SAFEGUARDING SOUTH AFRICA'S PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONAL RECORDS: THE QUESTION OF CUSTODY

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ABSTRACT

This research article made an effort to uncover the attitudes of South African Portuguese community-based organisations in Gauteng, South Africa, towards the custody of their potential archival records and where these organisations would prefer to house any archival records they may hold. The literature reviewed revealed that community records often present community organisations that hold these records with a dilemma regarding who might take custody of their potential records if they do decide to participate in an archival collecting effort of their community. The literature also showed that archival custody options come in different forms, ranging from traditional approaches to custody of physical and legal transfer of ownership to a mainstream archive, to alternative methods often referred to as the post-custodial and stewardship approaches. Utilising an interpretive qualitative research design, similarly the empirical findings from the interviews held with the Portuguese organisations in Gauteng also revealed that these organisations' preferences towards custody were not uniform. The results

showed that any proposed archival collecting effort of the Portuguese community will have to take all their divergent views into consideration if an archival collecting strategy that facilitates the contribution of the records from all their organisations is to be achieved. It also became evident that each organisation's preference towards the custody of their records is often contentious and therefore needs to be respected if these community records are to be preserved in the long term.

Keywords: community archives, community-based organisations, community-based records, custody of community records, provenance, records management, South African Portuguese community, under documented communities

1.   INTRODUCTION

The history of the Portuguese in South Africa from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries is relatively well documented, especially the experiences of prominent Portuguese navigators of the time and their arrivals at the Cape and Natal. However, after the arrival and domination of the Cape by the Dutch and the subsequent loss of control of the region by the Portuguese, the documented history and experiences of this community diminished, even though the actual Portuguese population continued to grow, especially since the early twentieth century. Glaser (2010, 62) highlights this by stating that in spite of the fact that the Portuguese are still comfortably the third largest group of European descent in South Africa (after those of Afrikaner and British ancestry) and '… that they have left indelible layers on the culture and economy of the country, there is astonishingly sparse recognition of their existence in South African historiography'. Glaser (2010, 62) further argues that: 'While a great deal has been written about earlier Portuguese involvement with the subcontinent dating back as far as the fifteenth century "discoveries" – to my mind much more significant migrations of the twentieth century have largely been overlooked.' Leal (1977), Van Graan (1988), McDuling (1995), Pereira (2000) and Ferreira and Le Roux (2009) also confirm that there are minimal materials available for research on the contemporary South African Portuguese community.

Therefore, this article is based on an interpretive qualitative research study which sought to bring the contemporary social history of the South African Portuguese community into the country's archival heritage by developing an archival collecting framework for the records generated by their community-based organisations in Gauteng, South Africa. These organisational materials were given special attention, as they are deemed an important source in preserving the social history, memories and experiences of communities that have been underrepresented in a nation's archival heritage, such as the Portuguese in South Africa (Flinn 2011; Harris 2005; Josias 2011; McDonald 2008).

Based on the study findings, though, it became evident that in order to achieve a successful archival collecting plan for these community records, resolving issues

surrounding their custody was paramount and would have to be dealt with from the outset. The article therefore discusses the 'question of custody', and how it impacts on the preservation of community records in general, and on the organisational records generated by the South African Portuguese community in particular. In addition, it reports on the empirical findings of the semi-structured interviews held with the South African Portuguese community-based organisations in Gauteng to determine their custody preferences towards the records they hold. Finally, the article makes recommendations with regard to the custody of these organisations' records, taking into account the community's divergent preferences.

2.   THE QUESTION OF CUSTODY

Wurl (2005, 71) argues that the question of who retains custody, ownership or control of community archival records, such as ethnic and immigrant collections, has become a controversial issue. This has led to archivists interested in community archiving considering alternatives to the traditional custodial role of an archive. Wurl further explains that in order to fully appreciate the question of custody of community records, a closely related issue – that of their provenance – needs to be understood.

2.1. Custody and provenance

According to the traditional definition, 'provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family or organisation which created or received the items in a collection' (Pearce-Moses 2005). The traditional archival principle of provenance insists that the contextual source of documentation be 'respected' in the way materials are developed and administered. However, in the domain of ethnicity, immigrant and other community collections, Wurl (2005, 71–72) argues that the meaning of 'respect' goes hand-in-hand with the matter of cultural ownership or custody. Daniel (2010, 94) further contends that the origin of records, or 'who' created them, is not always as easily identifiable as may appear. According to Daniel (2010, 94), archivists need to look at the context of creation, the social processes involved in the creation of records, and that provenance could even be 'the societal and intellectual contexts shaping the actions of the people and institutions who made and maintained the records'. In this paradigm, provenance could include new forms of records, and records creation could be thought of beyond individuals and institutions 'as the dynamic activity of a community with its own cultural values and practices'. Accepting this expanded view of the context of creation allows for other possible provenances, such as 'place, ethnicity or collective memory as provenance' (Daniel 2010, 94).

