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# **Indigenous Knowledge and the Archives: Designing Trusted Archival Systems for Koorie Communities**

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This article begins by contextualising the Trust and Technology (T&T) Project with a discussion of narrative and Koorie knowledge. It then focuses on the findings of the first stage of the T&T Project, presenting an analysis of the transcripts of interviews from the perspective of key archival issues that have implications for the design of archival systems and services for Koorie communities. The article is based in part on a paper delivered at the joint ARANZ ASA Conference, Archives and Communities, held in Wellington, New Zealand, October 2005.

The first stage of the T&T Project was a user needs study of Koorie<sup>1</sup> views about:

- Storytelling and story recording.<sup>2</sup>
- Trust and authenticity in oral and written records.
- Trusted custodians for recorded stories.
- Control, ownership, access and privacy issues relating to recorded stories and other records of Koorie people, including government records.
- Experiences of using existing archival services.<sup>3</sup>

An outcome of the user needs study is the development of a set of ‘scenarios’ depicting a range of user needs.

The second stage of the project involves a case study evaluating the existing services provided by the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. (KHT) and the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) with reference to the user needs scenarios from stage one. This stage involves interviews with experienced Koorie users of archival services and mediators who assist Indigenous users, and the modelling of trust (and distrust) in archival systems and services to meet the user needs depicted in the scenarios.

The final stage of the project will propose a framework and a set of functional requirements for trusted archival services and systems that would capture and provide access to recorded stories and related records.

The PhD research associated with this Australian Research Council project explores aspects of why a project like T&T is necessary by focusing on the processes used to create narratives of Koorie Victoria through the use of Koorie knowledge and government archival records.

## **Introduction**

The Trust and Technology Project was designed to address the challenge of archiving records of Koorie oral memory<sup>4</sup> that is transmitted via the spoken word. Much of the knowledge transmitted was, and is, needed for the continuing survival of Koorie communities.

This challenge involves:

- Working with Koorie communities that are seeking archival solutions that recognise cultural and community differences.

- Understanding and reinforcing the role of oral narratives and memories as sources and methods of transmission of Koorie knowledge and as an integral part of the collective archives.
- Recognising the limitations of existing archival systems in relation to representing and preserving Koorie knowledge that has hitherto been transmitted orally.
- Linking recordings of oral narratives and memories to other forms of records of Koorie people, including archival and institutional records.
- Designing trusted systems and services that embrace Koorie frameworks of knowledge, memory and evidence.

### **Narrative in the creation and transmission of Koorie knowledge**

It is an oft-quoted truism that traditional (by which I mean pre-European contact) Aboriginal culture was an oral culture. Children learnt from their Elders and information be it secular, sacred, religious, ritual, economic, humorous, medical or other was passed from one generation to the next by harnessing memories and the songs, narratives, epics and other forms of associated story-telling. This ensured that cultural knowledge was transmitted and younger generations knew what was important to know.<sup>5</sup>

The above quote epitomises the way Indigenous knowledge transmission occurred in Australia prior to colonial invasion. Even today, while contemporary Koories are ‘fully modern, globally connected and often integrated groups who are committed to accessing the same advances and developments available to the rest of Australia’,<sup>6</sup> much fundamental Koorie knowledge is still transmitted visually or orally. This means that Koorie oral memory is now contained not only within the people and land; it is also contained within books, records and multimedia formats.

The developments and opportunities available for the creation and transmission of Koorie knowledge has enabled Koorie individuals and groups to share their knowledge and history with a wider community – the ability to tell their story their way.

Koorie narratives often differ from mainstream narratives in that they have a different perspective – they are telling the Koorie story, with pride of people and their achievements, and loss of land, people, language, and cultural practices being the themes that feature strongly. The victors and villains are swapped – with colonial explorers and settlers as the invaders who ravaged the land and people, and the Koorie (usually portrayed by the invaders as needing to be saved, or as the noble savage), as proud family members or heroes fighting to protect the family and land to which they belong.

Koorie narratives also tend to include material that locates their narratives within the mainstream history. This is achieved through including events and people that are known within the dominant narratives of the past. To achieve this Koorie narrative creators use not only their oral memory, but also the archival memory of the colonial invaders. The increased use of government and archival memory also produces new narratives that then return to oral memory.

Archives, state libraries and other repositories house many significant records about Indigenous communities. These are the products and consequence of colonisation, dispossession, removal and the relentless surveillance to which Indigenous people were subjected.<sup>7</sup>

The records contained within archival institutions sometimes provide a different aspect of a Koorie narrative, and sometimes provide narratives that are missing from Koorie oral memory. The archival record may provide the reason ‘why’ behind government or church actions captured in the Koorie record. This then gives the archives a dual ownership – they are no longer just narratives or records of the actions of the government, they are also part of the collective memory of one or more communities.

Records about Koorie people produced by others are considered Koorie knowledge, as they contain knowledge belonging to the Australian Indigenous people. According to Lynette Russell, although this material is not technically Indigenous knowledge the ‘material can become Indigenous through reclamation processes ...’<sup>8</sup>

In regards to the T&T Project, this means that oral memory is not just made up of traditional stories that have always been oral; it also includes contemporary narratives, family records, and narratives that can be linked to, or have been recovered from, mainstream narratives. This opens up a broad conceptualisation of archiving Koorie oral memory, leading away from being concerned with storage and retrieval systems for Koorie oral records, narrowly defined, to become a process of archiving a shared and collective oral memory, and providing linkages between differing cultural narratives – within Koorie communities and beyond.

Whilst there are positive elements to the relationship between Koorie oral memory and archival records, there are other more negative elements that have caused distrust and therefore difficulties for the development of a Koorie oral memory archive of the kind envisioned.

### **The impact of mainstream narratives on these processes**

The Issue is control. You seek to say that as scientists you have a right to obtain and study information of our culture. You seek to say that because you are Australians you have a right to study and explore our heritage because it is a heritage to be shared by all Australians, white and black. From our point of view we say you have come as invaders, you have tried to destroy our culture, you have built your fortunes upon the lands and bodies of our people and now, having said sorry, want a share in picking out the bones of what you regard as a dead past. We say that it is our past, our culture and heritage, and forms part of our present life. As such it is ours to control and it is ours to share on our terms. That is the Central Issue in this debate.<sup>9</sup>

Since colonial invasion Indigenous people of Australia have been researched. This has led to innumerable issues of control in regards to Koorie stories being presented differently from the way in which they were shared with the researchers – ‘Understanding and analysing the collected material can lead to the inadvertent but nonetheless detrimental re-interpretation of the Aboriginal knowledge under discussion’.<sup>10</sup>

Methods of mainstream narrative creation are based on the lack of recognition of Indigenous rights and ability to present their own knowledge. This has led to practices of:

- Indigenous knowledge being sanitised and reinterpreted.
- Debates regarding the validity and or value of Indigenous knowledge.
- Culturally inappropriate practices of collection, use, storage and access of Indigenous knowledge.
- Inflexibility of mainstream narratives to include alternate, dissenting or questioning voices.

Although some of these practices are changing with the introduction of community consultation processes and culturally appropriate research methods, there are still major unresolved issues.<sup>11</sup> The impact that this has upon the Trust and Technology Project is that it is not only addressing distrust of archives and archival systems, but also the legacy of the research practices of mainstream narrative creators.

