Multiple voices, multiple memories: Public history-making and activist archivism in online popular music archives.

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MA Creative Industries and Cultural Policy

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Abstract

Creative industry and cultural policy initiatives and interventions in the United Kingdom have begun to utilise concepts of popular music heritage.

Popular music heritage though, is a contested term interwoven with popular music history and archival practice. This is evidenced in the diverse ways popular music heritage is interpreted and realised in various projects that seek to celebrate local, regional and national music histories.

This research paper will focus on the relatively new phenomena of online sites devoted to popular music heritage, history and archival practice and in particular, sites that pertain to the city of Birmingham in the UK.

Evidence will support my argument that two distinct sets of practice emerge around popular music heritage; official and unofficial, and this explains the disparities within such sites.

I argue that official online sites dedicated to popular music heritage mirror traditional history-making and archival practice by reinforcing traditional canonical historiographies of popular music. Unofficial online popular music heritage sites, created and curated by individuals and communities of public history-makers and activist archivists, challenge
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	his historiography through the production of new narratives which provide new insight to music histories and the social and cultural function music plays for individuals, communities and cities.
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Finally, but really they should be first, my family. As I type this little thank you, the kids are still in their pyjamas (it's 1pm), arguing about a Toy Story storyline they are playing, as I keep promising them that I'm almost finished and will get them washed and dressed in a minute so we can go see their mom who is out working at one of the craft fairs she organises. So to Jennie, Sonny and Scout, thanks for being so patient with me as you've got on with your lives as I became more absent and more grumpier by the day!

Love you loads.

And this is for my mom, Bernie.

Mom, I finally got some qualifications. I love you!
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Introduction

This thesis argues that new popular music histories and community archives are emerging in online sites of practice. Created, curated, and populated by public history makers and activist archivists, these sites, I argue, challenge the traditional gatekeepers of popular music heritage and dominant popular music historiography.

Creative industry and cultural policy initiatives and interventions in the United Kingdom have begun to utilise concepts of popular music heritage. These initiatives have often focused on the role that popular music can play in stimulating the economy and tourism and as a form of ‘place making’ (Brown, O’Connor & Cohen 2000, Connell & Gibson 2001, Cohen 2007, Kruse 2010).

For this study, an example is the recent Birmingham City Council (2012) scrutiny review aimed at developing policies for Birmingham as a ‘music city’ and a ‘destination city’ to attract and boost music tourism. This report was a direct response to a UK Music (2011) report that explicitly equated music tourism with economic value and called on local and regional policy makers and tourism bodies to create strategies in order to exploit their music heritage. Practical examples of such music related heritage activity can be seen in the Beat Goes On exhibition held at the World Museum (part of National Museums portfolio), Liverpool, the Home of Metal exhibition held at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and the opening of the British Music Experience in London.
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But such activities lead us to ask what concept of heritage is being deployed and whose popular music heritage is being presented, by whom, and for what purpose? Furthermore, popular music heritage is a complex and contested term interleaved with popular music history, archival activity and individual and collective memory. This contested space, I argue, has resulted in two distinct sets of practices to emerge; official and unofficial sites of popular music heritage.

The parallel turns within the history and archive disciplines towards the inclusion of the traditionally excluded — that is, the lives, voices and experiences of everyday people — has been expedited by the growth of the internet and digital technologies. In this thesis I investigate a number of official and unofficial online sites of music heritage, history and archive practices that cohere around the celebration and preservation of the city of Birmingham’s musical heritage.

I define official sites of practice as being those which have received public funding in order to establish and sustain popular music heritage, archive and history music sites. This funding can be seen as acknowledgment of public authorisation and validation for such projects. Unofficial sites, therefore, are sites that have not received any sustained development funding, operate independently to publically authorised practices, and/or do not have music history-making as their primary concern. Rather, individuals and communities of shared interests sustain these sites, where music heritage and history become a vehicle for self-identity, meaning and remembrance. In unofficial sites then, I
argue, new approaches and practices are forming that offer different narratives of popular music heritage through the inclusion of multiple voices and multiple memories. The role of public history makers and activist archivists challenge the traditional curatorial gatekeepers of history and archive practice and this approach produces new insight to the social and cultural function music plays for individuals, communities and cities.

In order to support my thesis, I explore how, or indeed whether, these online sites can be seen as challenging notions of history-making, the authorised archive and popular music history. I argue that official online sites dedicated to popular music heritage mirror traditional history-making and archival practices (Government 2000, MLA 2004, Craven 2010 Geiger et al 2010). In particular, and when it comes to popular music, this involves a re-enforcement of traditional, canonical and totalising historiographies (Frith 1983 Thornton 1990 Negus 1996, Motti 2002, 2006 Wall 2003).

This research will draw upon issues of the role of individual, collective and cultural memory in history-making, archival activism and community archive practice and an analysis of online popular music archive practices and narratives in order to inform my thesis.