The benefits of extending the definition of provenance to a broader societal understanding is supported by Nesmith (2006, 352) who explains that document

creation, use and archiving have social origins. Therefore, the idea that provenance is about a single person or institution limits the understanding of the complex context within which records are created. Thus, Nesmith (2006, 352) argues that accepting the societal dimensions of records creation, and expanding the view of provenance 'helps archivists and others to understand in greater depth the utility of records by contextualising them more fully'. Bastian (2006, 279) argues that the redefinition of provenance has already been expanded by archival theorists, such as Terry Cook, Tom Nesmith and Eric Ketelaar, amongst others. These theorists are reimagining provenance as the whole of identifiable and multiple relationships surrounding a record. According to them, archival narratives about those multiple relationships of creation and use should be exposed so that researchers may truly understand records from the past. They further argue that provenance should not be limited to institutions, because of the dynamic relationships between these and communities and individuals, and should therefore be expanded to 'societal provenance' (Bastian, 2006, 279). Therefore, Bastian (2006, 280) suggests the need to extend provenance to include a wider 'social provenance' and a 'community of records', because 'the reality we record and the way we record, are induced by socio-cultural factors', and goes on to say that 'framing records within social provenance' and a 'community of records' offers archival solutions to the dilemmas of locating all voices within the spaces of records'.

It is within this debate on provenance that Wurl (2005, 65–67) introduces the concept of 'ethnicity as provenance', which he views as records emanating within what he refers to as ethnic communities, such as immigrant groups, indigenous populations, linguistic minorities, and so on. Wurl (2005, 65–67) acknowledges the recent thread of archival literature, especially postmodern archival theorists, that challenges the traditional definitions of the basic archival principle of provenance. He explains that the authors who challenge this concept argue that archivists learn early on that the originating source of archival material is something to be respected and represented in the way such materials are gathered and made accessible. However, because of the conventional focus on discrete materials, archivists tend to avoid the richer and more expansive connotations embodied in the idea of originating source. Postmodern authors widen the understanding of provenance to encompass entities not conveniently bound by the walls of an institution or a government department. Instead, they argue that human beings operate in a collective fashion and develop collective identities that, while perhaps more complex and not so neatly contained as the more distinct state or institutional entities, are nonetheless corporate and corporeal; therefore, provenance can merge around larger social groupings, such as, immigrant, ethnic and other communities, inter alia.

Understanding ethnic and other related communities as a possible manifestation of provenance has significant implications. It can assist archivists in overcoming the tendency to oversimplify their conceptions of these communities when documenting

them. Without a full appreciation for the contextual whole of a community, efforts to document this dimension of society can take on a fragmentary and narrow approach. When a community as a whole is not viewed as provenance, it tends to be viewed simply as a subject area, topic or theme, like education, health, or the arts. This paradigm of archival selection overlooks the rich pool of information originating within community structures in favour of scattered products about communities, often generated by those on the outside looking in. It also runs the risk of being grounded on distorted assumptions of ethnic identities and community experiences (Fernandez and Paschild 2013). Wurl (2005, 68) therefore explains that: 'It is only through an appreciation of ethnic communities as environments of originating context that we can liberate ourselves from constricted thinking about the evidence of ethnicity.'

Daniel (2010, 96) does, however, caution that provenance is more than ethnicity or community identity, and supports Wurl's own admission by explaining that 'considering ethnicity the primary source of identity shaping and community also leads to fragmentary and narrow collections, as ethnicity is only one of the many social groupings that shape collective identity'. Daniel (2010, 96) nevertheless acknowledges the benefits of being open to the possibilities of community and ethnicity as provenance presented by Wurl, by agreeing that 'without such open thought, and an awareness of the social cultural context in which archives takes place, collecting efforts can never be sustainable and effective because they will lack the support of the communities'.

2.2.   Debating the custody of community-generated records

The preceding discussion of the new meanings of provenance calls into question the conventional archival values of the ownership or custody of archival records. The traditional attitude or belief that has dominated the archival profession is that of custody, where the safekeeping of records implies the physical transfer of records away from the originating body to a formal archival institution whereby both physical ownership and legal responsibility of records are surrendered to the latter; or as Bastian (2002, 81) explains, that the concept of custody has been that of 'the legal and physical control of records by an archival institution' and that 'the custody obligation is fulfilled when an archival facility formally takes in records from a records creating agency and thereby assumes both legal and physical custody of the records' (Bastian 2002, 86).

Alternatives to the traditional custody approach mainly began as a consequence of the large increase in records and technological developments, such as the advent of electronic records, and the difficulties these presented in being transferred away from their offices of origin to a formal archival institution. These concerns were initially mainly due to technical issues, such as complications that arose from the

wide range of hardware and software which would have to be transferred or be available at these institutions to access and maintain these records and the electronic systems on which they were created. According to Bastian (2002, 88), the American archivist F Gerald Ham suggested that:

> In an age of increasing record abundance that threatened to overwhelm archival institutions, archivists needed to rethink their custodial role and devise proactive strategies to manage archives and retain legal custody. He coined the term 'post custodial' era, to herald a new age in which archivists would not be merely keepers of records, but managers of records within the context of a technological society.