## **Storytelling**

I think it is very important for us ... the stories around the biographical stuff of our family and Ancestors, and also some of the stories about culture and the law, and the creation stories that are relevant to where we are from, and for our kids as well ... probably the most fundamental thing is an individual's identity, where they fit in, and where they belong is really important. Having some way to re-connect with family, community and culture in that way is a really good path to follow.<sup>12</sup>

In this section we discuss the findings of the user needs study relating to storytelling, the value of stories, the role of the storyteller, the protocols associated with storytelling, and issues of trust and authenticity. Storytelling – including creation and land stories, stories about post-invasion historical events, and family stories – is seen by interviewees as fundamental to group and personal identity and cultural continuity, ‘a feature and a necessary marker of their Aboriginality’.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Post-invasion family stories***

Almost all participants in the user needs study highly value family stories spanning the last three or four generations. Some are concerned that relatively recent family history, particularly stories of mission experience and family break-up, should be valued just as much as stories of land, creation, and initiation which have pre-invasion origins. In some instances there seems to be a correlation between having little or no knowledge of older culture and highly cherishing recent family history. One person talks about the ‘stereotypical’ image white Australians have of Aboriginal stories and of the tendency for Koories to feel their stories are not taken seriously because of the extent of assimilation and loss of traditional knowledge in Victoria.<sup>14</sup> Many people refer to the importance of stories of mission and post-mission life, child removal or the fear of it, assimilation and efforts to resist this. They talk about stories that explain, ‘what we went through’. Struggle and resilience are recurring themes.

Understanding your own family history and where you belong in relation to everyone else. The history of those past hardships that the family had to go through and there's

the learning about survival, there's the traditional stories passed on through a knowledge of our history ... Then there's the reflective stories of times gone by and memories.<sup>15</sup>

I think the most important use of stories in this day is survival and how we had to survive. We did it tough ... I believe we've come a long way. Up until about ten years ago we had no children to complete their VCE at [town name].<sup>16</sup> Since then we've had about 43. To me it is how we have survived and how we've coped and the way we've gone about it ... You've got to remember when you're talking about creation and all the rest of it I was born on a Mission. My mother was born on a Mission and my grandmother was eighteen months old when she went to a Mission. A lot of that was taken away from us and they took our culture away and we had to live within a white society. I get all this talk about creation and all the rest of it, a lot of that had gone by the time my generation came along. I've got to be honest. I grew up on a Mission and it was just a matter of survival. I was part of the Cummeragunja walk off. I was five years old and my parents moved to Mooroopna and lived on the river banks there. My growing up was survival and I learnt from a lot of my Elders, not just my family Elders, but Elders from all over.<sup>17</sup>

Some explain that their grandparents were taught to be ashamed of their Aboriginality and were consequently reluctant to talk about their experiences. Reclaiming their stories is a way of redeeming these experiences – younger generations are proud to own the stories. Some have a sense of urgency about ensuring that those stories are learned now as members of the generations directly affected die, and a determination that these stories will be incorporated into their children's understanding of their identity and history, explaining complex extended family relationships – how everyone fits.

That's when it struck me that the storytelling is great [as] in 'you look like your Auntie or you look like your Nan'. But to Mum that was so precious to her because she'd never had anything to look at and say 'Who do I look like?' In my generation and all the ones that come along we could see who we were looking like. They'd been split up and everything.<sup>18</sup>

I have been upset [by mission stories]. But it's important. I want the kids to know. They get angry but I want them to be informed so they can help themselves ... Pain is part of everyone's story.<sup>19</sup>

Uncles and aunts didn't tell us much about those sorts of things. They only told us when we were adults and we went mad at them: 'You didn't tell us when we were younger and record it'. They told us more like when the kids were taken away and that. They told us more about that side of things. When we got a bit older and could understand things ... [My father] told us how my grandfather, he was friends with somebody on the Council and he used to get word to him and say they were going to come to the Mission, and take some children away, and my grandfather would grab the kids and take them over to the other side of the river. He remembered that very well. And when they were in school they would come and take them out of school and they would have to run and tell the parents what happened.<sup>20</sup>

My dad used to have a licence to be an honorary white to go off the mission and have a drink. We were segregated at the picture theatres you know all that sort of stuff. Nobody realises the full extent of what we went through as kids growing up in those years. You weren't allowed to walk on this side of the street or go into that cafe. You

weren't allowed in the pubs. I'd like a non-Indigenous person to fully understand what we went through and our Elders went through and the effects that it had on us.<sup>21</sup>

It's just as important to tell the struggles today as what it is to tell of the struggles years ago because I think that story's been told. As far as I'm concerned that story of 'Lousy Little Sixpence'<sup>22</sup> happened in my mother's time and my grandparents' time. We moved off the mission and went and lived over at Mooroopna. It is just as important to tell of the struggles that happened here when we moved into commission houses and said 'Right we're going to live like white fellas now'. And what a silly thing we did. Because then our kids were all scattered in commission houses. Our kids were scattered when they went to school ... And so what we've got to do is to teach our children [the] self esteem that we learnt as a whole heap of people together. When we had to struggle, we struggled together.<sup>23</sup>

Most interviewees identify particular people in their family who are the key storytellers, for example a grandparent, parent, or a few aunties and uncles, although some say everyone in their family tells stories. Interviewees discuss a range of factors that might determine who is told stories, including gender, kinship or community associations and age, but protocols relating to family stories are described as fairly informal. Many interviewees feel that age is particularly relevant to determining who is told stories. Some interviewees explain that storytellers will tell the next generation stories when they can 'handle' them; when they have the maturity to understand their significance and in turn pass them on to others in appropriate ways.

Over many, many years, I have accumulated a lot of information through Elders and community people passing on lots of information, I think it all comes down to timing and if you're not receptive yourself and you're in a situation where you are with a group of Elders and family members who have a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge, and if you're not open to receiving that then, it just goes by the wayside. So it is really about timing, and it is about your level of development too in terms of how you receive it and take it on board and try and work out what it all means.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Land and creation stories***

While recent family stories are important to most interviewees, only half of the interviewees have knowledge of creation and land stories. As noted above, many people are aware that much of this tradition is lost to them.

Our ties are traditionally to the land but we can't, in a lot of instances, say that we know the traditional stories associated with that land. But we know in our own hearts that those stories are there ...<sup>25</sup>

There was no traditional culture left by then. This is what people do not understand. By the time I was eight years old no one knew how to speak their own language.<sup>26</sup>

When my grandmother was alive at Lake Tyers she'd try to tell the kids the language and she got a whipping for that. They weren't allowed to learn it ... They [mission managers] were very strict. You couldn't do a Koorie painting.<sup>27</sup>

The white fella didn't understand our language, and they feared it so they banned it. If we spoke it we got bashed for it ...<sup>28</sup>

A number of interviewees highlight the link between language and storytelling: when language was lost it became impossible to properly convey land and creation stories.

Similarly as some languages are being recovered so too are stories. Land and creation stories are being revived to an extent through schools and TAFE courses – more interviewees have been told them through these channels than through traditional means.

Those who have received pre-invasion stories through traditional means are usually aware of how those stories convey the community's law and dictate community structures and personal relationships. They explain that the stories often have complex storytelling contexts: they are connected to a particular activity and are learned by doing as well as hearing (for example river stories told whilst fishing); they are only told in a specific location; or they are told as part of a ceremony. Stories are told to a particular person for a purpose; they are not just told for the sake of posterity. Although the link between the story and the storytelling context may have loosened over time, these contexts still have relevance. Stories may also have multiple layers – a story which might appear to be an explanatory creation tale is usually much richer – it may also teach about how to respect and care for the land, or it may embody rules about relating to others within and beyond the clan, or rules to keep children safe.