While popular music history has been widely studied and written about, and the recent
growth in permanent and temporary popular music museums and exhibitions has begun to attract the interest of the academy (see Brabazon & Mallender 2006, Leonard 2010), very little attention has been paid to online popular music history and archival activity.

This research, through an analysis of narrative responses drawn from users of a number of online popular music archive sites of practice, will seek to better understand what online practices are taking place, what is being presented and by whom and what is their motivation? What challenges and opportunities emerge from these practices, and do such online sites challenge dominant popular music discourse?

It will also bring new thinking that will inform those involved in the contested space of official and unofficial popular music heritage, history and archive activity.
Chapter one: The contested space of heritage, history and archival practice in popular music

This literature review relates to my area of research which explores what challenges the digital environment presents, if any, to traditional history-making and archive practice in popular music heritage discourse. It has provided a theoretical framework through which my research has been examined.

I map the key texts concerning the role individual, collective and cultural memory play in the construction of history-making. Next, I explore what effect the digital environment is having on constructions of memory, and therefore, as a result, history.

I then map the key texts relating to the digital environment and the implications for archives and archivists in what has been termed Archive 2.0 (Palmer 2009). Finally I examine how a new community of what Howard Zinn would call ‘activist archivists’ (Johnson 2001), have taken advantage of the opportunities now available to them, to create their own online archives of popular music.

History and Memory

In Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory (2003), Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone argue that to contest the past is not merely about the struggle of right versus wrong, truth versus untruth, but also the question of who is entitled to speak of the past, in the present (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003 pg 1). History and memory, then, become entwined as memory, which by its very nature is alive and active, seeking to be afforded a voice in the interpretation of history. The authors recognise that this is not to favour
the use of memory which may be unreliable, biased, or a mediated construction over traditional historical values as a vehicle of absolute truth, but rather as an aide to the formation of history. The authors argue that work within the field of social and cultural memory has become known as public history and this, they say, points to the continuing unease of historians working with the concept of memory.

Hodgkin and Radstone’s work is influenced by, and develops, the historian, Raphael Samuel’s theory of the complex relationship between history and memory, taken from his seminal and widely referenced text *Theatres of Memory* (1994).

Samuel is scathing about the prejudices of the historian, arguing that history is not the sole preserve of the historian, but is rather ‘a social form of knowledge, the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands’ (2004 pg 8). Samuel also asserts that memory is active and dynamic and is dialectically related to, and shares a process of intellectual labour with, history. He goes on to argue that memory is ‘historically conditioned, changing colour and shape’ dependent on the moment and ‘far from being handed down in the timeless form of ‘tradition’ it is progressively altered from generation to generation.’ (Samuel 2004 Preface x).

Samuel highlights a number of ‘amateur’ individuals, groups, associations and clubs that have been instrumental to our understanding of historical practices. Samuel claims these amateurs and their work should cause us to rethink our approach to history-making. Not he says, as divided between ‘professionals’ and ‘public’ but rather if ‘history was thought of as an activity rather than a profession, then the number of practitioners
would be legion’ (Samuel 2004 pg 17). For Samuel, this manifests itself in the uncovering of history in legends and myths, in folk ballads, in television and literature and other forms of popular cultural activity, and this is held within our individual and collective memory. In essence, Samuel expounds that history is what we make it to be, embedded as it is in oral traditions and shared through generations. This approach, then, challenges the ‘unspoken assumption that knowledge filters downwards’ (Samuel 2004 pg 4), by embracing the public and personal actions of everyday people into different histories, shared amongst themselves.

Here, Samuel presents an intellectual and theoretical approach to history and memory that allows scholars and practitioners to re-think the parameters of what constitutes history and history formation. Samuel’s work has also been developed by a body of historians and academics who have begun to form around the premise that ‘people are active agents in creating histories.’ (Kean & Ashton 2009 pg 1). This concept lends itself to the study of popular culture as a legitimate historical activity and in this context, provides a reference point for my research into the relationship between popular music and public history-making in online sites of practice. Such sites as the ones I will study in this essay, therefore become part of a wider public history milieu, infused with the forgotten, lost and hidden voices which are constructed through individual and collective memories that bring to light new social, cultural and political histories.

As will become evident, contributors to online music archives are challenging the accepted notions of history, in this case around popular music activity in Birmingham, by providing previously forgotten or unheard narratives linked to their own past, recalled
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through individual memory, which then plays a substantial role in the formation of collective memory, which in turn leads to the formation of new histories. Users therefore, as Hodgkin and Radstone argue, claim their right to speak of the past in the present.

Writing in 1998, David Thelen wrote of a need for ‘a participatory historical culture’ (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1998 pg 190). This, he explains, is a shared culture where the professional and the popular history-maker use the past as a basis for ‘shared human experience and understanding’ (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1988). For Rosenzweig & Thelen, individuals and communities create and interrogate their histories differently from professional historians. Their extensive research into ‘popular history-making’ (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1988 pg 3), resulted in the authors suggesting that people use their own past in a much richer and more complex way than they experienced with national or state histories and that, as other scholars mentioned above have noted, people use their past as a key feature in their present. For the authors, their research (The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life 1998), argues for the need for better co-operation and understanding between professional and popular history makers, with a call for the professional historians to lead the way in this.

