, Director of Paaralang Pilipino and FYI, the youth spent the last half hour of their weekly schooling dedicated to archiving PACCM’s material. The students work in three teams: the website, Google Drive, and archiving team—though with the possibility to rotate among them. The Website (Omeka) Team is the “face” of the archive. They control what visitors see, understand about the purpose and values of our archive, and how to navigate the pages. The Google Drive Team maintains the Drive folders, maintains protocol for scanned and archived materials, and scans and uploads materials to the Drive. Finally, the Archiving Team archives the scanned material from the Drive and establishes and maintains a consistent system for metadata. Each team was supervised by a FANHS-MI member.

The center’s community—whose members include the youth who archive materials, the FANHS-MI members who archive and guide the process, and the elders who provide guidance and consultations—are the ones who more consistently provide additions to the collections. Additionally, Filipinx American locals

complete this loop by contributing materials through the cultural center's network of connections (see Figure 8.1). Since March 2020, members of the Filipino American community of Michigan have volunteered objects to be added to the archives, often by reaching out to FANHS-MI board members who then individually archive the material or add it to the Google Drive.

Successes: Collectivist-Driven Narratives, Shared Place/Space Identity, and Intergenerational Sustainability

As a collectivist culture grounded on the concept of *kapwa* (fellow being), stressing the values of unity and oneness, Filipinxs tend to operate through their cultural networks and have an intrinsic sense of shared identity. According to EJR David, what springs from the core sense of *kapwa* are further Indigenous values such as *utang na loob* (sense of inner debt and gratitude) and *pakikisama* (companionship, maintaining harmony for the group) (108). Many of these Filipinx values have been retained, drive the underlying local motivations for the volunteer-led communal archiving project, and have steered the networked and intergenerational model that allows our participants to also be users and archivists. Like its peer Filipino American archives, *The Filipinx Americans in Michigan Historical Archive* challenges Western-centric and institutional models through localized, collectivist-driven narratives and attention to place/space, contributing to a plurality of archival practices within American and even Filipino American contexts while grounded in the discursive field of a specific locale (the cultural center).

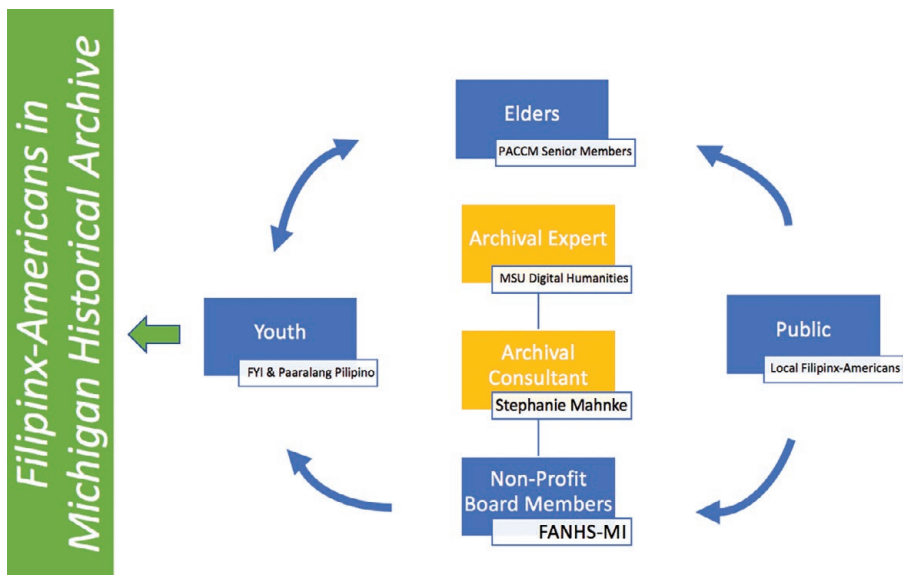


Figure 8.1. Collectivist working infrastructure and flow of archival data.