I can talk about a project I worked on many years ago and it had so many threads connected to it. There was one central story that had many arms but there were many interpretations of it. Over many years I got different pieces of the story that added up. So it took about five or six years to make sense of it and bring it all together. It was to do with a burial site and there were lots of stories about this individual and the connections to where he came from and family. I sometimes cite that story and tell people about being in the right place at the right time to receive that information and asking the right questions. Because some of those Elders who have passed have taken some of that knowledge and stories with them.<sup>29</sup>

Interviewees who have received pre-invasion stories through traditional means also have a more formal understanding of storytelling roles and relationships, the role of a community's Elders in storytelling, and the role of gender, kinship and community associations, and age in determining who tells stories and who may hear them.

They'd be taboo for others' ears ... We're the descendants of the [tribe name]<sup>30</sup> and some of the stuff that Dad has passed on to the boys and to ourselves is for nobody else's ears. It's from our lineage'.<sup>31</sup>

The stories that come from Gippsland they belong to Gippsland. It's what makes up the country in terms of identity and how we all interconnect and relate to one another ... So it wouldn't be my place to interpret those stories ... It's that respect for country and acknowledgment that there are other custodians that hold that information.<sup>32</sup>

Only a few people from the interviewee group convey a strong sense of demarcation and secrecy surrounding men's and women's business. This tends to be the case amongst those who have at some time been involved in communities outside Victoria. Some also express an age-based hierarchy: it isn't appropriate for younger people to be telling older people stories, but only one interviewee who retains close links with a community in another part of Australia and has been involved in ceremony and initiation rites, expresses a more prescriptive understanding of the link between age, or rather stages of ceremony and initiation based on age, and storytelling and receiving.

### ***Trust and authenticity in storytelling***

Many interviewees do not comment directly on matters of trust and authenticity, however amongst those who do it is clear that, whether family or land and creation stories, the teller, their role in the family or community, or their connection to country, not the story, are the key to trustworthiness.

I do not judge those stories ... To me it's quite disrespectful and rude if I did that. I just listen respectfully and take it on board.<sup>33</sup>

Whether the storyteller is an older member of the family or a community Elder, trust and authenticity stem from the authority of and respect for that person.

I travel the State and the country quite often and from my own personal experiences, if I'm in someone else's country and they tell me a story which is allowed to be told to the broader community, then I trust that story ...<sup>34</sup>

Trustworthiness also influences who gets told stories or different versions of stories. Many interviewees convey a sense that storytellers carefully choose who they entrust stories to, choosing people whom they know will in turn be reliable caretakers of stories and good storytellers.

### ***Implications for archival system design***

If we think of storytelling as a process involving a storyteller, a story and an audience, what issues surround the design of a system to support and capture storytelling transactions? Is it meaningful to treat a story as a concrete entity in this process or as an abstract work? Recordkeepers would conventionally answer 'no': they would characterise each specific instance of telling or rendition as a separate record, which recordkeepers would usually seek to capture and manage, describing the nature of relationships between these renditions where appropriate. To what extent, however, does this paradigm match with Koorie understandings of stories? How can archival systems deal with the dynamic, fluid, cumulative and multi-layered nature of stories? Can a story be described in its own right – as a concrete entity or an abstract work? If so, what are the boundaries around a story?

Alternatively we could understand the transaction between the storyteller and audience as one which involves 'versioning' of stories (a bibliographical paradigm) according to the relationship between the storyteller and the audience. In this understanding a story does have an existence separate to each instance of its telling. This leads to considerations of the roles of both the storyteller and the audience in the storytelling process. The impact on the particular rendition of the story of the storyteller and his or her purpose in telling the story is more immediately obvious, but what is the audience's role? How can we understand the influence of the recipient of the story on its telling and on the storyteller? What of the role of place, time and events? What protocols are involved in relation to particular tellings? How far do we need to document this rich storytelling context in archival systems? Do current descriptive practices and metadata schemas support this?

### **Recording stories**

Overall, questions about whether stories should be recorded, and whether interviewees want their own stories recorded, elicit positive responses. A

straightforward impetus expressed by many is so that the younger generation will be able to know about previous generations' experiences, in particular the injustices and struggles they have faced. Some also highlight the importance of story recording as a way of reclaiming their own history that has more often been told by Europeans.

Our society is slowly dying. If you don't teach the children the history, what's going to happen? You won't know your history. It's important to keep history alive because, as I said, many of our people are lost, they don't know their history. But because everyone is so dispossessed, forced not to teach the history, we do have a lot of problems in that respect. So it's important that what history we do have we hold on to. Because our children are not going to be any different. They are still going to be black fellas.<sup>35</sup>

Yes [it's good to record Indigenous stories] if they are used for the right purposes. The more people die, those stories go with them, they're lost stories. Myself personally not hearing a lot of stories that I've been disadvantaged when I hear about all these families that have had all these stories passed down. I didn't have that to a great degree, so it's a shame now because I can't hand it down to my kids to help form their identity when they're older, to let them know who they're linked to and that sort of stuff ... Because there are a lot of misconceptions about Aboriginal people. If other people are writing stories, they might be wrong. It's good to get the facts down.<sup>36</sup>

The decision about whether to record is regarded by many interviewees as a family decision; some kind of consensus would need to be reached within the family before doing so. Some expect or imagine recorded stories being used largely within their own family, others talk about them being used in educational contexts by their own children and by non-Koorie Australians. Several give examples of how recordings of land and creation stories have been used in schools in this way. Interviewees are asked about what would happen if another member of their family told a conflicting version of a story. The vast majority acknowledge that this could happen, but are comfortable with this possibility and see no need to try to avoid it happening. For example:

... it is through my eyes that I'd see my story, and it would be through their eyes that they saw their story. I think both sides should be respected. We've all got different opinions about how things happened and we might have the wrong one. But it's the way I see it and we should respect that.<sup>37</sup>

... at the start of any recording it needs to be stated that whoever is doing the recording this is how they perceive the things to have happened and someone else may perceive it in a different way.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast a few people respond that there would be a 'sorting out', or process within their family for negotiating a correct version. Some refer to a particular senior member of the family who would be regarded as authoritative in this regard.

Although the most common view is that the benefits of recording stories outweigh the disadvantages, there is a wide range of concerns expressed about recording stories. Previous experience leads a few interviewees to be concerned that information provided by them will end up being used against them. At the very least, they will lose a degree of control over their own knowledge and who it is shared with. Not

surprisingly a couple of interviewees from the Yorta Yorta community express these concerns strongly:

... my perception is that a lot of Elders and community people disclosed a lot of information on the understanding that that information would be used in a way that was beneficial to the community whereas it turned out not to be ... People put forward that information in the hope that it [would] build towards that positive determination of Native Title whereas that information in itself was the evidence for them to say 'There are inconsistencies in such and such. Therefore we have to conclude that there is no [case]'.<sup>39</sup>

I would want to first know who is going to hold it, who is going to have access to it, what it would possibly be used for. Things like that.<sup>40</sup>

Some interviewees feel that Elders may feel usurped by technology – that an important role has been taken away from them because the stories they have been responsible for are now available via recordings. But others feel that storytellers will retain control over their recorded stories simply by the version of it they tell into a tape recorder. They point out that Koorie people are generally well skilled in 'versioning' stories to suit the audience: this is in fact a component of their oral tradition. They will do the same when stories are recorded for a wider audience.