Having established that there has been a turn within the academy towards a greater understanding of the construction of history-making in the actions of everyday people and their materials, a turn that provides a theoretical platform from which to study my topic of online popular music archival and history sites of practice, I now turn to the role of memory within this practice.
Definitions of collective and cultural memory have long been discussed across a number of disciplines; History (Confino 1997, Crane, 1997), Sociology (Connerton 1996, Halbwachs, 1942) and even Archeology (Assmann 1995), to name but a few.

Historian Susan Crane argues that while ‘history is both the past(s) and narratives that represent pasts as historical memory in relation to the presents/presence, collective memory is a conceptualisation that expresses a sense of the continual presence of the past’ (Crane 1997 pg 1373), and, therefore, the difference between collective memory and historical memory is the separation between lived experience and the preservation of lived experience. Crane is arguing here, that by re-locating the individual experience as distinct from historical memory, we avoid ‘speaking for others’ (Crane 1997 pg 1375), thereby allowing many voices and many different histories to emerge. These lived experiences, as recalled through individual memory, can then be seen to form collective memories. Crane’s concept allows us to move away from the notion of historical authenticity and accuracy, towards the understanding that lived experience is authentic and accurate for the individual recounting their history. I will attempt to demonstrate this concept in my research which is drawn from narrative responses in online popular music history and archive sites, within the main body of this essay.

I also want to link the concept of individual and collective memory to cultural memory.

Here, I employ Assmann’s theory of cultural memory as a ‘concretion of identity’ (Assmann 1995 pg 128). Through interacting with specific sites of popular music histories, I claim that individuals coalesce and identify themselves with the group
‘preserving the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity’ (Assman 1995 130). Again I will return to this concept in the main body of my research.

I now wish to explore memory and history in the digital environment.

**History, Memory and the Digital Environment**

In the introduction to their edited book *Save As… Digital Memories* (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins & Reading 2009) the authors state how new and increasingly mobile technologies may be changing memory and its relation to human behaviour, that is, our ability to forget.

Certainly in the western world, we live with our lives being constantly recorded and captured; whether by the informal camera phone shot, or via public and private CCTV cameras, or ISPs storing our electronic footprints via IP addresses and email accounts. We are under constant scrutiny with the possibility that, good or bad, wanted or unwanted, our actions can be retrieved and recalled, dredging up memories long since buried or forgotten.

But individuals are also increasingly and willingly adding to this rapid growth by constructing (sometimes multiple) identities in the online environment. Twitter profiles and Facebook accounts proliferate; we seek to boost our online profiles by befriending strangers and old school friends in order to share our pasts and present in ever more visual forms. I have lost count of the number of hours spent following a digital photo
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trail of people I barely know and accepting ‘friend’ requests on sites such as Facebook or Linkedin.

We carry our memories with us, stored away, to be suppressed, or released by certain triggers, a comment or a photograph perhaps. But we recall and remember those memories in the present, in the here and now, and therefore they are shaped by our attitude to, and organisation of, the past, whether that be negatively, fondly, or indifferently, and so individual memory becomes ‘dynamic, imaginative and directed in and from the present’ (Garde-Hansen et al 2009 pg 2).

But memories also require social frameworks in order for individuals to locate and anchor these memories and it is new media technologies — blogs, social network sites, online forums — that allow individuals and connected networks to remember and share memories from peer to peer rather than being presented from top down. I’m thinking here of the traditional sites connected to history, archive and media modes, which are at the forefront of what Andreas Huyssen has labeled the ‘memory boom’ (2003). Such media platforms allow anyone, individually or collectively, to create sites dedicated to stirring the memories of its users. No longer do those interested in such matters have to seek the agreement or indeed help, of a professional organisation in order to present themselves as the keepers of the memory flame. Such opportunities, therefore, lead to both a wide diversity of subject matter and approaches to sites dedicated to the retrieval of individual and collective memories.
However, caution is also needed when discussing this new, and seemingly democratic paradigm, of memory making and sharing. Andrew Hoskins urges us to recognise the role that mass media and other forms of media play. Hoskins states that memory is mediated by the nature of what is or isn’t recorded or archived and this ‘is entangled with the nature, forms and control of the technologies, media and institutions of the day’ (pg 27). Garde-Hansen (2009), goes further with this note of caution in her analysis of Facebook and its technical architectural structure.

