

People, records and power: What archives can learn from WikiLeaks

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Summary

The 2012 ICA Congress theme of “Trust: Archives supporting good governance and accountability” invites exploration of the nexus between recordkeeping and holding powerful people and organisations to account. In this paper, I seek to examine how effectively archives and recordkeeping professionals today are meeting their stated goal of upholding accountability while ensuring the creation of inclusive societal memory, by comparing the formation, management and use of a set of records under currently accepted frameworks for recordkeeping in Australia with the formation, management and use of the WikiLeaks CableGate archive. By analysing these two cases from the point of view of recordkeeping activities supporting appraisal, access, use, trust and authenticity, I draw some conclusions about lessons we should be learning from WikiLeaks and the changing nature of information generally if we are to remain relevant and useful as a profession.

What is an archive? What is its purpose? Has the kind of archive that has evolved in 20th and early 21st century Western civilisation remained consistent with the underlying principles of the contract struck between the people and the State in a democracy, whereby the State establishes the archive in part as a guarantee of its ability to carry out its actions in a fair and accountable way? WikiLeaks, embodying as it does a renegotiation of the boundaries of knowledge and power that exist between the citizenry and the State, has brought into sharp relief the unhelpful layers of bureaucracy and vested political interests that have blunted the power of the archive in society. Now, as technology permits us to sweep away many of the encumbrances of the paper based recordkeeping legacy, is it possible for the archive to reclaim its position at the heart of a healthy democracy?

The archive in the Greek city-state of Athens in about 400 BC was located in the Metroon, a temple situated by the courthouse in the centre of the city. This archive housed the law, contracts, diplomatic records, court proceedings, and other records – even archiving the day’s art forms such as the plays of Sophocles and others. These were the raw materials of the first democracy, and they were open to any private citizen to access and make copies. The archive was watched over by the magistrate, or ‘archon’, hence our word ‘archive’. This indicates the extent to which the archive related directly to the law; the archive was the law, it provided the foundation from which power in society was wielded. And the people (of the right class and education) could access records from this trusted repository without intermediaries, either physical or administrative, to understand for themselves how their government was operating.

In his seminal work *Archive Fever* (1996), French philosopher Jacques Derrida references the role of the archon in his exploration of the role and purpose of the archive, arguing that it is through control of the archive that political power is exerted. His argument is, in part, that “Effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”¹ The centrality of the archive to the use and abuse of power has been well illustrated in the meticulous record keeping practices of repressive regimes from the East German Stasi to the Khmer Rouge in

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Archive Fever: A Freudian impression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, p8

Cambodia. Once the regime falls, the archives are opened and become a powerful resource for those who have suffered injustices to seek redress or simply to understand.

However despite this understanding of the vital importance of the archive to a just and well managed society, it could be argued that public archives today have failed to uphold the qualities which put the Metroon at the very heart of Athenian life. A variety of factors including the massive quantities of paper based records generated from the second half of the twentieth century, a lack of adequate technologies to identify and capture records of significance, a separation of the record keeping process and the archive, and laws and practices favouring secrecy have left government archives too often as the passive recipients of records that are long removed from the business to which they relate, impotent and relegated to the category of historical curios.

By contrast, WikiLeaks shows us how an archive can be formed and pluralised directly from the affairs the records document and so serve an extremely powerful purpose in society. Take, for example, a WikiLeaks archive such as the United States diplomatic cables, and compare it with a typical records release by a government archive, the National Archives of Australia's 1980 Cabinet papers release.

The Cabinet is the key decision-making body of the Australian Government. Cabinet records reflect decisions made at the highest levels of government. They also reveal how the Cabinet has been concerned with issues affecting the states, local communities and individuals, as well as with those affecting the nation as a whole, its international relations and its defence. The decisions recorded in Cabinet records have profoundly shaped the social, cultural and political life of Australia. The 1980 Cabinet papers were released on January 1, 2011. January 1 is usually a slow news day, so the Cabinet papers provided a useful filler for the media, with folksy and nostalgic stories from the political machinations of 1980. Historians were interviewed to muse on the policies of the day, and a cabaret act performed at the Archives' Parkes building to mark the occasion.

By contrast, just over one month earlier, on November 28, 2010, WikiLeaks began publishing over 250,000 United States embassy cables. The documents give the world an unprecedented insight into the US government's foreign policy and actions in almost every corner of the globe. Significant flow on effects from the cable releases have been felt in the Arab world, in post tsunami Japan and in South East Asia, giving people the information they had been lacking to understand and address administrative and political wrongs.