Due to the requirements of archival electronic records which demanded management outside the environment of the archival repository, the aim of this approach was to allow the creators to retain physical custody of their archives, but to receive assistance in caring for these from a formal archival institution. The proponents of the post-custodial approach argue that in today's technological society with the abundance of archives, archival materials would best be served if they remained within the setting in which they originated. Many of these proponents also advocate the idea of a 'distributed custody model', whereby by abandoning the physical in favour of the intellectual control of archives, records would remain in the originating office. In the distributed model, the legal responsibility for records and accountability for them is divided between the originating office and the archives (McDonald 2008, 18).

As noted above, for the most part this emerging paradigm has been encouraged in the domain of electronic records. However, although the debate of custody has mainly taken place in the context of electronic records, the recognition that certain archives might be best served if they remained in the place where they originated has also been strengthened by the creation of many community archives. This is supported by authors such as Bastian (2002), Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd (2009) and Fernandez and Paschild (2013). Bastian (2002, 89) notes that

> many people, communities and groups do not want their records in the hands of a large centralised government, perhaps transported to archival storage in cities well removed from the point of creation, and from the people who may want to access them.

This is also highlighted by Flinn et al. (2009, 71) when they refer to archives that wish to document, record and preserve the identity and history of their own community: 'Some custodians and creators of these collections remain suspicious of the mainstream archival profession and are determined to preserve their independence and autonomous voice by retaining direct ownership and physical custodianship of their collections.'

Wurl (2005, 71) goes on to say that: 'If there is any one facet of documenting immigrant and ethnic communities that sets this realm of archival activity apart, it is the issue of jurisdiction.' The traditional principle of custody, a deeply entrenched professional value, assumes that guardianship of records includes both physical

possession (physical custody) and legal responsibility (legal custody) of records. However, in the administration of community, ethnic and related archives, the 'inviolability' of custody needs to be challenged. In the world of community archival collecting, such as ethnic and immigrant archives, custodial principles need to give way to a different framework of jurisdiction and responsibility. Wurl (2005, 71) therefore posits that 'custodianship needs to be replaced by stewardship'. In the custodial approach to archives, property is relinquished by the originating source, possession is taken both physically and legally by the archives. At the moment of transfer, from the perspective of the collecting institution, the importance of the materials to the originator fades away in comparison to their importance for external researchers. The materials are now owned by the archival repository, and any attention given to them is aimed at a largely imagined group of potential users, most of whom are often not seen as being affiliated with the originators.

On the other hand, the 'stewardship principle' encompasses a very different set of relationships between stakeholders and materials. It is characterised by partnership and continuity of association between archival repository and originator. In a stewardship approach, archival materials are viewed less as property and more as cultural asset, jointly held by the archive and the community of origin (Flinn 2007, 168). Records may be donated to a repository, but with the expectation that in many respects the relationship between donor and archive is just beginning. The goals of stewardship are preservation and access to information wherever it might be physically held, while intentions or claims of possessing the material for a given community are both irrelevant and invalid. Stewardship recognises that the universe of potential source materials originating from and pertaining to any community is limitless and ranges far beyond the boundaries of formats conventionally regarded as archival. Wurl (2005, 72) goes on to explain that accepting the idea of

> ethnicity as provenance and consequently adopting a principle of stewardship may seem to speak primarily to archival programmes directly established by ethnic communities. In such settings, the kind of symbiotic ongoing 'ownership' connection between archive and originator described above develops more naturally.

In the case of community collections not set up by ethnic communities, but by mainstream institutions such as universities, the first task of any immigrant or ethnic documentation effort is to be aware of this paradigm of cultural provenance. According to Wurl (2005, 72): 'Without the deep absorption of this socioarchival reality, such efforts can never be sustainable and effective. They can never be seen by the communities they endeavour to reflect as anything meriting true participation.'

On the point of custody, Bastian (2002) makes another important observation. He explains that despite the shift away from physical custody that these new custodial approaches emphasise, they do not by any means suggest a total break from the

former. The debate of custodianship of any particular archives needs to foremost consider access and the needs of the user.

> Any custodial system would include the assurance of continuing access for those communities or peoples whose histories it represents [...] Cohesive and reliable construction of collective memory by communities or groups of people depends upon their ability to access their own historical records in addition to the artefacts, traditions, folk histories and other memorializations of their pasts. Access therefore is integral to the custody of those records and must be part of any debate about their care and control (Bastian 2002, 93).

