

Assessing the Emotional Impact of Creating Records

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The UCLA Community Archives Lab, in partnership with The Texas After Violence Project (TAVP) and the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), is conducting a three-year participatory action research (PAR) to assess the affective impact of digital technologies on the creation of records documenting minoritized communities by community-based archives (CBAs). Through semi-structured interviews with people who told their stories to each organization through digital projects, this research examines both the emotional impact of creating records for inclusion in archives and the impact of digital technologies on storytelling. The project addresses many of the emerging needs of archives, especially the growing recognition of the need to mitigate potential harms for record creators and users, and the growing dependence on digital technologies across the archives, museum, and LIS fields in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This presentation will explain our community-led participatory action research methodology in which research findings inform the creation of new digital projects at community archives, pointing to ethical collaborations between academic researchers and community archivists.

About the authors:

Michelle Caswell, PhD, (she/her) is a Professor of Archival Studies in the Department of Information Studies at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Caswell directs a team of students at UCLA's Community Archives Lab (<https://communityarchiveslab.ucla.edu/>), which explores the ways that independent, identity-based memory organizations document, shape, and provide access to the histories of minoritized communities, with a particular emphasis on understanding their affective, political, and artistic impact. She is the author of two books: *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* (Routledge, 2021) and *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), as well as more than three dozen peer-reviewed articles. Her work has defined and refined core concepts in critical archival studies, including archival imaginaries, community archives, imagined records, radical empathy, survivor-centered archives, and most recently, feminist standpoint appraisal.

Anna Robinson-Sweet is a doctoral student in the Department of Information Studies at University of California Los Angeles and a Graduate Student Researcher with the Community Archives Lab at UCLA, directed by Dr. Michelle Caswell. Previously, she was an archivist at The New School Archives and Special Collections. Her research focuses on if and how archives and records can be used by activists for accountability of state-sponsored violence and discrimination. She holds an MLIS from Simmons University.