One interviewee is wary of stories being recorded for 'political purposes', for example someone seeking to have his/her Aboriginality accepted by a particular community might record a fake or embellished story in an effort to gain credibility. A few have found it upsetting or emotionally difficult to tell their stories, especially if being recorded:

I know with my Nan that when I did start to talk about it, much as she wanted to talk about it, she got pretty crook after it. ... She just started to fret for the old people. She went into a relapse for a while.<sup>41</sup>

This interviewee later explains that her Nan's reaction, along with her own reaction to the deaths of close family members, caused her to stop trying to gather together family history and family stories. Others acknowledge that story recording may rouse emotions, but feel that overall this would be positive rather than destructive for the people involved. Some interviewees are aware of ways in which a story's value is diminished by recording it and removing it from a storytelling context.

Most of the above examples reflect some ambivalence about recording stories: interviewees are wary, but also recognise the benefits. One interviewee, in contrast, rejects recording as part of a 'European perception of history' which works against the maintenance of authentic, participatory storytelling traditions. He also highlights the risk of disclosure of sacred information. More fundamentally, however, he believes that efforts to record and collect information about Koorie people have ostracized them from their own culture and served successive governments' efforts to control and assimilate:

The Western world has been more effective because the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is the biggest depository of Indigenous information in the southern hemisphere.<sup>42</sup>

Interviewees are asked whether they would prefer their story to be recorded in video, audiotape or book format. Some have no preference. A majority prefer video, pointing out the value in being able to see people's expressions and gesticulations.

The facial expressions of an Elder, the voice and tone. Every time they tell the story it is not told in exactly the same way. They've got a lot of feeling behind different words, they can obviously pass it on to their children ... If it is going to be recorded it probably has to be recorded on video, not just audio, so you get the whole feel of it.<sup>43</sup>

However a significant number of people state they would prefer to have their story recorded in a book or booklet. Audio recording is generally not popular. Interviewees express a very wide range of opinions about who they would prefer to tell their story to if it were to be recorded, however in most instances a relationship of trust is a prerequisite. Many nominate a particular family member, or someone they know. For some, the interviewer's skill and experience is a secondary, but important consideration. Some would be unlikely to trust a non-Koorie person to record their story whilst others would be prepared to tell their story to a non-Koorie person whom they know and trust.

### ***Implications for design of archival systems***

Capturing stories potentially 'freezes' oral history and may work against the maintenance of participatory storytelling traditions. There is also the possibility that recording a story gives it a status that it would not otherwise have. These dilemmas are well recognised by interviewees and reflected also in the literature about efforts to use Western recording technologies to preserve and maintain oral traditions. However, as canvassed above, almost all interviewees feel strongly that stories need to be recorded. Is there any way a memory capturing system using Western technologies can avoid or mitigate their concerns? How do the factors that we need to understand in relation to storytelling transactions (the abstract or concrete nature of a story; its dynamic, fluid, cumulative and multi-layered nature; the role of the storyteller and the audience) apply in the particular instance of storytelling that is recorded? How does recording itself influence the whole transaction? What information needs to be captured in an archival system about the story and the recording of the story? What impact might the form or format of recording have on the story/storytelling? How should different versions, layers or tellings of stories be linked? How might archival systems and technologies preserve the dynamic, fluid, cumulative and layered nature of stories once they are recorded?

### **Archiving recordings of stories**

Emerging from the interviews is the non-negotiable issue that Indigenous people exercise control over collection and access to records in the future. Such control however is metered by an acknowledgment that the role of preserving the records is one that will need to be shared with the relevant institution.<sup>44</sup>

Questions about who should hold, control and have access to recorded stories elicit a very wide range of responses.

A number of different models for storage and long-term preservation are put to interviewees: recordings being held by the individual, family or community; shared

custody involving an institution like the KHT or government archives. Many accept the suggestion of shared custody, recognising the value of an institution such as the Trust having a copy for long-term safekeeping and preservation, provided one or more copies are held within their family. The possibility of shared or distributed custody is attractive to some, including a possible demarcation of roles in relation to custody and access. For example, an organisation such as the KHT could provide access, with a government archival institution as custodian and preserver; or a community could provide access with the KHT as custodian and preserver. However many are wary of institutional custody, especially by government institutions, because of experiences relating to native title claims, and favour an Indigenous organisation with appropriate facilities and expertise.

The Koorie Heritage Trust, yes, as long as they weren't bound by government legislation. To make sure they didn't pass it on or hand it over to the government.<sup>45</sup>

I think the Koorie Heritage Trust would be a most appropriate place because they are alive to those considerations of intellectual property and I would assume alive to the concept of intellectual ownership. But also I appreciate that the KHT play an educative role for the non-Indigenous community and that is just as important as the retention of cultural knowledge for the Aboriginal people.<sup>46</sup>

I think ... an organisation such as the Koorie Heritage Trust because they are a non-political group. They ... want to show true traditional connections here in Victoria and keep the ongoing Indigenous culture that we do have. I think the KHT here in Victoria would be the better organisation to work with and keep that storytelling going through people that do that oral history, and do more investigations and research and help people to do it themselves. It's much easier to go to an Indigenous organisation like KHT, than going to the Public Record Office or the State Library and all the Government organisations. They are not the appropriate places for Aboriginal people to go.<sup>47</sup>

Yes [the KHT could be the guardian of Indigenous stories/records] I think there should be a one-stop-shop, where you can get all the information.<sup>48</sup>

Others feel strongly that records should be kept by the family or by the community in an organisation such as a local keeping place or Aboriginal cooperative.

Our vision – when I say 'ours', it's the mob's – [is that] through negotiations we are aiming to build a centre and it's going to be a centre of those particular types of things, having photos, videos, all these family trees ...<sup>49</sup>

A wide range of responses is given in relation to questions about access to recorded stories. A few people see no need to impose any restrictions on access to their story. Some feel they have nothing to hide, whilst others want their story to reach as far as possible into the community as an educative tool.

... it would be good for the wider community. Everybody, because that is what it is all about. Learning. It's the only way you can learn.<sup>50</sup>

I've got no problem with anything so long as it is utilised the right way. I've got no problem with my story... if it's going to help in any way shape or form then I would just like to do it. 'Knowledge it's nothing better than to share' That's what my

grandfather said 'Everything I teach you boy you've got to share it'. That's a thing in itself. We're missing that component of our culture.<sup>51</sup>

Anyone who wants to find out a little bit more about the culture and the history [should have access to stories] ... No, [no restrictions on access] because to me all the nation should understand a little bit more about the culture and history of Aboriginal people.<sup>52</sup>

Some would not want anyone but family or community members to access recorded stories, while others would want to decide on who can access recorded stories based on other criteria, such as purpose or intended use.

If it was my personal story, I'd only want [to give] it to my family and their descendants... If it was the wider family story it would be confined to the descendants of the family... I don't think [wider access is needed]. I think [of] my grandfather telling me about the stories about past times growing up, he doesn't tell those stories to anyone else. So I'd almost want to replicate that.<sup>53</sup>

I think there has to be a certain criteria that you have to meet before you get access. 'Why do you want it? Where is it going? Who is going to use it?' For land claims or whatever, people get identity to say that their Ancestors come from a certain area ...I think there's got to be a pretty strict criteria because that sort of information can be used for and against people.<sup>54</sup>

Many interviewees would want to retain some ongoing control over access to their stories, although most are also comfortable with copies being held by an institution like the KHT as well as by themselves or their family. Often answers envisage case-by-case decision-making about requests for access – an individual (or someone in their family or community) would like to be able to adjudicate each request for access to their recorded story. In this regard, a commonly expressed concern is about the motives and purposes behind requests for access:

I'd want to know what they are going to use it for and why. I don't want them to use it as a means to [*indistinct*] [*tribe name*]<sup>55</sup> people. I'd never ever give permission for that sort of stuff. I'll be very restrictive with the white fella because it's all about trust and knowing where they're coming from.<sup>56</sup>