In this talk I propose explore how the arrival of WikiLeaks at this particular point in history can teach archivists and recordkeepers some extremely valuable lessons. Lessons which if properly heeded, will enable the archival profession to actually deliver on some of our more grandiose claims to about ensuring accountability for the powerful and healing and reparation for the weak. Are we serious about accepting and embracing postmodern understandings of archives as tools for power? Can we work towards systems for access to records that protect privacy but reveal the workings of our governments without fear or favour? And can we finally give up our paper minds and fundamentally reinvent our practice for the digital environment and a connected world?

"The first serious infowar is now engaged. The field of battle is WikiLeaks. You are the troops. #WikiLeaks" This is a tweet from December 3, 2010, by John Perry Barlow (@JPBarlow), an American poet and essayist, political activist and cyberlibertarian. As well as writing lyrics over many years for the Grateful Dead, he co-founded the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an

international non-profit digital rights advocacy and legal organisation. What Barlow so succinctly said here was that we have arrived, now, in the early 21st century, at a moment in time and in the evolution of the internet where we are seeing the widespread use of technology by the people to engage with - or challenge - the powerful, on an unprecedented scale. WikiLeaks is a powerful embodiment of this.

But as the internet becomes an ever more powerful platform for sharing information, governments have by and large reacted by becoming more secretive. Famously, the promised 'most transparent administration in history', under President Obama, has been characterised by massive spending on classification systems, a failure to deliver on promised declassification of large swathes of older records and the harshest response to whistleblowers yet seen in the United States. While here in Australia despite much talk of 'open government', the reality for those seeking to extract information under Freedom of Information laws can be quite the opposite.

In some cases these things can intersect; for example in commenting on the Government's repression of records needed for the case of a whistleblower, former NSA officer Thomas Drake, J. William Leonard, the US Government's former head of classification said recently in an interview: "the system for classifying information is "becoming dysfunctional" and "clearly lacks the ability to differentiate between trivial information and that which can truly damage our nation's well-being."² In the case of a more widely known whistleblower, Private First Class Bradley Manning, the US Government has been resisting releasing to Manning's defence team so called 'damage assessments' on harm brought about by the WikiLeaks releases. It seems more than likely given their resistance that the reason for this is that the assessments show minimal harm and impact as a result of the publication of these materials which had been marked secret. David Coombes, Manning's Defence Attorney, had a win recently with the Government now compelled to provide these assessments to the military court. So we will be able to make our own judgements on this matter. And a side note. Bradley Manning has now been held without trial for over two years in conditions that have been equated with torture by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez. While some governments promote the importance of safe and retaliation free protected disclosures in the face of corruption and crime, the United States military and government clearly take a different view on the treatment of a whistleblower reporting war crimes such as those we saw in the Collateral Murder video.

In Australia, the release of government information under Freedom of Information laws can be slow, expensive and reluctant. Too often vague references to national security are used to exempt material, part of the longer theme of fear, paranoia and secrecy that has underpinned much public policy since 9/11. And redaction is used to an, at times, comical degree. Recently Crikey did an analysis of the results of two FOI applications made by Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlam on the question of the Australian Government's dealing with the United States on the matter of Julian Assange. Not only were the two agencies' (the Attorney General's Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) redactions substantially out of sync, but by seeing what one chose to restrict, left open by the other, the mundanity of much of the information deemed to be too sensitive for public consumption becomes only too apparent.

And people are not satisfied with this state of affairs. Where they have the means, the will and the skills, activists are finding ways to access and share information that is withheld. Whether it

² *Washington Post*, 22 July 2012: 'Ex Federal Official calls US classification system 'dysfunctional'' http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/ex-federal-official-calls-us-classification-system-dysfunctional/2012/07/21/gJQAFj1o0W_story.html

is storming the secret police headquarters in Cairo to liberate and publish police files online, or hacking into the email systems of Stratfor, the privatised Texas based intelligence agency with the ear of Washington, people are fighting for information to shine a light on injustice and corruption. And these acts are important for those of us working in information policy and practice to understand. Hacking is so often perceived by mainstream media as just teenage fooling; the technological equivalent to spray painting the side of a building. Some of it is, and quite creative at that, but there is also the kind of hactivism which is actually more akin to the kinds of protests that saw civic groups storm the Stasi headquarters in East Berlin in 1990 shouting 'Freiheit für meine Akte!' (Freedom for my file!). Hactivism is actually an alternative to the officially sanctioned methods for information access like FOI, and one which extends into the corporate world where no such options exist. It has emerged out of a palpable frustration with clunky and expensive official processes, and secretive governments and corporations.