For Garde-Hansen (pg 137), Facebook is the archeion as described by Derrida (1996), the keeper of huge amounts of personal data and information. This is held not in the traditional physical archival locations, but on hundreds of huge remote servers, providing Facebook with the power and authority to interpret the archive. This, then, controls how memories are stored, ordered and shared, in order to serve the corporate and commercial activities of the organisation (2009 pg 136). While pointing out the astounding speed with which new, ‘new’ technologies are developed and ‘old’ new technologies obsolete, and the dangers associated with this, Garde-Hansen et al (2009 pg 5) point to the multitude of professional and amateur archivists saving memories (whether good or bad) as proof of our longing and appetite (2009) for such vessels of memory, ‘the capturing, storing, retrieving and ordering of them then is what digital memory culture is all about’.

Here, the authors pose an interesting question by asking whether the convergence culture enabled by the digital environment can be seen as the end of traditional history-making and the beginning of memory. As I claimed earlier, the relationship between
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history and memory is complex, and certainly, the digital environment is blurring the boundaries further. What Garde-Hansen, Hoskins & Reading are suggesting here is that the traditional upholders of history and memory (those state record offices and national institutions), are being supplanted by new media technology companies and amateur activists who are now the new seats of history, archive and memory repositories, and therefore new arkhés are emerging.

Maurice Halbwachs suggests that individuals who made use of group memory did so by only having to ‘carry in my mind whatever enables me to gain the group viewpoint…’ (1992). But with the advent of the internet we don not even need to hold this information in our minds. Through the use of mediated sites of memory such as Facebook, or the Birmingham Popular Music Archive, we no longer have to rely on our memory; we simply need to know where to look, a quick click of the ‘join’ button and we immediately find ourselves members of ‘a social network memory’ (Hoskins 2009 pg 30), sharing autobiographical details with fellow users of such online sites (and viewers, you don not always need to be a group member to read the material).

But how can we understand what role popular music may have in this new history/memory paradigm?

Jose van Dijck (2006) provides a method in answering such a question by arguing that recorded music is integral to the construction of our personal and collective cultural memory. Van Dijck states that memory is simultaneously embodied, enabled and
embedded; we relive our experiences through constructed narratives therefore by creating public spaces we can create and share our music heritages.

To explain her theory, van Dijck looks at the narrative responses to the recorded music that formed the Dutch Top 2000 radio show, which, she argues, shaped collective memory. These ‘mediated memories’ (pg 369), then, are at the intersection of personal and collective memory. Van Dijck explores the links between music and neuro-cognitive and semiotic-cultural perspectives to explain how we engage with recorded music, applying emotion and lived experiences which form mental maps with particular pieces of music which are later recalled as part of our individual memory. We then share and exchange these memories with others through ‘explicit memory narratives’ that ‘directly bespeak musical memory as it relates to personal and group identity’ (van Dijck 2006). These collective experiences, van Dijck says, can then be seen as ‘collective reservoirs of recorded music’ which become our cultural heritage.

Van Dijck argues that remembrance is always embedded in the individual but our wider social contexts stimulate memories of the past through frameworks in the present. Here, then, we can see how the internet, and in particular specific sites that concern themselves with collective histories, memories and recollections, can be seen as ‘cultural frames for recollection’ that ‘do not simply invoke but actually help construct collective memory’ (2006 pg 358).

I wish to employ van Dijck’s theory in my research but extend it to include non-recorded music materials. Photographs, ticket stubs, flyers, printed material and written text, all
help create individual and collective memory through narrative stories. They are invested with meaning and, as van Dijck points out, help to create common musical heritage and identity, a heritage and identity, I claim, that challenges dominant popular music history. As van Dijck has done, I will analyse a range of online responses and interactions across a number of different websites all of which share a commonality; they are all concerned with differing aspects of Birmingham music history.

The Archive

Archival practice has traditionally been the preserve of professionals and gatekeepers, predominantly from the Museums and Libraries sector. They are the arbiters of what is deemed to be of sufficient archival importance in terms of acquisition, preservation and collection. They are considered, therefore, to be the legitimate guardians of cultural heritage.

In June 1994, Jacques Derrida gave a lecture in London that would form the basis of *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* (1996) (*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*). Derrida’s explanation of the Archive, and the subsequent interpretation derived from historian, Carolyn Steedman, has helped in locating and guiding my research. Derrida (1996, pg 1) takes the reader back to the origins of the term ‘archive’ (Greek term *arkhe*). He informs us that this is the place where things begin ‘commencement’ and where power resides in having access to the knowledge, giving both the *archeion* (controller of the archive) and the *arkhe* authority.
In Derrida’s description, the archive is invested with power and authority. This is held in a physical location, available only to those who attain positions of power in society, such as the Greek superior magistrate (the *archieon*), which allowed him to exercise and interpret the archive. Carolyn Steedman interpreted Derrida’s archival fever as ‘the fever, or sickness of the archive [is] to do with its very establishment, which is at one and the same time, the establishment of state power and authority’ (2001, pg 1-2).