2.2.1. Encapsulating the possible custodial approaches to archival collecting initiatives for community records

Although a community archives collection is one that represents the history and experiences of a specific group regardless of where these materials may be kept or preserved, it is important to make a clear distinction between the different possible custody approaches that may be adopted for collecting community records. These possible approaches reflect the diverse thoughts on the custody, ownership and control of community records expressed in the above debates. On the one hand, these may include collecting initiatives that follow the more traditional approach of custody, where mainstream institutions acquire and transfer records created by a community to the mainstream collecting institutions, with the latter being responsible for establishing, managing, preserving and making accessible these collections. These initiatives are often affiliated to institutions, such as a national archive or a special collection of a university. On the other hand, collecting initiatives may include those that are borne within the community, situated within its own community structures and managed by it independently. These are often referred to as independent community-based archives. Finally, there are also archival collecting initiatives of communities that adopt a collaborative or a stewardship framework towards the management and preservation of these records. These endeavours normally include partnerships between the community and a mainstream institution, where the skills and knowledge of each are garnered in order to sustain and enhance the collecting initiatives.

Flinn (2011, 7–8) also acknowledges these different approaches by elaborating that although the focus of community archival collecting initiatives includes that of keeping physical custody of records within community structures, the focus also includes endeavours where intellectual ownership of the collections is retained by the community, but physical custody of the records may be transferred to a mainstream institution, or even partnering with these formal heritage institutions for mutual support, advice and professional expertise. Singer (1997, 2) also observes the distinct approaches towards collecting community records explaining that while some government and university archives may have components which

define themselves as community collections, their institutions are not exclusively dedicated to the acquisition of community archival materials or maintained within the framework of a cultural or ethnic community in the same way a community-based archives is. For these reasons there is a considerable distinction between community run archives programmes and community collections within public or university archives. Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd (2010, 59) similarly recognise this discourse regarding what may be referred to as the different approaches towards the custody and disposition of community records, by stating that materials created by community members and organisations may be sustained entirely independently of mainstream heritage institutions, they may be handed over to mainstream archives, or they may receive support in some form from these institutions.

The best approach to the above dilemma is not straightforward and will depend on a number of factors, such as the type of community organisation, the community's attitudes and perceptions of mainstream society and 'their' archives, or the will and/ or the ability of mainstream archives in a given society in accommodating these records or providing assistance. For instance, the option of transferring potential archival records to a mainstream institution, such as a national archive or university archive, at the end of the day the choice and success of such an approach is equally dependent on the willingness, the capability and the interest of these institutions – such as a mainstream university or a government archives–in accepting, acquiring or procuring the records of these communities. This issue is also recognised by Church (2008, 176) who argues that the ability or readiness of formal archival institutions to accept or even actively seek out these records depends on factors such as staff shortages, funding limitations, available storage space, competition among repositories, and gaps in existing materials. Additional factors involve issues of trust and issues of confidentiality, issues of accessibility and control of public access to records, the ideological and political stance of the organisation (Flinn 2007, 2010; Hamilton 2013; McDonald 2008).

With regard to the community-based initiatives, Flinn (2007, 152) remarks that responding to the absences of their narratives, and the pervasive recognition of a lack of concern from mainstream archival institutions, some communities have established and cared for their own archives. The writer further suggests that in the unlikelihood of mainstream archives representing all of the 'many and varied voices' of society on their own, the development of community-based archives has provided a partial solution to the problem (Flinn 2007, 152–153). As opposed to a collecting initiative of community records set off by a mainstream archive or heritage institution, a community-based archives or initiative is one that has been inspired by community members and/or their community-based organisations representing them. The holdings of these archives are managed by non-governmental community groups, which are independent of the state. These archives take on several forms such as ethnic, religious, linguistic, immigrant and special interest groups, regional

interests, thematic or a common issue of interest. A community-based archive is described by Flinn (2010, 41) as:

> Community archives and heritage initiatives come in many different forms (large or small, semi-professional or entirely voluntary, long-established or very recent, in partnership with heritage professionals, or entirely independent) and seek to document the history of all manner of local, occupational, ethnic, faith and other diverse communities.

Flinn (2010) continues his clarification on what constitutes a community-based archive by stating that they are usually established to represent populations that are underrepresented in mainstream archives, that the concepts of social justice, archival activism and equality often prevail in these archives, and they are most often owned and controlled from within the community, but others may be sponsored or receive assistance from mainstream heritage organisations. In addition, he explains that they are collections of materials gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise a level of control. 'The defining characteristic of community archives is the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of a particular group' and on their own terms (Flinn et al. 2009, 71).
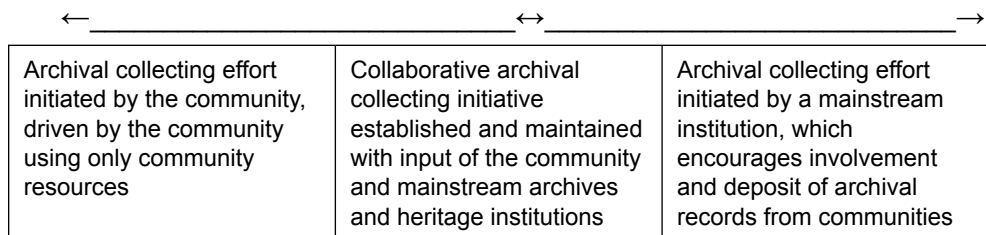
These community-based archives are not a new development, but over the last 20 years numbers have grown substantially in South Africa and abroad (Cook 2007; Flinn 2010; Harris 2011; Hatang 2004; Manion and Morgan 2006; Rodrigues 2013). There are a variety of reasons for this growth including an increasing awareness of and concern over absences and biases is mainstream heritage narratives brought about by the recognition of the significance of social history and the records that represent this history (Flinn 2010, 41). Flinn et al. (2009) further elaborate by observing that the growth of community-based archives 'coincides with concerns that where public or government funded archives do contain material on those not from dominant sections of society, the material has tended to view them as objects', rather than citizens and individual inscribers of records in their own right.