Guiding Narratives

One way our community has guided the archive's narratives is by communal decisions over collection development. Though largely guided by the center's elders who donate and steer other participant-archivists towards certain materials, our democratized form of collection development relies on an excess of voices to tell a story about a specific collection. Thus, rather than a curated or partial view of Filipinx American history typical in more institutionalized archives, our accumulation of narratives complements and sometimes complicates essentializing categories or descriptions. For instance, the collection on PACCM's history includes original documents from its planning days, such as minutes and financial reports, but also secondary and reflective pieces, such as a dissertation chapter on the history of PACCM written by a Filipinx student, as well as oral history recordings of the center's previous presidents as they reflect on their terms. Some of the oral history testimonies and more personalized items (e.g., handwritten notes and letters) further contextualize other documents pertaining to the planning years, but they also provide different perspectives and conflicting histories. One example of this are the tensions between the PACCM board and the churches which were used or vetted as potential places to house the center and the language school. Though some of the interviews attest to mainly needing an autonomous, affordable, and larger space for PACCM, the inclusion of a letter articulates concerns over upkeep and even a 1996 town hall meeting document reveal community concerns over the safety of the location and a church's concern that the center's purposes would be more cultural than religious. The decision to include a plurality of documents and voices allows for more nuanced and collectively driven histories instead of a monolithic narrative, thus allowing an archival experience that is fuller, textured, and dynamically incomplete.

The choice of sources privileges the excess of narratives to a collection, and additionally, the communal input of metadata and tags allow members to collectively add to these narratives through the addition of key terms, elements, and descriptive notes. To help with discovery and access to archived objects, metadata describes these objects in terms of elements. Though we chose Dublin Core's model of metadata for its easier learning curve and potential for cross-cultural interoperability with other entities (such as institutions, museums, larger archives, etc.), we didn't necessarily privilege rich metadata under the same mindset. In other words, we avoided leaning toward highly descriptive elements under the common principle of avoiding assumptions or predictions of general users' search terms. Instead, participant-archivists were guided toward basic descriptive elements and tags they believed would be relevant to them and the local Filipinx American community. For example, one digitized document of the center's minutes from the 1990s has accumulated tags and details from different participant-archivists emphasizing various aspects of the meeting notes, such as the specific people involved who might be of interest or familiar to the local community, the legacy of a specific fundraising event, the emphasis of the center as a

home, or the pursuit of a centralized place/space. In this instance, the description is listed briefly as “Minutes from board meeting on November 3, 1996 at St. Anne’s school,” but includes community-oriented tags such as the names of attendees and mentions, the popular “Valentine’s Ball” fundraiser, and even “land” to highlight meeting discussion of finding a location for PACCM. Using tags, the participant-archivists privilege familiar community-centered narratives in anticipation of what might be useful or of interest to local Filipinx American users.

Afterall, much of the ongoing communally developed metadata is intergenerational, reaching members across the center and its affiliated organizations. Many of the descriptions of the collections are crafted by the youth and FANHS members, usually after discussing the materials with elders and PACCM staff. This communal guidance not only steered the development of the metadata and descriptions, but also affected these choices of tags or keywords from a collectivist perspective in terms of what is worth noting. Even in some instances, participant-archivists developed tags such as “Vincent Chin” for a newsletter which mentioned him, the names of key PACCM members, or specific Filipinx dances or folk terms that the students recognized from the materials, though they aren’t mentioned explicitly on the materials themselves. Since Omeka offers the accumulated tags as options when inputting metadata, the community could rely and build upon the community-archivists’ collection of focal terms, having an auto-populated repository of terms for additional collectivist consideration. Thus, the communal process itself of inputting metadata and crafting item descriptions not only captures the local Filipinx American history, but the specific community’s forms of remembering, interpreting, and emphasizing certain aspects of these artifacts.

Place/Space

As mentioned earlier, attention to place/space in the archival process has influenced Filipinx American archival decisions around access and autonomy. Place holds a particular importance to Filipinx history when considering the centuries of multiple colonizations of the Philippines, and decades of displacement, gentrification, and removal of ethnic enclaves in America. *The Filipinx Americans in Michigan Historical Archive* has not only grounded the archive and its materials on local Filipinx history in the state, but on place, the cultural center specifically, and the history of the Filipinx American communities who have conceived, fundraised, built, and maintained it as a greater community.