But Derrida also speculated on the future of the archive, making reference to the way in which the psychoanalytic archive, and in this instance, Freud’s archive, may well have been different had he had access to ‘MCI or AT&T telephonic credit cards, portable tape recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences and above all E-mail’ (1996, pg 17).

Steedman (2001), notes that by Derrida turning his gaze to the future:

> the *arkhe* appeared to lose much of its connection to the idea of a place where official documents are stored for administrative reference, and became a metaphor capricious enough to encompass the whole of modern information technology, its storage, retrieval and communication. (2001 pg 4)

Steedman’s interpretation of Derrida offers us, then, the opportunity to re-think our approach to archives in the digital environment. As Craven (2008 pg 1) notes, ‘the archivist stands at something of a crossroads’.
**Activist Archivists**

‘Activist archivist’ was a term first used in 1971 by Howard Zinn, when calling upon the archive profession to break with traditional archival practice. He argued that this was the preserve of the ‘rich and powerful elements in society, whilst the poor and impotent continued to languish in archival obscurity.’ In order to change this he said archivists needed ‘to compile a whole new world of documentary material about the lives, desires and needs of the ordinary people’. (Zinn in Johnson 2001 pg 213).

Johnson pinpoints this as a turning point in North American archival practice, with the profession at least attempting to rectify their omissions. He does, though, note that at the time of writing, this hadn’t been taken up in the UK. Johnson laments this and calls for archivists to work together for the co-coordinated acquisition and establishment of regionalised acquisition networks. For Johnson, acquisition policies developing more coherent, systematic methodologies of collecting that would better represent and reflect the social and cultural make up of contemporary Britain, is a necessity.

Thus, I contend, we can establish a direct link to historians such as Samuel (1994) and Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) and between the history and archival disciplines in the call to those professions to recognise the value of ‘everyday lives and practices’ as areas of legitimate historical study and archival practice. Just as Samuel's call to arms encouraged a body of historians to engage with public history, so too did Johnson and Zinn within the archive profession.
Written during the early days of the internet, Johnson’s article is illuminating in highlighting the deficiencies of archival practice in representing everyday, ordinary life. But he argues that the ability to change this resides only within the profession. Andrew Flinn (2008) challenges this by arguing that the sector needs to see beyond their repositories to the wider community, in order to fully embrace notions of representative archives. New skills and new mindsets will be required, but for Flinn, those connections have to be made and explored through shared practice.

As Hands (2008), Craven (2008), Flinn (2008, 2010) and Palmer (2009) have all argued, the digital environment and the move to digital archive practice offers both opportunity and threat to notions of the authorised archive. Hands posits that the very ontology of the archive is being challenged. How are archivists to deal with the issues of authenticity and meaning and provide contextual understanding of material things, when they become digitally mediated and where their meaning can be lost in translation?’ (Hands 2008 pg 132). Here, Hands is merely sounding a note of caution, as organisations and institutions rush to provide wholesale digitisation of collections. He states the need to think about the context and meaning of materials in the switch from analogue to digital. But for Flinn (2010), the benefits for communities, professionals and academia that the digital environment has had in progressing Zinn’s notion of the ‘activist archivist’, far outweigh such issues. Using community archives as a model, Flinn posits that they create new knowledge and provide for different voices to be heard. While noting issues such as numbers of active participants in online archives and the sometimes mundane contributions made, Flinn argues that rather than being a threat,
the democratisation that the digital environment offers, and the practices of activist archivists, provides us with an opportunity to re-think the profession. For Flinn, such approaches result in richer, more representative archives, which can have huge benefits for cultural heritage and all those interested in archival practice.

Palmer (2009) calls this Archive 2.0 and argues that this is less about the integration and alignment with Web 2.0 practices than about a mind shift for the profession. As Palmer notes, simply to build more accessible online archives opening up collections to users, is no guarantee of success. More thought needs to be given to which technologies are of most use, to re-think how the profession speaks to, and includes disparate audiences, and how it sources deeper interaction with archive materials.

As Palmer, Flinn and Hands point out, a key concern surrounding digitising and archival practice is that of authenticity. Hands states that ‘the authenticity of memory is the central concern in terms of the correspondence between an artefact or record and its description’. He goes on to claim that this new form of archival practice ‘introduces a complexity to the object of memory making and storage that can only be described as debilitating’ (Hands 2008 pg 155).

But Flinn (2010) finds himself ‘sympathetic’ to Jennifer Trant’s position

...professionals can only ensure that cultural institutions are relevant by changing their stance about the nature of their role; it is possible to contribute authenticity without demanding authority…demanding authority is an act, often of arrogance, that denies the contribution of others to the development of knowledge…within
the rapidly developing environment of social computing, communities of practice are forming that could contribute significantly to the development of the museum. (Trant 2008 pg 290)

Although Trant is talking about museums here, the quote is relevant for history and archival practice. However, what I believe is missing from such discussions are those voices who are using this moment, this digital archive turn, to create these new archives and practices, and, in the process, new discourses. Here, then, I want to talk about community archives.