Lu (1993), Flinn (2007), Stevens et al. (2010) and McDonald (2008) confirm and emphasise the observations of the above authors with regard to the distinct approaches to collecting records emanating from communities, their members and organisations. They go on to say that when deciding on the best possible approaches, archivists and other heritage professionals need to identify and build relations and engage with the community itself and the organisations that serve them. Stevens et al. (2010, 64) further elaborate on these possibilities, by explaining that other than community members and community-based organisations that establish a community archive independently or those that decide to transfer their records to a mainstream institution and relinquish ownership of these, there are also a number of collaborative possibilities for those communities that are receptive to some sort of partnership. These collaborative initiatives include the collection, dissemination,

advice, consultancy, outreach and marketing the value of these collections, and their custody. In the case of custody, mainstream archives may support these community organisations in securing the long term future of their collections through a range of flexible custody arrangements.

Respecting the preferences of these organisations regarding the custody of their records is paramount. In some cases, for example, acquisition or support by institutions that have an interest or similar ideology as the community, may be a more appropriate solution (Karleback 1996, 129). It is also acknowledged that often it is not a matter of choice, but of circumstance, such as a lack of resources. Often due to circumstances, at some point in their lifecycle, some community archive collections are transferred to mainstream institutions for better preservation. Flinn (2007, 168) therefore suggests that different existing archival custodial frameworks or models need to be considered, for caring and preserving these materials. For example, on the one hand, the community-based archives movement may offer many communities a partial solution towards including their voices in the nation's archival heritage. On the other hand, the stewardship and post custodial models may be appropriate in certain instances. Authors, such as Momryk (2001, 151–174), Keough (2002, 241–251) and Flinn (2011), go on to say that mainstream archives can also offer their support in dissemination of the community collections, by means of, for instance, exhibitions and event organisers. In addition to these, one of the most useful services mainstream archives can offer communities is training in archive skills and advice on matters such as preservation, digitisation and documentation. Lastly, just as community members and organisations may gain from the advice of mainstream archives, so the latter may look at the community members and organisations as sources of specialist knowledge. This can be knowledge about how to access a particular community for collections to fill the gaps of mainstream archives, or it may be subject specific, or both.

To encapsulate, the following linear scale distinguishes, in an uncomplicated manner, the potential choices or approaches towards an archival collecting initiative of a community:

←_____↔_____→

Archival collecting effort initiated by the community, driven by the community using only community resources	Collaborative archival collecting initiative established and maintained with input of the community and mainstream archives and heritage institutions	Archival collecting effort initiated by a mainstream institution, which encourages involvement and deposit of archival records from communities

Archival collecting initiatives of community records often encounter many obstacles and have consequently sought many approaches to try to overcome these. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, when seeking strategies towards safeguarding the records generated by the Portuguese community-based organisations in South Africa,

all these approaches were considered so as to determine the best possible archival custody framework for the community.

3.   DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS CONCERNING THE SOUTH AFRICAN PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS THE CUSTODY OF THEIR POTENTIAL ARCHIVAL RECORDS

The research aim of the article made an effort to uncover the attitudes of South Africa's Portuguese community-based organisations towards the custody of their potential archival records and where these organisations would prefer to house their archival records (i.e., towards those records that had no immediate administrative use and thus no longer needed to be at these organisations for daily consultation). As noted in the discussions above, the literature revealed that community records often present community organisations that hold these records with a dilemma with regard to who might take custody of their potential archival records if they do decide to partake in an archival collecting effort of their community (Bastian 2002; Cook 2013; Flinn 2011; Jimerson 2006; McDonald 2008; Stevens et al. 2010; Wurl 2005).