As journalist and former senior bureaucrat Dr Phillip Dorling said at a forum on information access in Sydney earlier this year: "the whole question of openness of government and of private institutions and business— either by accident or by leaking or hacking or whatever, that this broad cluster of issues is up so prominently in public debate in a way that I haven't seen in 25 years. I think that's a profound thing for the good."³

And this period of changing attitudes to information in society is not only about information access. It's about people's relationship with information. Slowly but surely the complete trust and reliance on large information gatekeepers like governments and big media players has morphed into a recognition that these are simply one of many voices, and not necessarily the authoritative one. Many people are just as likely to trust what they read from an influential blogger or tweeter as they are an official communication or a news report. They are more likely today to seek out their own information, gather their own evidence of what's going on that matters to them to share with others - whether it's livestreaming police brutality at an Occupy camp or retweeting on the ground reports from an uprising in the middle east.

Wikileaks' philosophy embodies this idea that people should see for themselves what is actually going on if they are to have any chance of addressing injustice or arguing for the right reforms. To do this, they brought hyperdissemination and high level cryptographic skills to facilitate both small and large scale publishing of material from whistleblowers⁴. In particular with the releases of 2010 and beyond, their release of whole recordkeeping systems seemed almost modelled on archival processes – but in hyperdrive. And not only do they mirror our models, I would argue that their work in fact fulfils the archival mission - by giving us evidence to enable the citizenry to participate fully in society, as designed by the Greek city State. Evidence - in the form of records - that can be used at a time and in a way that gives them - and us - real power, in a time when the information age is poised on a threshold, with an informed and participative democracy on one side, and a society kept in blissful ignorance while their governments decide to go to war, to ship away at civil liberties or to feed more and more wealth to the elite on the other.

³ 'Phillip Dorling on Philip Dorling on leaks, whistleblowing, archives, access to information and the behaviour of governments', Recordkeeping Roundtable, March 2012
<http://recordkeepingroundtable.org/2012/03/24/philip-dorling/>

⁴ Mark Pesce, 'The Blueprint', December 5, 2010
<http://blog.futurestreetconsulting.com/2010/12/05/the-blueprint/>

To explore this assertion, I'd like to do a comparison of two sets of records that were created by governments and ultimately – in continuum terms – pluralised, forming part of society's collective memory, or as WikiLeaks often express it 'the historical record'; one via Wikileaks – the CableGate release, one via the recordkeeping rules and practices of an Australian government jurisdiction – such as the 1980 Cabinet papers.

And I would like to explore these two sets of records in terms of recordkeeping concepts of:

- Appraisal
- Access and use, and
- Trust and authenticity

Appraisal

How does a set of records become part of a societal archive? In the case of government records we have an accepted set of accepted practices for appraisal and disposal. And increasingly for digital recordkeeping systems, these are resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes.

Appraisal decisions under legal authorities indicating that all records of X function are to be retained as archives are either:

- never implemented in digital systems, because the way they are scoped in the authority bears little to no relationship to the business done by the system, or
- they are implemented, but because the authority is structured around function, rather than process. It is selectively applied to some transactional records in the system but not all.

With CableGate, we had the identification (by a whistleblower) of an entire recordkeeping system as having value to society. As, no doubt, it would also be by the National Archives and Records Administration - but in many other instances we see systems being picked apart by appraisal based on functions and activities. Appraisal that is done on a whole of system basis, moving away from the identification of significant functions, is, in my view, a far more appropriate approach, and eminently achievable in a digital environment where the cost implications of mass storage are so different to paper. Often called, disparagingly, 'document dumps', or criticised for a lack of focus or specificity, records such as the diplomatic cables must be revealed as an interconnected whole if they are to serve as robust evidence of the global actors whose activities they document. This importance of relationships and context is well known to archivists, who strive to preserve recordkeeping systems with all of their interdependencies, rather than seeking to artificially construct stories from them. By retaining the totality of the recordkeeping process and its products, the full impact of the evidence can be felt.