**Community Archives**

The word ‘community’ has many different interpretations, connotations and meanings, but for the purpose of this research, I will utilize Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens’ definition when describing ‘community archives’. For Flinn and Stevens, this term encompasses grassroots activities in creating, collecting, curating and making accessible, collections that relate to a particular community or specific topic. (2009 pg 5)

In this context, then, my use of the word community is to be understood as those spaces inhabited by individuals that coalesce in and around online sites that are anchored by music activity and geographic location specific to place, and how the originators of, and contributors to, such sites and activities self-define and self-identify themselves.
Flinn and Stevens (2009) cite Stuart Hall’s address to the ‘Whose Heritage?’ conference, organised by the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museums Association and the North West Arts Board, in 2005, as a pivotal moment in the history of community archives within funding and policy implementation. Hall has consistently argued that whole communities and their histories — communities often aligned along lines of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality — have been marginalised in the official British heritage and history discourse by the creators and custodians of this discourse and have therefore been denied their place and role in the development of British society. Furthermore, this omission, he argues, has led to individuals in these communities becoming the historians, curators and archivists responsible for the recording, documenting and preservation of their heritage and history (Hall 2001).

Because of this lack of acknowledgement and attention, Flinn and Stevens (2009), claim that the relatively recent upsurge in the creation of community archives is a political act. While noting the wildly differing subject matters, approaches, aims and objectives of community archives, the authors cite two areas of commonality in such initiatives.

First there is an underlying distrust of ‘official’ archives and a desire by creators of community archives to maintain full autonomy. Second, and more relevant to my research, is the authors’ argument that community archives are motivated by the very failure of mainstream heritage narratives and collections to reflect and actively represent their histories, their stories, their knowledge.
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This is addressed in one of the few scholarly articles with respect to popular music archives, that the literature review has identified, Toni Sant’s 2009 article about the Maltese Music Project (M3P). With no recognised or systematic collection of Maltese popular music, Sant was concerned with the possibility of ‘cultural memory fading to anecdotal legend or being completely lost’. Therefore, he wanted to ‘capture a living archive of the past, present and future works of interest’ (Sant 2009 pg 89).

Coming from a technology based background, Sant’s article is concerned mainly with exploring technology based solutions for the capture and preservation of Maltese music, in this case the use of Media Wikis, the open source software that all Wikis run on (Wikipedia, WikiMedia Foundation, WikiQuote). Launched in September 2010, the Maltese Music Memory Project (http://www.m3p.com.mt/), uses a Wiki platform. For Sant, Wikis were an obvious and user-friendly platform in the building of a popular music repository where the community would populate and administer the site and expand the archive into new areas of knowledge pertaining to Maltese Music.

Sant’s article also highlights two other areas worthy of further exploration. He notes how scholars are arguing that we are seeing new ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999). He explains how this term derives from scholars who observe participatory and informal learning between ‘groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a position about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis’ (Wenger et al 2002 in Sant 2009 pg 92). This insight is at the heart of online popular music archives. Does the online environment allow us all to be archivists, to create and share our own culture and
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cultural memory? Is it true that we no longer need to look to the traditional archieon to be the keeper and interpreter of the arkhe?

Home Archives

The practice of home archiving has been around for a long time. We only need to think of the boxes of photographs we keep, or in my case, the thousands of categorised vinyl records and cds that line the shelves in my house. But as with the other archival activities, Web 2.0 is changing how we store, access, retrieve and use our increasingly digitised home archives. But, as Williams et al (2008), revealed in their research, creating and managing personal digital archives is extremely complex.

David Kirk and Abigail Sellen from the Cambridge University Microsoft Research Centre, are calling for a greater understanding of, and a new approach to, the practice they term ‘home archiving’. In their recent research study (2010), of why, and what, artefacts people choose to archive within their home, their findings highlighted the ways in which we archive and store physical and digital artefacts for more than just the purpose of supporting memory. Instead, they argue, the very things that seem mundane actually hold complex sentimental values that evoke and symbolise important places, times, things, people and experiences (pg 10), and that these things are often polysemous in nature.

Viewing the ‘social life of objects’ (pg 4), the authors argue, will allow a new approach to the design and construction of new archival technologies that ‘enrich our experience of living with digital artefacts’ and the methods by which we ‘curate, display and otherwise
interact with cherished objects’ (Kirk & Sellen 2010). While Kirk & Sellen’s research was concerned with the relationship of objects in the home, and with the relationship between people in the home and artefacts, such an approach can be extended to wider archival practices that concern seemingly intangible ephemera belonging to individuals who choose to share such objects online. I will return to this theme in the main body of my research when looking at objects posted to online popular music archives.