'What they want it for' is in fact expressed more strongly as a factor in determining access than rules based around family or community relationships or an automatic divide between Koorie and non-Koorie people. The most commonly expressed view is that access is, at least to some extent, a family decision. A few state that the community rather than family should determine access. However some interviewees are against community control over recorded stories and access to them, feeling that divisions within a community may mean that an individual's or family's interests were not always upheld. A few state that Elders should decide what happens to recorded stories. A couple of interviewees raise the possibility of layers of access control: parts of their story could be restricted to certain people and other parts could be available to anyone:

There may be parts that I would want to restrict just to other Aboriginal people, Aboriginal researchers. There may be other parts that would be freely available to anybody.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Implications for design of archival systems***

Providing a number of options for preserving and accessing recordings of Koorie knowledge previously transmitted orally would seem to be desirable. If local or distributed access is preferred, it is unlikely that one model will fit all circumstances, for example some places have active, interested cooperatives; others do not. The user needs study indicates that whatever custodial arrangements are put in place, sensitive control over recordings into the future is a fundamental expectation, requiring at least full and ongoing consultation, and ideally strategies and systems that involve shared decision-making and control. Not surprisingly the study highlights the fact that rights negotiation and management are big factors in building trust in archival systems, and better understandings of the nature of rights in recorded memory are needed. What understandings of ownership, custody and access control are helpful? Are models of shared or negotiated rights helpful? Archival systems managing recordings of stories may also need to deal with:

- ‘Subpoena proofing’ records in institutional custody.
- Enabling negotiation and assignation of roles and rights relating to custody, storage, preservation, control and access to different parties and managing possible changes in these roles over time.
- Archiving records for safekeeping or preservation purposes without the custodian being allowed to access their content and being able to assure integrity in these circumstances – that this record is the same record as archived.
- Enabling ongoing control of records in archival custody by creators, communities and Elders, including assigning control to creators, communities and Elders indivisibly, i.e. assigning control in a way that prevents it being passed to others.

### **Accessing and using**

In this section the outcomes of the user needs study relating to existing archives services, issues of custody, ownership, and access relating to government and other European records of Koorie people, and the relationship between these records and Koorie narratives and recordings of stories are explored.

### ***Archives services for Indigenous communities***

In recent years, Australian archival institutions and government recordkeeping programs have undertaken many initiatives in response to the recommendations of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report,<sup>58</sup> the findings of related inquiries, and the development of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*.<sup>59</sup> Most of these initiatives relate to providing better access to records and improved reference services for members of the Stolen Generations, and other Indigenous people. For example, the National Archives of Australia (NAA) began the ‘Bringing Them Home Name Index’ in 1998. This index identifies names of people and places – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>60</sup> The PROV is about to begin a similar indexing project. PROV also established the Koorie Records Taskforce in 2001 in response to the *Bringing Them Home* report. The Taskforce has been instrumental in the 2005 PROV resource manual, *Finding Your Story: A Resource Manual to the Records of The Stolen Generations in Victoria*,<sup>61</sup> and the recently

launched *Wilam Naling* report. The latter proposes a framework for the coordination of the access services provided by government and non-government organisations in Victoria, including the development of common access guidelines and protocols.<sup>62</sup> A wide range of similar initiatives are reported in an article in the May issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* by Loris Williams, Kirsten Thorpe and Andrew Wilson.<sup>63</sup> Whilst most of these initiatives stem from the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report, which focused on access for members of the Stolen Generations, they are having a flow on result for Indigenous access to records held in public and private institutions generally.

### ***Experience of existing archives services***

Very few interviewees have visited an archival institution such as the PROV or National Archives of Australia. Some state they have visited the KHT or ‘Canberra’ (probably the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) and many have visited the Melbourne Museum (Bunjilaka). A significant number of interviewees are not aware of the full extent and nature of records about Indigenous people held in archival institutions like NAA and PROV, confirming the findings of the *Wilam Naling* report which identifies this as a major issue for Victorian agencies.

Most interviewees either explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the value of a ‘keeping place’ for colonial and post-colonial government records about Koorie people. Whatever else interviewees may think of records of the Aboriginal Protectorate, for example, none of the interviewees are calling for these records to be destroyed. There is, however, a wide range of views about local, community-based keeping places versus centralised ones such as the PROV or KHT. A few people favour local keeping places, either for convenience of access or because they believe that custody and/or ownership of these records should be handed back to Aboriginal people.

The thing is why should other people have all these records? ... They should be handed back to the community. That's what I think anyway. It's just like anything else, a painting or that type of thing, if it's from an area, it should be given back...I think they [Aboriginal Protection Board records] should be handed back to the communities that rightfully are the keepers ... [To keep them safe] You've got just about in every Aboriginal community there is some type of organisation.<sup>64</sup>

However there is a more prevalent lack of trust in the ability of local organisations to appropriately care for records. Sometimes this concern arises from the politics of the local cooperative. Other respondents simply feel that decentralisation risks fragmentation and loss.

Interviewees were asked to consider four options for gaining access to government records about themselves or their families: by personal visit, receiving copied records in the mail, having photocopied records sent to a local cooperative or keeping place, or digital delivery. Many have no strong view, or feel that a combination of all of these is desirable. There is, however, a noticeable preference for making personal visits to an archival institution wherever possible and having direct personal access to records. To the extent that they would like moral or practical support, many interviewees would visit with other family members. Most also see value in having a private space in which to look at records in an archives, particularly because potentially they may be accessing distressing or confronting information, and some discuss the need to make provision for referrals to Link-Up workers and other

counselling services. Questions about dealing with Koorie and non-Koorie staff in search rooms again elicit a wide range of responses. A majority feel they would be more comfortable with a Koorie person, and a few strongly state that they would not trust a white person. However many state they would feel comfortable with either a Koorie or non-Koorie archivist: 'I don't want a black face just to be comfortable, I want to be served properly'.<sup>65</sup> A few would strongly prefer not to have Koorie staff assistance, or at the least not someone from within their own community. They explain that Koorie people know each other too well: an outsider offers more neutrality and privacy.

### ***Control, ownership and access***

Interviewees were asked about how access to government and other records in archives about Koorie people should be administered. Their responses raise critical issues about the interrelated areas of ownership and control.

I don't think it's up to the government to say: 'This information cannot be made public'. I think it is the individual's call. They make the assessment as to whether they think it is reasonable to be public. If they choose to make that decision that it is public then so be it. I would argue. If they think: 'Yes it is too sensitive and I'm not comfortable about going public', then that's cool too, the protection is there'.

When you think back, when we went through our land claims it makes you wonder about the access the government lawyers had to our families was unreal. It really opened our eyes when we couldn't get it ourselves ... There was stuff that I don't think should have come up in the court about a lot of our people, because there were things there that we didn't know about. That was sacred to the families alone to know. I think it was a disgrace the way some of the stuff was handled for the families that went through the court ... I think a lot of that stuff that came up where the families should have been consulted about it. Really when you work it out as Indigenous people we had no right to access our own information.<sup>66</sup>

... it goes back to defining what you want to use it for would really determine who has right of access ... those who contribute to it should ultimately have access to it. But in terms of broader access and who wants to be able to use it, those sorts of things need to be clearly defined up front. What does it mean when I depart this world. There could be sensitive information that could harm or upset people. So we must be really clear about what we're using it for, who gets access to it and who should have access to it, and what purpose they can use it for. As we know accessing public records hasn't been an easy thing to do and it's only in latter years that we're starting to open up or challenge some of those processes around access too.<sup>67</sup>

No, [PROV records should not be openly available to the public]. Why does everyone have to know about anyone's family unless they give permission. Everyone knows everything about you but you don't know it. The stolen generation, they don't know. All these other people know all this stuff about them. It's pretty intrusive.<sup>68</sup>

By far the most commonly expressed view in relation to government records is that the subject of the record or their family should control access both whilst the subject is alive and after their death. A minority suggest Elders or the community should determine access, but again there are at least as many others who are opposed to this because they do not trust people outside their own family to act in their best interests. However all agree that the development and implementation of 'blanket rules' by the archives and government agencies is not acceptable. Access policies and practices need to provide for consultation with Koorie people and include the possibility, if

desired, of an ongoing role in decision-making about access policies and their application in individual cases. Some link their views on this quite explicitly to their views about the role of government records in the implementation of repressive policies and practices, their right to know about the existence of government records about them or their communities, and their right to 'set the record straight'.