The discussion of the results presented in the subsequent sections was extracted from interviews held with South African Portuguese community-based organisations. The main subjects of the study comprised the South African Portuguese social and cultural community-based organisations in Gauteng that create and keep records that represent their activities, and as such are the major potential creators of archival materials that may represent the experiences of the broader Portuguese community in South Africa and the Gauteng Province specifically. These organisations were located by means of on-line directories and resources, such as the Portal das Comunidades Portugueses – Africa do Sul (www.consuladovirtual. pt), E Pa (www.saweb.co.za/epa) and Forum Portugues (www.portugueseforum.org. za); community newspapers, such as 'O Seculo' and 'Voz Portuguesa', and personal contacts. A total of 19 Portuguese community-based organisations in Gauteng were selected, namely:

- *Federacao das Associacoes Portuguesas da Africa do Sul* – Federation of Portuguese Associations of South Africa (FAPRAS) – Johannesburg;
- Lusito Portuguese Association for the Challenged (*O Lusito* School) – Johannesburg;
- *Núcleo Sportinguista da África do Sul* – Sporting Nucleus of South Africa – Johannesburg;

- *Academia do Bacalhau (Academia Mae)* – Bacalhau Academy (The Mother Academy) – Johannesburg;

- *Federação do Folclore Português da África Do Sul (Raízes do Nosso Povo)* – Federation of Portuguese Folklore of South Africa (Roots of our People) – Johannesburg;

- *O Seculo de Joanesburgo* – Seculo of Johannesburg Newspape*r* – Johannesburg;

- *Sociedade Portuguesa de Beneficência* – Portuguese Welfare Society of South Africa – Johannesburg;

- *Liga da Mulher Portuguesa na África do Sul* – Portuguese Women's League of South Africa – Johannesburg;

- *Nucleo de Arte e Cultura* – Centre of Art and Culture – Johannesburg;

- *Uniao Cultural, Recreativa e Desportiva Portuguesa* – Portuguese Cultural, Recreational and Sports Union – Johannesburg;

- *Associacao da Comunidade Portuguesa de Pretoria* (ACPP) – Association of the Portuguese Community of Pretoria – Pretoria;

- *Associação de Beneficiência 'Os Lusiadas'* – Welfare Association 'The Lusiadas' – Pretoria;

- *Clube Sport Marítimo* – Maritime Sports Club – Pretoria;

- *Sporting Clube de Pretoria* – Sporting Club of Pretoria – Pretoria;

- *Academia do Bacalhau* – Academy of the Bacalhau – Pretoria;

- *Casa Social da Madeira* – Social Club of Madeira – Pretoria;

- *Casa da Madeira* – Madeira House – Alberton;

- *Forum Portugues e a Voz Portuguesa* – Portuguese Forum and the Portuguese Voice – Benoni;

- *Associação Portuguesa de Futebol, Cultura e Recreio* – Portuguese Association of Soccer, Culture and Recreation – Vanderbijlpark.

Each of these organisations is well established, and has a long enough standing to have made a significant impact on the community. Another main reason for the choice of these selected community organisations was that as the larger long-standing organisations with established structures, staff and facilities, these were more likely to have created a significant number of records and therefore may hold a substantial amount of potential archival materials.

These community-based organisations are involved in community cultural activities, social events, recreational and educational activities, sports events, religious celebrations, charity and fundraising events, social welfare, support groups and the reporting and dissemination of community information, amongst many other activities for the Portuguese community, and generate records that emanate from the

various functions associated with these activities. The key respondents were the director or chairperson of each organization. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from these participants. The respondents were asked a variety of questions, ranging from the types of records they generate and hold, their recordkeeping practices, such as filing, and their appraisal and disposal approaches. As the article focuses solely on the custody preferences of these organisations towards their records, the discussion therefore only reports on the findings concerning this question.

The study found that none of the respondents from the Portuguese community-based organisations was in favour of the more traditional approach to custody, that is, where both physical and legal transfer of ownership of their records is relinquished entirely. They felt that the records belonged to them and they would hence not consider renouncing total ownership of these. This is in line with the literature reviewed which revealed that communities often have a strong sense of ownership towards their records and see these as being part of or belonging to the community. This is emphasised by authors, such as Bastian (2002), Wurl (2005) and Flinn (2010), who argue that these communities and the organisations that represent them, often prefer to keep at least legal ownership of their records and strongly feel that these records belong to them, their organisations, their members and their communities, and would therefore prefer not to relinquish their rights over them.

By contrast, the participants' opinions were divided between other more recent approaches to custody, although more than half of the respondents articulated a preference towards transferring physical care of their records to a central archiving entity as long as they could keep legal ownership. A significant number also supported a decentralised distributed collaborative approach where physical and legal custody both remained with the organisations that created the records, but with outside assistance in the management of these records and potential archives. These interview results confirm a theme that arose in the literature surveyed, that creators of community records often prefer the alternative stewardship and post-custodial approaches to custody, as they feel a deep connection and a strong sense of ownership for the records they have created. McDonald (2008, 18) also highlights this by elaborating that the community often retains legal ownership, even physical custody at times, but frequently finds collaboration necessary, striving for partnerships between itself and the formal archives and heritage sectors where both assist one another and give each advice and input on archiving matters of the group.