As a number of scholars have noted (Hill 2004, Craven 2008, Bevan 2009, Noriega 2010, Flinn 2010), there are moves within the archive profession towards utilising Web 2.0 technologies for holdings, particularly in the use of media platforms such as Facebook, You Tube and Flickr. This is principally to increase access but it is also in recognition of the fact that Web 2.0 can offer more democratisation of archives, and therefore, more people can engage in the production of new knowledge. There are also concerns however, that issues such as acquisition, preservation, cataloguing and metadata, challenge the academy and the profession.

As Geiger, Moore & Savage point out, the status and form of the archive is being keenly contested between and within disciplines, sub disciplines and inter-disciplines, both ‘destabilising the conventional archive and at the same time revealing the archive’s potential’ (2010 pg 5).

In this literature review I have highlighted similar discussions taking place within the history discipline. The constant theme within these debates, theories and arguments is the role memory plays within the formation of both history and the archive. Whose memory, whose voice can speak of the past, in the future?
Antoinette Burton argues that the ‘Internet-as-archive’ has helped to prize open canonical notions of what counts as an archive.’ (quoted in Geiger, Moore & Savage 2010 pg 4). Here then, we can see how individuals and communities with shared interests, in this instance popular music, lend themselves to the creation of legitimate sites of archival and history-making pertaining to popular music.

Very little has been written about popular music archives. As Flinn (2010), states, the motivation for people and communities to participate in archive and history projects, is almost always to do with a desire to tell a story, whether of place, experience (shared or otherwise), class which are rarely represented in formal archives.

This review of literature has revealed that history, memory and the archive share a complex relationship and that proliferation of new technologies is merely adding to the blurring of boundaries between the academy, professionals and ‘amateur’ practitioners.

In order to explore the theories and hypotheses revealed in the Literature Review, I will study a number of online popular music archive practices, all of which relate to the city of Birmingham and its music.
Chapter 2: Following the traces of hidden lives, online.

This research derives from my practice-based work as the founder of the Birmingham Popular Music Archive (http://birminghammusicarchive.com). Such practice-based work has revealed not only online websites relating to the city of Birmingham, but also a growing number of other online music history and archive sites which share similar traits — their desire to celebrate the bands, venues, gigs, record shops, local characters and other music-related activities linked to a specific location. These sites draw on local and specialised knowledge in the uncovering of unheard voices that can be seen to lead to new popular music histories and archival practices (Appendix).

This study has been concerned solely though with sites pertaining to the city of Birmingham and with the sites’ users. It is hoped the results will provide the field with a better understanding of online popular music history and archive sites, and the communities who originate and populate them. This research will further provide new insight into how these practices can be seen to allow multiple narratives to emerge which create new knowledge about music and the city. In conducting this research, I have employed online ethnographic and narrative analysis methods which are detailed below.

At the heart of my research are the online music sites, and their practices. Scholars and commentators have written of the shift from traditional cultural production to a more democratic and networked individual form of cultural production which has developed
Multiple voices, multiple memories: Public history-making and activist archivism in online popular music archives around communities of interests in online participatory sites (Wenger, 1999 Castells, 2002, Leadbeater, 2008, Shirkey, 2008, Gauntlett 2011). In seeking to understand this practice I have studied what these sites present about themselves and their practice; who are they? What do they say about themselves, and who are the people who use? What is their contribution? How do they present themselves? And what can we learn from such interactions?

The internet plays an increasingly central role in peoples everyday lives as new technologies are introduced that enable us to connect and share effortlessly with others. This relevant newness has brought challenges to researchers, challenges such how people, communities or groups form, how they communicate with each other, how these conversations are mediated in online environments; all are areas of interest to the academy. But how we go about studying this phenomenon is also new and therefore open to interpretation and discussion (Hine 2006, Boyd 2008, Murthy 2008).

My research of the sites to be studied was undertaken through an online ethnographic study. Ethnography would normally entail direct observation, of the object of study, by the researcher in a physical location. Data would normally be collected via interviews, questionnaires and other face-to-face participation in order to aide ‘the development of relationships’ (Cohen 1993 pg 124). While aiming to remain ‘invisible’ and ‘neutral’, the ethnographic researcher recognises the effect their placement and interventions may have, and therefore, would note and reflect on this as part of their rationale.
But what should the researcher do when they seek to study online behaviour? Where there is no physical space to study human behaviour, no face-to-face interactions, a space where the researcher need not identify themselves in order to study, or as Rutter and Smith put it; ‘data collection seems more desk work than fieldwork — getting the seat of your pants worn but not exactly dirty’ (2006 pg 84). But as Rutter and Smith also state, a sustained presence by researchers is also required in online environments in order for the ethnographer to be able to explore the cultures of the objects of their study. What looks obvious, or data which seems ripe for research, cannot be readily assimilated through a few brief visits. Christine Hine (2000 pg 154), has spoken of this as the need to develop adaptive approaches towards online ethnographies if we are to fully realise the opportunities of the online environment. Dhiraj Murthy (2008) argues that social researchers are failing to make use of the opportunities afforded by digital technologies for ethnographical research. For Murthy, good ethnography is to be found in how the ethnographer conveys the social stories brought back from the field of research. These stories, he argues, are as vivid as they have ever been; what has changed is how they were told. He cites examples such as digital cameras, webcams, e-mails and large-scale web questionnaires, as ways which can be understood as tools and technologies for the ethnographic researcher.