... some of the people you are dealing with are the very people who will say 'It was you bastards who done this to us. And now you're the protector and guardian of my information. How do I trust you? Your Ancestors are the same pricks who put us on the back of that truck with no explanation and took us off to Cootamundra or somewhere else'. Whether today's generation accept that or not, there are still people in our community that have that strength of feeling. I accept the fact that 'you can't blame us for what our Ancestors done'. That's true. But in accepting that there is still a depth of feeling and emotion around some of those issues ...<sup>69</sup>

Some of the mob from [region]<sup>70</sup> had come into the uni for a meeting. They were going into the library where [name]<sup>71</sup> is and they had discovered some records that had their family names. Well they took off with the records and the records were [dated from] about 1890. Security guards were called and there was abuse and f...ing this and that. And then there was assault in there also. So it was so traumatic. The members of the Aboriginal community who had nicked this very valuable material said, 'Well, they're ours'. But they left these uncompleted volumes. It's this situation: 'It's personal information. It's our family and we're going to have it'. It wasn't perceived as theft. Completely different sense of ownership. And so it went on and on.<sup>72</sup>

...people have said that with the Yorta Yorta claims some non-Indigenous people on the other side got access to records that the Indigenous people did not even know existed. Some of the people we've interviewed have said: 'I wouldn't be putting my stories into any public archives because they might be used by other people against me'. When I was telling people about this interview, that was the same feeling: 'Just be careful what you say' and those sorts of things.<sup>73</sup>

[If there are records about a person that the person hasn't created] Yes of course [that person should still have control over who sees them] There should be some kind of letter written to them: 'We have your records' ... There should be an effort made to find the people who have records about them ... If they didn't want to find out, that's fair enough, but they should have a choice and know there's a choice.<sup>74</sup>

Many of the views expressed echo those of members of communities elsewhere who have been subjected to surveillance, repressive government regimes and abuse of human rights. Eric Ketelaar draws a parallel between the experiences of communities in Eastern Europe and Indigenous communities in post-colonial societies, pointing to the views and feelings expressed by community members about the records of surveillance, repression and abuse.

A recent book ... contains the poignant story of Rene Baker, who, 4 years old, was literally snatched from the arms of her mother by a missionary. Being a half-caste she was removed to Mount Margaret Mission. Fifty years later, with the help of Bernadette Kennedy, Rene Baker ... went searching for her file. 'They've got *me* up there in Canberra,' she explained with a passionate emphasis on the word 'me'. 'They've got something of me up there and I want it back. They're keeping me, but in real life they don't give a stuff because it didn't happen to them and they'll never

know the experience that I and other kids went through. They keep these things but they don't respect the experience behind them.'

Rene Baker's identification with *her* file reminds one of the slogan 'I want *my* file', shouted by civic groups who, fifteen years ago, 15 January 1990, stormed the offices of the Stasi, the ministry for state security, in Erfurt, Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin and other German cities. They put up banners claiming 'Security for *our* records', 'Freedom for *my* file'.<sup>75</sup>

Ketelaar goes on to reference the work of Mark Osiel relating to 'administrative massacre', defined as 'large-scale violation of basic human rights to life and liberty by the central state in a systematic and organised fashion, often against its own citizens'.<sup>76</sup> Recordkeeping plays a crucial role in such regimes with consequences for the principles governing the related archives. Ketelaar argues that although the concept of administrative massacre is often used to define what occurs in times of civil or international war, it is at times equally applicable to the experiences of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and asylum seekers, as emphasised in the findings of Marsh and Kinnane, writing about Indigenous Australians: 'The control of Aboriginal peoples through the creation and use of specific archives mirrors many of the characteristics of archives of repressive regimes'.<sup>77</sup>

Ketelaar's article also outlines the Joinet-Orentlicher principles adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHRC) to guide member states in dealing with human rights violations. They deal amongst other things with the inalienable individual and collective right of individuals and communities to know the truth about past events, the duty of the state to preserve and make accessible archives of repression and abuse as part of the collective memory, and the entitlement of the individual to know that there is a record about her, and to challenge its validity by exercising a right of reply:

The challenged document should include a cross-reference to the document challenging its validity and both must be made available together whenever the former is requested (Principle 17).

Responses also demonstrate the conflict between removing barriers to accessing information, especially for people wanting to make family connections, and protecting the privacy of the people most directly connected to the record. These are equally important priorities for most people in the context of their twentieth and twenty-first century experiences. Many interviewees recognise the problem of balancing privacy and access and they do not know what to do about this problem. The recent Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce, Wilam Naling ... *Knowing Who You Are...: Improving Access to Records of the Stolen Generations*<sup>78</sup> highlighted the inappropriate application of privacy law and protocols to prevent access to information that is key to family tracing. In particular, the handling of identifying third party information is problematic.

### ***Setting the record straight***

A constant theme within the interviews has been the participant's request to be able to add their own 'stories' and versions of other stories to the records held in public archives and other institutions. This was most keenly expressed as a desire to set the

record straight. Another clear concern has been over the issue of control, who decides what can be seen, what can be kept and so on.<sup>79</sup>

Although they recognise the value of records government and other archives – as a resource for family history and as evidence of past government policies and actions towards Indigenous people – interviewees all place greater trust in the oral versions of events told within their family.

Someone that I respect highly in my family could more or less validate the story then I would believe it. If someone put a piece of paper in front of me the first instinct would be to say ‘I don't believe that’. I want to hear it from someone who I believe in and that I could respect and trust.<sup>80</sup>

Most would like the opportunity to address the errors or limitations of the written record by recording their version of events alongside it:

I think there should be cross-referencing. If there is an original entry from a Government agency which is derogatory, and if there is information to the contrary or another version from the other side, perhaps that should be cross referenced ... [I would welcome it] because think it's part of having the whole story.<sup>81</sup>

I think that [facility of adding to records] should be at the forefront of everything. There is always two sides to the story. Unfortunately we live in a society where whoever tells their story first is believed, and the person telling it second is trying to cover up a lie.<sup>82</sup>

[If white and Aboriginal versions are different] Aboriginal people should have the opportunity to add their oral history versions and an opportunity to say ‘This is the way we see it.’ So that should be included so that any researcher accessing those archives in the future can be aware of the Aboriginal family's position on the information...I'd see a lot of parallels with Jewish Museums where these places keep archives of Holocaust survivors. Data bases of that experience. If that could be achieved in Australia I think that would be fantastic.<sup>83</sup>

That's very important [to have the ability to add comment to existing records]. It's really going back to the point about the massacre stuff or sensitive stuff. A lot of one version has been written and taken as fact, so it's important that Indigenous people have a chance to say how they saw it.<sup>84</sup>