Like the National Pinoy Archives, the material collections remain at the cultural center instead of an outside institution because it is the most accessible to the Filipinx American locals who contribute to and use the historical documents. Many locals and Filipinx American groups see PACCM as the nexus of Filipinx events, meetings, and general congregations in the state, as most Filipinx American residents reside in metro Detroit and Wayne County. The center also does not charge a fee, and prides itself on welcoming anyone with even an “ounce of Fili-

pino blood” to visit. The digital archive, as an organized extension of the housed material collections, has amplified this notion of access for users to participate and find items remotely through granted permission from the center’s cultural networks. To keep the artifacts private and belonging to the local Filipinx American community and particularly those affiliated with the cultural center, elders in charge of the project insisted the digital archive remain private, at least for now, and only accessible through permission. Our digital methods and platform allow for this tempered and slower form of access to respect the insular and private nature of the local community and its items, and it’s the social and discursive field of the cultural center that grounds the range of this access.

As the materials are housed at the center and the digital archive run by the center, collection development and authenticity of archived materials is also grounded in the place/space. The focus on the cultural center not only ties our archival community together by our ethnic background and values, but by the shared space itself. Each participant-archivist weighs in on the materials or consults with other members through the shared intimacy and sense of identity around having been part of the center’s history at some point. This sense of belonging and accompanied authenticity crosses over into the handling of the center’s material history; the legitimacy of evidence is not only dictated by decisions from the collective and with the collective in mind but has also been established by participant-archivists’ knowledgeable relationship with the cultural center.

Thus, the layers of shared identity around culture and place/space help to ease intra- and inter-community tensions, a common challenge of communal archives which cite tensions around identity, ideology, or group loyalty (Poole 673). Our digital methods allow for both the need to privatize the collections to our cultural center’s community, but also to extend participation and access as a matter of degrees to members of our internal networks. To accommodate additional users to maintain the archive, the Omeka platform facilitates these networked permissions and extensions to access by allowing users to sign up and manage the digital archive as “admin,” “researcher,” or “contributor.” FANHS-MI board members have control over who gets access and the type of access they are allowed for the archival site, as well as the option to remove users who misuse their privileges or modify the status of users whose use of the archive has changed.

As our archival project continues the work of guiding culturally authored narratives of our Filipinx American history and strategically leveraging strengths around shared place/space, it has also shown positive results around sustainability of human resources, or more particularly, outreach and intergenerational succession which are other commonly cited issues of community archives.

Outreach

After we contemplated the most effective ways for engaging the community to bring more awareness to the archives, we eventually relied on our built-in cultural

networks which involved the center's connections through individual members, scholarly circles, and organizational circles. The bulk of the archive includes the processual contributions from the youth, elders, and FANHS members, but individual members who are encouraged to donate have also opened pathways to material contributions that tell a broader story of Filipinx American history in the state. The wider Filipinx American community is included through personal outreach and discussion with family members. Everyone is a part of the collective, each with their own narratives, histories and herstories that converge into the Filipinx American diaspora. Prospective donations of their material data and material lineages are crucial to our archive's collection. A few examples in the local Detroit Filipinx American community are within the familial history of Nanette Maranan Green. Like many other Filipinx Americans, Nanette and her parents have accumulated aged photos stemming from her family's local Filipinx American restaurant. The Maranan family were the original owners of Royal Kubo, which was the first Filipinx American bar with karaoke in the state of Michigan. Dating as far back as 1990, these photos encompass some of the histories of the local Filipinx community organizations in Michigan. Our digital archive is further incentive for individual donations as a method of preservation against unforeseen problematic cases in preserving material history and the occurrence of inevitable catastrophes. In the case of Fe Rowland, one of the past directors of Paaralang Pilipino, much of her own collection of involvement within the Filipinx American community has endured a basement flood.