Immediately linked to the question of custody was the issue of where these organisations would more readily transfer their records to, that is where would those respondents that indicated that they prefer – or do not mind – their potential archival records being physically transferred away from their custody to a central location, prefer these to be housed. The literature portrays many different possibilities when it comes to a centralised approach to housing community records, such as mainstream

institutions (for instance formal heritage institutions and universities), a central independent community-based archives, transfer to an existing broader community centre, or even transferring records to a national or local archive of the particular country (Flinn 2010; McDonald 2008). Although this theme was often brought up in the literature, it was initially intriguing that the views of the study participants were different from those expressed in the literature as most respondents suggested the physical transfer of their records to a formal or mainstream institution such as a university as their preferred choice, while authors on the topic of community archiving report that community organisations often choose to affiliate their records to community structures, such as establishing their own central independent community-based archives (Flinn et al. 2009; Neal 2002).

On closer inspection though it became clear why this opinion was put forward by a significant number of these Portuguese community-based organisations in South Africa. Portuguese community-based organisations were becoming increasingly unstable and unsustainable, especially due to the integration of younger Portuguese South Africans into mainstream society, and the consequent decrease in membership and participation by community individuals in these organisations. Respondents therefore explained that they felt that their records might be better safeguarded at a mainstream institution that is in a better position to care for their potential archival records long-term, as these institutions are expected to be more stable over the long run. Additionally, these mainstream institutions are more likely to have superior infrastructure, skilled staff, and so on. Flinn (2011, 7–8) also acknowledges this situation elaborating that although the emphasis of documenting communities has often been that of keeping physical custody of records within community structures as well, the focus has been shifting, and that community archiving '… may not be about the physical custody of the archive so much as retaining the intellectual ownership of the collections while partnering with a formal heritage organization over their physical custody' (Flinn 2011, 8).

Questions of trust, another theme that emerged in the literature, were brought up by the participants as well as a motive as to why these preferred a mainstream institution. The significance of trust remained detectable as an undercurrent throughout the study. However, while the literature often cited mistrust from communities towards mainstream institutions and strategies towards gaining trust from these institutions as a main issue (Flinn 2010; Lu 1993; McDonald 2008), the participants for this study quoted mistrust between each other as a major concern, that is political infighting between the actual community organisations would probably prevent them from coming to some sort of consensus with regard to a community based initiative. Therefore, these argued that transfer to a 'neutral' mainstream institution might be a safer option. As a final point on the option of transferring these potential archival records to a mainstream institution, it should also be noted here that at the end of the day the choice and success of such an approach is equally dependent

on the willingness, the capability and the interest of these institutions – such as a mainstream university or the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARS) – in accepting, acquiring or procuring the records of these communities.

A smaller number of organisations indicated a central community-based initiative as their preferred choice to house an archival collecting effort of the community. This choice highlights the views reported by authors such as Neal (2002) and Flinn et al. (2009) who agree that there are those that advocate the establishment of totally independent community archival programmes by community organisations, that is, that these materials be kept within community structures. These participants gave similar reasons to those that emerged in the literature examined as to why they preferred this option. These included: this approach would ensure a direct connection between the records and the community; continued control over their records which they felt would be lost if these were transferred to a mainstream institution; and the real possibility that some community organisations would be reluctant to transfer their records to a mainstream organisation in the first place. Tsuruta (1996, 107) corroborates this view stating that closeness to records creators is identified as the main advantage of community-based archives. The author further explains that other benefits to this approach is that it is easier for community based initiatives to cooperate with their own community members due to the informal networks that exist among community individuals and that it is also easier for them to locate potential archival records and advocate for archival activities within the community. McDonald (2008, 59) also remarks that it should come as no surprise that this documentation is sometimes held at a community-based archives rather than an archives affiliated with an academic or similar institution, as the latter are often subject to internal pressures–such as institutional collecting priorities, archival and research significance of the records, and so on – that prevent them from collecting these materials at times, while 'community archives, administered independently, are largely free from such pressures'.

Nonetheless, these participants did express some doubts concerning their preferred choice. Notably whether or not the community is willing and able to support an archival programme on its own was the major concern. Other concerns included their organisations' premises might not be the best place for keeping records permanently, a lack of committed individuals to drive such an endeavour within the community, a lack of knowledge in the field of archives and records management, and a lack of funds. The Portuguese organisations felt that some of these obstacles that may be encountered in creating and sustaining a community-based archives initiative specifically could be overcome though by, for instance, raising funds from community members and the Portuguese government, and seeking assistance, creating partnerships, collaborating and cooperating with mainstream institutions that have archives and records management knowhow. Newman (2011, 89) similarly highlights these concerns, explaining that in order for an independent community-

based archive to be a practical option, it needs to be sustainable, and thus a range of factors that are essential to maintaining community-based archives over the long term, need to be present. According to her article community-based archives that are more likely to be sustainable should ideally display the following characteristics: good governance; sustained funding; external support; skilled staff; collaboration the with formal archives sector to achieve expertise, and so on; dynamism and commitment of staff; appropriate preservation; sound archival practices in areas such as appraisal, arrangement, description, finding aids, access and promotion; the nature of the collection; and community engagement (Newman 2011, 95–97).