I know a lot of Aboriginal people get very upset when they look at their files and they look at the words that were used by the social workers of the time, or why people were taken away. And it's just purely from the policies of that era and then if Aboriginal people had a chance to be able to say: ‘It wasn't like that at all. Yes, I was dirty and I didn't have food, but I was well loved and cherished’. So that you get that equal perspective.<sup>85</sup>

That's right, just to put the record straight. ‘That wasn't the way it happened. This is the way it happened’. People want to pussyfoot around the truth. To know what effect it had on that person. To read something that is incorrect is pretty hard because you know that wasn't the way it happened. If you can have your chance to be heard, then definitely.<sup>86</sup>

Notably there are only a few calls for family members to have the right to expunge incorrect information in written records (although interviewees were not directly

offered this option). Many more interviewees express the view that there is value in differing versions co-existing and informing each other. However offensive or inaccurate the record may be, it needs to be retained as evidence of the system which created it:

And even the way some of the stuff was written, as Diane said, it is derogatory and quite hurtful. It's important to see that it just reaffirms what the thinking was at the time. It's almost like there it was government policy to hear a person's story about how they were removed and to see somebody who was actually involved in the system. This is the way for me that those records underline what the thinking was and what was actually involved in the system ... And how it was so and so wasn't a good mother because some of the times her children was dirty or the food in the house had passed the use-by date. It's important for me to show that's the way it was. I think that no matter what the script in the reports was, I'm comfortable with reading it and analysing it, but probably with my sister or someone that I knew. But I can see with other people there's actually a need physically to have people with you to support you or explain something. So that's an issue for some of the records agencies.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Implications for design of archival systems***

A range of questions arise in relation to the issues raised above:

- Can archival systems and services address the strong desire to add fresh versions of 'stories', to 'set the record straight', to acknowledge the dynamism of stories, to add more layers to stories? This desire relates to adding different tellings and versions of recorded Koorie stories and to adding stories to the 'official record', for example by some form of annotation that enables provision of different perspectives/alternative narratives or links the official record to a related recording of a Koorie story.
- Can multiple contexts be implemented in archival control systems to enable such linkages to occur? For example, if recordings of stories that transmit Koorie knowledge of an event are linked to government records can the parallel contexts be represented and linked?
- How can access policies be implemented across different archives to support flexible, multiple access paths, and customised interfaces, for example based on family trees or place maps?
- Can archival access regimes, particularly in government archives address the needs expressed relating to negotiated decision-making about access to records? Could this include the possibility of case by case decision-making linked to purpose, rather than 'blanket policies'? How might archival systems support this?

### ***Broader implications***

Government archival and recordkeeping initiatives aimed at making records more accessible to Indigenous peoples go some way to address some of the needs expressed by interviewees. However, the legal and policy frameworks in which the initiatives take place, and the associated access guidelines and protocols, are part of a broader paradigm in which ownership and most of the rights associated with decision-making about custody, preservation and access are vested in government agencies and

archival authorities. Indigenous communities have been consulted, Memoranda of Understandings negotiated, and efforts made to develop more culturally sensitive decision-making processes, for example ones that take account of the views of Indigenous people and aim to develop archival services better attuned to their needs. However, within the prevailing paradigm, Indigenous communities are consulted as users of archival services with rights to access records or as data subjects with privacy rights which need to be administered in culturally sensitive ways, but not as co-owners of the records, or people with a more extensive range of rights in the records that might involve shared decision-making relating to custody, preservation and access.

This approach can be contrasted with other initiatives relating to collecting, preserving and accessing Indigenous knowledge – for example in Victoria, the programs undertaken by the KHT, the Bangerang Keeping Place and Brambuk. These initiatives operate in a different paradigm, one in which the ownership, rights and role in decision-making of Indigenous people and communities are fully acknowledged in line with the recommendations of the 1999 report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights.<sup>88</sup> In the report, Indigenous Heritage is defined as ‘the intangible and tangible aspects of the whole body of cultural practices, resources and knowledge systems developed, nurtured and refined by Indigenous people and passed on by them as part of expressing their cultural identity’, including ‘documentation of Indigenous peoples’ heritage in all forms of media’.<sup>89</sup> Rights include ownership and control of Indigenous Heritage, and the right to define what constitutes Indigenous Heritage.<sup>90</sup>

As discussed earlier in regard to narrative creation, from a Koorie perspective, there is co-ownership of Koorie knowledge and narratives contained in and recoverable from archival records relating to Koorie people, in particular government records. The Koorie community has an integral connection with these records and a sense of belonging in relation to the narratives present in them, as reflected strongly in the findings of the Trust and Technology Project. From this perspective, the recommendations of the ATSIC report are highly relevant to government records of Koorie people in the custody of archival institutions and government agencies. It is possible to envisage new archival legal, policy and professional frameworks that acknowledge the mutual rights and obligations of Indigenous communities as co-creators or co-owners of the records – as communities of records.<sup>91</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The development of archival systems, and legal, policy and professional frameworks that could address the needs expressed by Koorie interviewees will be explored as a further part of the Trust and Technology Project. This will include consideration of the links between their needs and those of communities around the world that have experienced human rights abuse, surveillance and repression.

The findings of the Trust and Technology Project so far raise many questions and issues for practitioners, institutions and the profession. Can our archives, public and private, become federated repositories of ‘communities of records’ that reflect multicultural ownership of records and are governed by a matrix of negotiated and shared rights and obligations? How would descriptive practices and understandings of provenance need to change if archival spaces become places where the voices of the

creators of ‘official records’ – governments, churches and other institutions – can be challenged by the alternative narratives of those hitherto regarded only as users of records or as data subjects. Can archives become sites of contested memories where alternative narratives and different perspectives can challenge dominant versions of history? Can archival legal, policy and professional frameworks be developed that recognise forms of co-ownership or co-creatorship and negotiated mutual rights and obligations for all the parties to the transactions captured in records – including those who have thus far been cast in the roles of ‘creators’ and ‘subjects’?

Can a case be made for the management of government records of Indigenous peoples within frameworks derived from the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the protection of their cultural property and identity,<sup>92</sup> and on the ATSIC report recommendations?<sup>93</sup> How relevant are the UNHRC’s Joinet-Orentlicher principles which apply to the archival rights of post-trauma and post-colonial societies generally, and the special archival needs that are linked to human rights abuse and peoples who have been subjected to surveillance and repression?

Whilst these questions need to be addressed quickly in regards to Koorie communities, and post-trauma and post-colonial societies more generally, the answers to these questions might produce a better archival paradigm for all communities in democratic societies.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Koorie – a general term for Australian Indigenous people from Victoria and the southern part of New South Wales, meaning ‘our people’, ‘man’ or ‘person’. Not all Australian Indigenous people from this region use Koorie. There are many reasons for this, including personal and community preference to use their own clan or nation title instead of a generic term, to ‘Koorie’ being very similar to words that are of an offensive nature in some languages. When referring to Australia as a whole, the term Indigenous Australians will be used.

<sup>2</sup> Storytelling – a shorthand term we are using in the context of this project for the oral transmission of knowledge. This form of transmission continues to be fundamental to Indigenous personal and group identity, and is essential for cultural continuity. Story recording refers to the capture of representations of oral transmissions of memory and knowledge. Oral transmission may take many forms, including the spoken word, song, music, dance and ritual. The T&T Project focuses mainly on oral transmission of Koorie memory and knowledge via the spoken word.

<sup>3</sup> Seventy-two interviews were conducted in the first stage of the project. The selection of interviewees respected Koorie cultural protocols such as considering community group representation and recognition of community and cultural ways, concerns and issues. The interviewees came from throughout Victoria and form a ‘purposive sample’, with the key characteristics represented and balanced being, gender, age, place of abode (ensuring sufficient representation of rural, regional centre and city communities) and roles in the community.