Once identified as having archival value, records from government recordkeeping systems then typically navigate a winding path of storage of various kinds, still, in many cases stubbornly aligned to the time elapses regard as appropriate for paper records (active, semi active, inactive etc.). A determinedly life cycle point of view. Government archives have largely failed to acknowledge this and come up with more workable models – and ones that do not shy away from the lack of incentive for progressing records through these very clunky stages towards some indeterminate day on which they will be 'processed for transfer' (more likely not). With CableGate we saw a recordkeeping system really existing in multiple dimensions at one time – both within the US State department's active recordkeeping environment and globally disseminated, shared and used.

Access and use

Australia, like many Western democracies, has a patchwork of laws and regulations affecting access to public records, including FOI, information security, privacy and archives laws. In many cases these differ from State to State and from the Commonwealth.

Up until 2010, Cabinet records became publicly available once they were more than 30 years old under the Archives Act, 1983. (I should note: under an amendment to the Act made in May 2010 the open access period for most Australian government records (including Cabinet records) now begins after 20 years instead of 30. This change will be phased in over the next 10 years with the closed period reducing by a year on 1 January each year until 2020. So from 1 January 2012 Cabinet records for 1982 and 1983 will be available for the first time.) So on January 1 2011 over 3000 Cabinet documents were released. But even after the elapse of 30 years some remained withheld; about 25, under the terms of section 33 of the Commonwealth Archives Act which provides exemptions from open access that are similar to FOI exemptions. All that was released of these were some of the titles, which included 'Recovery of damages awarded by foreign courts in anti-trust proceedings', 'Iran crisis – issues and options for Australia', 'Antarctica – Australia's policy at the conference on the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources' and 'Acquisition of IBM computer'.⁵ Subjects which, not seeming likely to contain a lot of sensitive personal information, you have to wonder why they were held back. But we are not allowed to know, as the specific reasons are themselves secret.

I have already spoken about some of the problems that we see with the implementation of Freedom of information legislation, even as some Australian jurisdictions make public statements about being more proactive about information release, the culture of secrecy and lack of political will to truly get behind such statements remains.

Earlier this year in London I had the opportunity to talk about this paper with Julian Assange. We talked about how records and archives find their way into the public domain. His view is that mechanisms like FOI and - by extension - other government controlled rights of access, such as access rules under archives legislation - will never enable access to serious information which could be incriminating for those making the decisions.

And this perspective is of course reflected in CableGate; a pluralised archive which is controlled by an entity without vested interests or reputation to lose by releasing it. The duplication and dissemination of the cable set across thousands of technology platforms and in unknown numbers of online contexts instantiates it as a collective archive capable of being owned by everyone and no-one; a pluralised archive which exists beyond spatial and temporal boundaries, transcends State and economic controls and which encourages and incorporates people's participation and comment.

Its release by mirroring, bit torrent and other forms of mass sharing allows it to serve the needs of the broadest possible concept of 'societal totality'. It sits within what archivists would term the 'ambient' realm; above the functions and structures of governments and other juridical entities, in touch with the broadest possible themes of human experience as played out on the internet.

⁵ Peter Timmons, 'Some cabinet papers still too sensitive after 30 years', Open and Shut, 17 January 2011 <http://foi-privacy.blogspot.com.au/2011/01/some-cabinet-papers-still-too-sensitive.html>

This archive is still forming (and will continue to); as comment, debate, challenge and reflection on cables proliferates in blogs, on Twitter, in the traditional media, in public art, academic journals and elsewhere. Developers are building tools to interrogate, reuse or visualise the cables data in a huge variety of ways. Can we see the relationships between cables from a certain period of time and location? The CableGate search tool, for example, has a commenting facility. Are you personally mentioned in a cable? Is what is said true? The vision of user contributed analysis and comment on whistleblower releases originally conceived of by WikiLeaks is in full flight.

And while some material was redacted prior to the CableGate archive's release, where cables named individuals who would potentially be put at risk, the release of the recordkeeping system was total and it was transparent in its intentions.

Trust and authenticity

It is also interesting to consider both record sets in terms of our notions of authenticity – and therefore trust – in information that is presented to us.