Another way we developed outreach was to extend the archive to another group of common archival users and contributors, the local Filipinx American college students. The organizational multilayering and multilateral community involvement from both FANHS-MI and Pilipino Student Associations from local universities have helped in facilitating classes at PACCM on most Sundays throughout the academic school year. This built-in partnership with the Filipinx American college groups has allowed for shared discussions around the importance of material archives and its history, a type of reflection that becomes a search for personal relevance with both individual and collective narratives, and importance of intergenerational participation in accepting collective responsibility over the longevity of these material objects.

Finally, outreach through our cultural networks extended to connected organizational groups. FANHS National, the umbrella group under which our FANHS-MI chapter is situated and the owners of the National Pinoy Archives, calls for chapter reports of each of its regional and chapter organizations biannually. Outreach of our localized archive extends to other chapters and Filipinx Americans across America, opening the possibility of receiving donations from those with ties to Michigan, as well as the possibility of collaborating within a larger network of developing communal archives in different states. Though our model strongly believes in designing archival methods and infrastructures that are immediately influenced by localized needs and resources, with the compilation of

Dublin Core metadata, our model is still conducive to uptake into a larger, consolidated repository of a FANHHS chapter archival network. Through this form of outreach to other FANHHS communities, we can share our archival methodologies in incorporating this type of working model, while simultaneously strengthening the greater network of Filipinx American communities' material history.

Intergenerational Succession

Another indicator of the archive's sustainability is the prioritization of the collective in our infrastructure which naturally fosters intergenerational succession. Researchers have cited that across the many forms of community archives, succession and intergenerational engagement has remained one of the greatest concerns for the longevity of these archives (Poole 676). PACCM's elders had long been on board to preserve the center's material history, and with the key guidance of the FANHHS-MI members and PACCM staff, our community saw the archival project as an opportunity for youth involvement that could both cement their key role in the succession of our center and history, as well as strengthen the community's relationship to each other and the individual knowledges that piece together the mosaic of this history. The Filipino Youth Initiative (FYI), an intergenerational, community-based class, which is offered at Paaralang Pilipino Language and Cultural School program at the Philippine American Cultural Center of Michigan, shares the goals as emphasized by Melissa Sia, a former facilitator of FYI: "We hope to generate self-awareness and confidence in the youth . . . to have a better understanding of Filipino American history and contemporary issues as well as personal recognition of one's place as a member of the Filipino American community" (Sia). Our intergenerational programs became an easy way to involve the youth at documenting and contributing to our Filipinx American material lineages.

For example, the students are asked first to bring an item from home that is culturally important to them or their family, such as an heirloom. The relevance of "cultural artifacts" helps establish its proper relationship to material lineages whereas in these types of workshops, while it challenges the students and facilitators to reflect and discuss aspects of identity, it also generates crucial intergenerational dialogue through the utilization of material history. Additional workshops provided by PIN@Y Educational Partnerships supplement these methods of building relevance while contributing to cultural material lineages. Some workshop presentations such as *Mapping Your Family's Journey* emphasizes documenting intercultural dialogue from their family members and immigration pattern via oral history or spoken word answering the question "Where are you from?" (Tintiango-Cubales et al.), and observing the accumulation of letters, photos, and personal documents such as shipping tickets. Cultural artifacts such as these are crucial to be donated to the archive.

These intergenerational programs and workshops have developed their curriculum for recognizing and engaging the youth by not only positioning the

youth as audience and “learners” in this approach to history, but also re-centering the power balance between student-facilitator and allowing students to understand their role and responsibility in building and maintaining the material history of our Filipinx community. Some of the elders who serve as a part of the board membership of PACCM engage with the FYI students on what materials are most crucial to be included in the archive. These may include and are not limited to the proper arrangement of board meeting minutes, flyers, brochures, financial statements, and of course, photographs, as well as how to designate and arrange the artifacts under specific collections. The archive’s collection development, metadata, tagging, descriptions, multi-user access, and arrangement are in continual flux and revision to accommodate emerging communal stories, shifting consensus, and needs.