<sup>4</sup> Oral memory – for the T&T Project oral memory refers to Australian Indigenous knowledge that originates and/or is reinterpreted as orally transmitted narratives or stories. For an extended discussion of the concept of oral memory as defined in this project and the related broad concept of Australian Indigenous oral history, encompassing the transmission of knowledge orally and the recording of Indigenous knowledge, see Shannon Faulkhead and Lynette Russell, ‘What is Australian Indigenous Oral History?’ in *Proceedings of the International Oral History Association Conference*, Sydney, July 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Lynette Russell, ‘Indigenous Records and Archives: Mutual Obligations and Building Trust’, *Archives and Manuscripts* 34:1, May 2006, pp. 32-44, quote pp. 34-5.

<sup>6</sup> Faulkhead and Russell, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> *op.cit.*, Russell, 2006, p 35.

<sup>8</sup> Lynette Russell, ‘Indigenous knowledge and archives: accessing hidden history and understandings’, *Proceedings of Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries Colloquium in M Nakata and M Langton (guest editors) Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, 2006, 36:2, pp. 169-80; quote from p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Ruby Langford, ‘Our heritage – your playground’, *Australian Archaeology*, vol. 16, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Faulkhead and Russell, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Shannon Faulkhead, Lynette Russell and Sue McKemmish, ‘Koorie distrust of archival records’ unpublished, to be presented at the *Community Informatics Resource Network Conference*, Prato, October 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 42, p.4.

<sup>13</sup> *op.cit.* Russell, 2006, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 44

<sup>15</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 65, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> Name of town removed to ensure anonymity.

<sup>17</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 17, p.2

<sup>18</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 34, p.6

<sup>19</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 37, p.8

<sup>20</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 55, pp. 2, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 64, p.13.

<sup>22</sup> The interviewee is referring to the video *Lousy Little Sixpence* directed by Morgan, Alec & Gerry Bostock, Sixpence Productions, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 62, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 32, p.2.

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- <sup>27</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 66, p.4.
- <sup>28</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 68, p.3.
- <sup>29</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 62, p.3.
- <sup>30</sup> Tribe name removed to ensure anonymity .
- <sup>31</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 35.
- <sup>32</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 62, p.8.
- <sup>33</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 37.
- <sup>34</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 4, p.6.
- <sup>35</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 37, p.7.
- <sup>36</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 38, p.7.
- <sup>37</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 17.
- <sup>38</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 15.
- <sup>39</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 51.
- <sup>40</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 44.
- <sup>41</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 14.
- <sup>42</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 47.
- <sup>43</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 50.
- <sup>44</sup> *op.cit.*, Russell, 2006, pp. 41-2.
- <sup>45</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 44.
- <sup>46</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 51, p.8.
- <sup>47</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 57, p.9.
- <sup>48</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 60, p.10.
- <sup>49</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 9, p.10.
- <sup>50</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 18.
- <sup>51</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 22, p.11.
- <sup>52</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 55, p.8.
- <sup>53</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 65, pp.10-11.
- <sup>54</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 60, p.9.
- <sup>55</sup> Tribe name removed to ensure anonymity.
- <sup>56</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 37.
- <sup>57</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 10, p.9.
- <sup>58</sup> National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia), RD Wilson, et al., *Bringing them home: report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Sydney, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997.
- <sup>59</sup> *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*, <<http://www.cdu.edu.au/library/protocol.html>>.
- <sup>60</sup> Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Jim Stokes and Paul McPherson, 'Bringing Them Home: database, ethics, culture and information about Indigenous Australians', *Comma* 2003:1.
- <sup>61</sup> Public Record Office Victoria, *Finding your story: a resource manual to the records of the stolen generations in Victoria*, 2005, North Melbourne: Public Record Office Victoria.
- <sup>62</sup> Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce, *Wilam Naling ... Knowing Who You Are ...: Improving Access to Records of the Stolen Generations, A Report to the Victorian Government*, Melbourne: Department for Victorian Communities, 2006. The recommendations address several major access barriers still facing Indigenous users, including a lack of awareness of the existence of records, where they are located, and what access arrangements and services are in place; a lack of name indexes; the wide dispersal of records and differences in access policies and protocols across different government and non-government agencies; and the cost of access.
- <sup>63</sup> Loris William, Kirsten Thorpe and Andrew Wilson, 'Identity and Access to Government Records: Empowering the Community', *Archives and Manuscripts* 34:1, May 2006.
- <sup>64</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 24, p.12.
- <sup>65</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 29.
- <sup>66</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 11, pp.12-13
- <sup>67</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 62, p.13
- <sup>68</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 61, p.8.
- <sup>69</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 4, p.19.

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- <sup>70</sup> Name of region deleted to ensure anonymity.
- <sup>71</sup> Person's name deleted to ensure anonymity.
- <sup>72</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 43, p.11.
- <sup>73</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 23, p.15.
- <sup>74</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 61, pp.8-9.
- <sup>75</sup> Eric Ketelaar, 'Access: The Democratic Imperative', *Archives and Manuscripts* 34:2, November 2006. The quotes are taken from: Rene Powell and Bernadette Kennedy, 2005. *Rene Baker. File #28 /EDP* Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, p. 174; and Hans Joachim Schädlich (ed.) 1992. *Aktenkundig*. Rowohlt, Berlin; Cornelia Vismann, 2000. *Akten: Medientechnik und Rech.* Fischer Taschenbuch, Frankfurt am Main. See also Eric Ketelaar, 'Recordkeeping and Societal Power' in: Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed and Frank Upward (eds.) 2005. *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*. Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, pp. 277-298.
- <sup>76</sup> Mark Osiel, *Mass atrocity, collective memory, and the law*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1997, pbk. 2000, p. 9.
- <sup>77</sup> Lauren Marsh and Steve Kinnane, 'Ghost Files. The Missing Files of the Department of Indigenous Affairs Archives', in: Christine Choo and Shawn Hollbach (eds.). *History and Native Title*. The University of Western Australia, Crawley, *Studies in Western Australian History* 23, 2003, pp. 111-127, quote p. 114.
- <sup>78</sup> Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce (2006), pp. 30-33
- <sup>79</sup> *op.cit.*, Russell, 2006, p.41.
- <sup>80</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 6, p.15.
- <sup>81</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 30, p 17.
- <sup>82</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 50, p 10.
- <sup>83</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 10, pp.11-12.
- <sup>84</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 42, p.14.
- <sup>85</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 43, p.13.
- <sup>86</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 64, p.13.
- <sup>87</sup> Trust and Technology Interview No. 42.
- <sup>88</sup> ATSIC, *Our Culture Our Future: A Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*, 1999, <<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AILR/1999/51.html#Heading360>>
- <sup>89</sup> *ibid.* Chapter 1.
- <sup>90</sup> *ibid.* Chapter 4.
- <sup>91</sup> Eric Ketelaar, 'Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records', *Archives and Manuscripts* 33:1, May 2005, pp. 44-61.
- <sup>92</sup> Adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2006, and forwarded to the UN General Assembly for approval before the end of 2006. See <<http://www.iwgia.org/sw248.asp>> for detailed discussion, a copy of the UNHRC Report to the General Assembly and the text of the Declaration as adopted by the UNHRC.
- <sup>93</sup> *op.cit.*, ATSIC, In Chapter 14, the report recommends changes to museum and other cultural institutions' legislation that include amending archival law to include the establishment of Indigenous cultural management committees to address issues relating to access, identification, preservation, use, control and copying of Indigenous cultural records held by an archives.