In addition, a theme that reoccurred in the literature and which reflects much of what was mentioned in the interviews was the importance of community input and participation for any such collecting effort to be successful and legitimate – irrespective of whether it is driven by a community-based institution, whether it is initiated by a mainstream institution, or if its created with the collaboration of both. This substantiates the literature reviewed. For instance, Stevens et al. (2010, 64) elaborate that there are a number of collaborative possibilities. These collaborative initiatives include custody, collection, dissemination, advice, consultancy, and outreach and marketing the value of these collections. Moreover, a report by Eales (1998) on community archives articulates the need for community collaboration and participation clearly, 'A key premise of community archiving is to give substance to a community's right to own its own memories ... Community participation is a core principle of a community archives'.

4.   CONCLUSIONS ON THE PORTUGUESE ORGANISATIONS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS CUSTODY OF THEIR POTENTIAL ARCHIVAL RECORDS

As observed in the discussions above, these distinctions between preferences towards custody are meaningful. On the one hand, efforts driven by mainstream organisations may not require as many resources as they already have the infrastructure, funds, skills and experience in-house, while community driven projects may require resources and skills and specific support to define and develop their initiative into a feasible project (Jura Consultants 2009, 12). On the other hand, an endeavour driven and maintained by community structures also has its unique benefits such as, inter alia, ongoing direct connection of the collections with the community and the added advantage of these being able to locate potential archival records and advocate for archival activities in the community. Either approach can be complemented by collaboration as was shown in the discussions above.

The repercussions of these attitudes towards the custody of their records and where these South African Portuguese community-based organisations in Gauteng may eventually choose to house their records are significant. Foremost, the results show that the participants' preferences towards custody were not uniform, and that any proposed archival collecting effort of the Portuguese community will have to take all these views into consideration if a collecting strategy that facilitates the contribution of archival records from all their organisations is to be achieved.

It is also clear, that whatever approach is adopted, to be successful, collaboration, cooperation and partnerships with the community will be crucial. Ongoing collaboration and input in all archiving matters were identified in the literature reviewed and brought up by the participants. This includes participation in advisory bodies, input with regard to identifying relevant materials, assistance in filing schemes, arrangement and description, disposal and appraisal, preservation, access and outreach (Rodrigues, Van der Walt and Ngulube 2014, 9–11).

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE CUSTODY OF THE POTENTIAL ARCHIVAL RECORDS OF THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY

Based on the above findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the preferences of the community-based organisations towards the disposition and custody of their potential archival records need to be respected. The importance of abiding by the wishes of communities with regard to the custody of the records they create and own is also recognised by authors such as Lu (1993, 104), McDonald (2008) and Flinn (2010) in the literature surveyed. These authors explain that the archival community needs to appreciate what the wishes of these communities are and understand why these make the choices they do. The literature does, however, suggest that the archives and heritage sectors need to explain the various custody possibilities to these communities and their records creators, such as their community-based organisations. The latter needs to comprehend what these different options entail, so that they can make an informed decision. The pros and cons of each choice, for instance central mainstream custody as opposed to a community-based approach, need to be clear.

In the case where any of the Portuguese community-based organisations choose to preserve their own records, it is advised that the archival community provide added advice and support not only on current recordkeeping but equally so on archiving matters (Lu 1993, 105). Although the archival records' closeness to records creators facilitates identifying records of continuing value and understanding their context, external support from the mainstream archives and records management fields becomes conversely more indispensable as these organisations most often do not

have the professional expertise necessary nor access to specialised facilities and the like (Newman 2011, 100).

On the other hand – as observed in the literature surveyed and supported by the organisations investigated – in many cases community-based organisations choose to transfer their records to a mainstream institution. In these cases, it is recommended that mainstream institutions – charged with preserving the heritage of this country – be willing and prepared to accommodate the community records of the Portuguese community as far as possible. Finding the most suitable repository – with the most appropriate collection policy, infrastructure, staffing, and the like – is crucial to the success of such an approach. In addition, these organisations will also need professional guidance from the mainstream institution that acquires their records, especially with regard to current records administration (Lu 1993, 106).

By respecting their preferences in this way, the archives and records management sectors will be in a better position to foster a healthier and lasting relationship with the community and their organisations that can only benefit the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate archival collecting plan for their records.

6.   CONCLUSION

The custody of community records is a contentious matter. Issues, such as resources, skills, the attitudes of mainstream institutions, perceptions and trust, all play an important role in deciding on the eventual custody of a community's documentary heritage. Custodial approaches allow for collections that are sustained by the community entirely independent of mainstream heritage institutions, those that are transferred to a mainstream establishment completely, and those that seek a collaborative endeavour. The issue of which custodial approaches community-based organisations – such as those of the South African Portuguese community – may prefer will most certainly be influenced by these issues, and will impact on the long-term survival of these unique records.

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