A set of paper records like the Cabinet papers derive their authenticity from things like an unbroken chain of custody, documented control by an authorised entity, their stationery and insignia. Since the 1990s different projects have worked on the digital analogues to these indicators of authenticity – from Luciana Duranti's work in Diplomats to InterPares. Using the results of these efforts we now usually point to things like the documentation of recordkeeping process through metadata and carefully managed and documented migrations as indicators of digital authenticity. And within organisations or governments with these various aspects of recordkeeping under reasonable control, these things can be very useful. However in reality people very infrequently if ever demand to see our meticulously kept recordkeeping metadata that demonstrates the processes behind the record's creation, management and custody. The setting in which they see it and the business context they are operating in is usually enough for them.

With CableGate there was little to no questioning of the authenticity of the records, because everyone could see the reactions to their release from the US Government. This was enough of a test. So this is a completely different kind of indicator of authenticity – that has more to do with the behaviours of the actors with a stake in the records, than it does with things like recordkeeping metadata.

I also talked with Julian Assange in London about authenticity. Rather than relying on the intrinsic qualities of records and the systems used to keep them as we do, his view of authenticity was more to do with human and organisational behaviour: actions and reactions - how hard someone will fight to defend a piece of information - or to conceal it. As I recall his actual words were 'there is no authenticity' - he was speaking in the context of media organisations who blindly pick up and republish that which the established organs put out - without question, however poorly researched. But the idea can be translated. When official digital records can be manipulated and repackaged and presented with ease, influenced by the power groups within governments, and detailed audit trails of recordkeeping metadata are barely acknowledged as useful by system designers, perhaps reactions are the only useful indicators that something is what it purports to be.

As Sue McKemmish observes in her chapter 'Traces' in 2005's *Archives: Recordkeeping in society*, archival notions of authenticity, reliability and trustworthiness at any given time are

shaped by the evidentiary paradigms of the day⁶. Maybe a rethinking of tests of authenticity that acknowledges behaviours and moves away from positivist ideas of an authentic record reflects the shift away from gatekeeper model of information dissemination that I mentioned earlier, but in a recordkeeping context. If you do not trust the gatekeeper, why would you believe their audit trails?

So what can archives learn from WikiLeaks?

1. That we would do a better - and more honest - job if we acknowledged and accommodated the fact that all of us working in recordkeeping are political actors.

What WikiLeaks has achieved has certainly given me a fresh perspective on being a recordkeeper. They have reminded me that recordkeeping is a political act - in fact a series or collection of political acts; from the decision to make or not make a record - to the activities that we participate in as professionals - from building recordkeeping systems which fulfil a particular set of recordkeeping requirements, to identifying those records which move out of the solely organisational / business domain to form part of society's archives.

Many would argue that we must retain our impartiality; listen to the requirements provided by 'the business', simply implement, not decide or consider the political implications of the decisions we make. But for years archival thinkers from Eric Ketelaar to Sue McKemmish and others have been urging archivists to think beyond the legal and methodological frameworks that currently direct the formation of archives, and consider moving to the creation of archives that go beyond the organisational or individual to encompass a broader set of requirements. Of course this includes understanding and working with or against political drivers and motivations.

I believe this means that as archivists and recordkeepers we should be bringing our skills to a projects that sit outside the government and large corporate realm. People are building archives themselves – and as my colleague Barbara Reed has often lamented; 'we're just not there'. People like Jason Scott of Archive Team are creating an archive of online user contributed content before it is taken down and lost forever as a result of corporate takeovers and shutdowns. The people of Tahrir Square created 25leaks, an archive of scanned documents liberated from the secret police archive Amn al Dawla, the Australian Research Council Linkage project with Monash University "Trust and Technology" project was about building archival systems for Indigenous oral memory, Occupy Wall Street has an archives working group. We should be there; helping facilitate archives of multiple perspectives and building communities of trust for the events and business beyond the centres of power and making maximum use of the power of the internet to capture and share the records that reflect these alternative perspectives.

2. That laws, culture and practices around access to records are dysfunctional.

And this is leading people to look for new ways of getting at the information they need to make sense of the world.

WikiLeaks had such an impact in part because it suddenly launched a number of very powerful archives into society in stark contrast to the long accepted norms of information release of entire

⁶ McKemmish, Piggott, Reed and Upward (ed.s), *Archives: Recordkeeping in society*, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 2005, p 18

recordkeeping systems, and making a mockery of tokenistic Freedom of Information regimes. We know the system isn't working. We know that many of our current access rules were born of the practicalities of dealing with large volumes of paper files. We see the big picture view of information access rules. Surely recordkeepers need to step up here both lobby for change to those rules but also work on better ways for people to engage with and use records that take the apparent intention behind open government commitments and turn them into working evidence delivery services. Better and more open recordkeeping systems can I believe lead to more humane forms of governance. Do I mean total transparency? No. but I mean something better than the current state. We have the tools now to effectively restrict access to sensitive personal information while we renegotiate the boundaries of other kinds of secrecy - a task which is long overdue.