Challenges: Remaining Issues of Access and Sustainability

Some of our archive’s challenges revolved around negotiating forms of access, and archive longevity in terms of financial sustainability.

Negotiated Forms of Access

For most Filipinx American archives, offering easy access for the Filipinx American communities who are documenting the histories and using the archived materials is a priority. Open access would be the easiest answer for an archive in digital form, but many of the documents contain private information, such as addresses, phone numbers, and sensitive financial information belonging to the center and staff. In light of this concern, the Omeka platform allowed us to privatize the archive in its entirety—although not individual items—which made it accessible only to those with usernames which were given editing, viewing, or contributing permissions. Consequently, the access and outreach became limited to only those connected to the cultural center, FANHS-MI, and our cultural networks. Since the elders steered the decision to privatize the archive to protect some of the information, having to negotiate the extension of access to outside community members became a challenge with these concerns in mind and with the idea that extending access would need collective consent, which is a slow and informal process.

As a result, FANHS-MI members had to carefully oversee the youth’s work on the archive, making sure the archiving process occurred at the center with the staff and elders present. All members were also instructed not to give out login information, or researcher or contributor access without consulting the other FANHS-MI members and PACCM elders. There are many drawbacks to these precautions. First, as the community grows, these precautions will be more difficult to control. Secondly, gaining the collective consent to extend username access to the archive takes time, and could prevent the wider community from participating and using the archive if they’re meant to wait an extended period. Finally,

it limits the scope of documented Filipinx American narratives in Michigan and participation to only those connected to the cultural center in some capacity.

Financial Sustainability

Though the archive's sustainability of human resources benefits directly from PACCM as an already established place/space for Filipinx Americans in Michigan, the shared ethnic background of its members, and the archival process's reinforcement of ties to the center and its members, financial sustainability remains a difficult task. FANHS-MI is a non-profit chapter of the national FANHS organization and must continually generate funds to keep the Omeka platform as our digital archive on a yearly basis. Much of FANHS-MI chapter's limited funds come from a portion of yearly membership dues, and donations from cultural events. Additionally, as the number of items in the archive grows, thus demanding the purchase of more space, the cost of keeping the Omeka platform and our community's accumulated work on the metadata, descriptions, and arrangement of collections will keep rising.

In anticipation of the potential loss of the archival platform in the future, our community relies on the Google Drive, which will remain a stable backup repository for our digitized items. As another safeguard, the choice of the Dublin Core format for our metadata was also in anticipation for the possibility of moving our archive into a more stable repository with a partner institution or organization. The possible depositing of the archive's collection to be housed by an outside entity could greatly impact autonomy and access for our community—not to mention make the cultural values behind our processual model less apparent or tied to the artifact meanings—so financial sustainability is a looming concern for our continued work and ownership of the archive.

Conclusion

Filipinx American community archives continue to challenge traditional or institutionalized notions of the archive and its attendant processes. Finding its natural form in community archives, Filipinx values of *kapwa* and emphasis on the collective steer processual archival models that continue to ask and push in the direction of “how do we serve our local community's needs, the very members who create, use, and are empowered by these histories?” In approaching and revisiting this question, Filipinx American archives, such as our own, have frequently circled the same concerns around the rhetorical curation of narratives, the influence of place/space on autonomy and access, the ways of reaching a wider net of Filipinx Americans, and how to sustain the community archive so it remains within the community's hands and cultural processes.

The Filipinx Americans of Michigan Historical Archive grounds itself on a decolonial and collective methodology that utilizes methods of prioritizing the

community and maximizing opportunities for intergenerational involvement. Our unique approach leverages the strength of our centralized place/space, the cultural center, and incorporates an intergenerationally-layered training and working model which is facilitated by the multi-user and generative metadata functions of our digital platform Omeka. We do not offer our archival model as a prescriptive approach to be adopted in its entirety, as one of the key strengths of community archives are their ability to respond to the localized needs and resources of a community and its history. Instead, our archival model demonstrates the diversity of archival approaches, and the heterogenous practices that thrive even within the array of Filipinx American archives.

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