Archives are starting to embrace tools for participation, but only for records that have struggled their way into a version of the fourth dimension over long periods of time and in an often incomplete way. I would argue that the real value of such tools can be seen when records are pluralised more directly from the affairs they document. We still this to a certain extent at sites like 'What do they know' and other Freedom of information and document release sites. But these records are divorced from the recordkeeping systems they come from. How much more powerful they would be if people could participate in recordkeeping systems themselves during the processes of government affecting their lives – collaborative systems that extend beyond the closed world of government. We have started to see some of this with Gov 2.0 like consultation sites and but these only permit moderated and filtered participation. Yes there is a need to let government get on and govern, but there is also a need ensure that closed systems are not allowed to nurture corruption, waste and abuse. There is a line there somewhere, and I'm not sure we have properly investigated it.

The third lesson is not a new one – in fact colleagues and I have been discussing it for some time. And it is this:

3. That archival methods need some pretty fundamental reimagining.

There is still (and will always be) a need for trusted, persistent archives (not places or repositories, necessarily) We're not going to be part of delivering that until we stop trying to bolt paper processes onto the digital world. And this reimagining needs to happen across the spectrum of our work; from appraisal to preservation.

We need to move away from the inherently biased appraisal practice which 'selects' records of continuing value from recordkeeping systems for permanent retention in the archive.

We need to move away from such strong custodial models and finally come to grips with what postcustodialism means, particularly as funding for large expensive archives buildings dries up.

As recordkeeping professionals, we should be extending ourselves beyond the standard government archives, single perspective setting and be about deploying robust contextualisation and access services to recordkeeping systems that sit in disparate contexts and offer a range of perspectives at once.

And we need to understand and embrace the fact that users of our records may never even know or care that they are accessing the services of archive X or Y; that while we capture and manage records in ways that we know their evidentiary value persists, to people online our

content is just that; another piece of information forming part of the massive volume of information we all process every day now. No readers' ticket required.

Perhaps what we have seen with WikiLeaks is a kind of halfway house between the old and the new form of archives. What will it take to really get there? Are we serious about the continuum? Then it seem to me the circumstances we live in now offer archivists the best opportunity yet to turn the theory into practice.

Encouragingly, projects like the Committee to Document the 25th January Revolution in Egypt, set up by the Egyptian National Archives, have understood the need for more contemporary and relevant archives. This project is about gathering as much primary evidence about the revolution as possible for deposit in the archives and release online – including official records, insurrectionary pamphlets, multimedia footage, Facebook and Twitter content. Importantly, there is an understanding from the start that all material should be publicly accessible to anyone on the Internet. It is a significant step in the Egyptian transition to a freer and more civilised society, and away from the abuses of the dictatorship. The power balance between people and State being redressed. The historian in charge of the project, Khaled Fahmy, has indeed spoken of the project in a manner which evokes Derrida's thesis, saying ""The question of access to information and archives is political, because reading history is interpreting history, and interpreting history is one way of making it. Closing people off from the sources of their own history is an inherently political gesture, and equally opening that up is a political – even revolutionary – act."

An archive, as understood by the Greeks, is a tangible and irrevocable symbol of the fragile bonds of trust between the powerful and the weak. In a society in which the role of the archive is marginalised or in which malign political influence is exerted on its formation, that trust is broken. Archives which do not capture and provide ready access to the records that form our laws, our rights and our memory – from all perspectives and acknowledging the inherent biases of power - are not fulfilling their purpose. WikiLeaks has shown us how it could be; where using technology we are able to draw out and exclude that information which must be kept secret to protect the privacy of the vulnerable, while the vast majority of records of the acts, agreements and events which are actually occurring in our society are made part of the people's archive and are widely disseminated to the people directly from their participation in those acts. This should be the new (from the old) model for our archives. This was the role of the Athenian archive, the Metroon. It should be the role of the contemporary archive; not to serve as a gatekeeper waiting for decades before making the raw materials of history available to us in piecemeal form, but rather as the trusted guardian and provider of timely, useable evidence, the use of which will allow us to steer an honest course for our society.

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