Murthy, as others have done (Frankel and Siang 1999, Hine 2000, 2006, Rutter & Smith 2006, Boyd 2008) balances the opportunities offered to researchers by highlighting the
possible issues that researchers face, when using such tools. Murthy notes that a survey of digital ethnographic work reveals a disproportionate number of covert, versus overt, projects. My research adds to this disproportionate balance. While broadly accepting of covert online research, Murthy notes the need for the researcher to be aware that the internet is never a neutral space; it always remains a fieldwork setting which makes the researcher’s data selection and analysis open to personal biases.

Here, he provides an explicit example when he says ‘For example, the video ethnographer, selecting what to point the camera at, or the chat room ‘lurker’, selecting what to copy and paste, sometimes ‘records’ exotica or marginalises ethnic others.’ (pg 841).

Boyd (2008 pg 31) further proposes that ethnographic researchers need to be aware that the architecture of the online environment affects people’s practices. She argues that in the mediated online environment, social contexts collapse and this changes the rules of how people can, and do, behave online. Boyd reminds us that in our physical environment our behaviour alters according to the public space we are occupying. This, she argues, is just as true online, and therefore, we have to take into account that what people say, and why they say it, changes because online public spaces also change and therefore no uniform context can be applied. Instead, ‘we have to understand the context within which the individuals think they are operating.’ (Boyd 2008 pg 310)
For Murthy, sites such as Facebook offer rich research material as long as the material used is contextualised properly and as long as the researcher is aware that, as in the physical world, there exists the potential of voices being missed out in. This, he argues is due to the digital divide, to those who have the required digital social capital and those who don not. This can often be attributed to race, gender and age. Murthy highlights a particular issue here for my research.

If, then, the online environment does offer more opportunity for new public history-making and activist archival practices to emerge, are they just merely perpetuating the traditional history and archive practice of the exclusion of margalinsed voices, or do they challenge such traditional practices by at least seeking to include these voices? I have been aware of these issues when selecting what comments I have analysed. Therefore I have focused on what the narratives may reveal about the nature of public history-making and archival activism in online popular music sites.

I have studied the online interactions of individuals across a number of sites of practice concerned with popular music from the city of Birmingham. It was not the individuals I wished to study, but rather what they said and did online which allowed me to research how these sites could be seen to challenge traditional history-making and archive practices. As Riessman writes, such narrative analyses ‘structure perceptual experience and organise memory.’ Individual stories, then, ‘mesh with a community of life stories’ (1993 pg 2). Having studied the comments and responses of users to a number of
online spaces, I have been able to gain insight into the community that coalesces around a defined space, thereby allowing me to study the ‘invisible web of behaviours, patterns, rules and rituals of a group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages.’ (Susteina & Chiseri-Straters 2006 pg 3).

But as a practitioner and an academic in this field, I have needed to recognise the complexities and possible conflict this brings. I have to acknowledge that while I wished to be an observer of the practices by keeping my role as researcher covert, I have also have to accept that I am a participant observer within my own BPMA work and also in the interaction I have had, outside the role of researcher, with the other sites I have studied. I am aware that there could be accusations of contamination and bias aimed at my research, due to my deep involvement in this area. But I would assert that this research is not about the sites or the users who populate them, but what it is they say which has allowed me to test the theories and hypotheses I have identified in my literature review: the role of individual and collective memory on public history-making and community archive practice in online music sites.

The use of an online ethnographic research has distinct advantages for the collection of research data drawn from a number of websites. I have undertaken covert observation but with the knowledge that I have played a participatory role in a number of the sites of my study. However, my study is of the comments users make or leave, their traces, and what this says about online music narratives of Birmingham. I am less interested in how
people are presenting themselves and their online/offline personas at this stage of my research. It has become clear to me that if further research is to be carried out it will need to engage with both the users and originators of the sites, using more traditional forms of ethnographic and qualitative research methods.
Music, Policy and Birmingham

In order to contextualise the recent interest in popular music and heritage in Birmingham, it is necessary to briefly recall a number of related policy initiatives that can be understood as the impetus for the city to raise its music profile, locally, nationally and internationally.

The Music Industries sit within the broader range of the UK’s Creative Industries’ sector. This sector has been identified by recent and successive governments as a priority growth sector within UK policy making’ (DCMS 1998, 2008 Smith 1998). As a result, popular music provision in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands has received some attention from policy makers in recent years. The Birmingham Music Network was set up with European funding in 2000, and various other industry reports have been commissioned and published in order to stimulate the music industries’ sector for cultural and economical outcomes (LSC 2004, Harper 2007, Wall 2007, Edwards 2008). Such policy reports point to the emerging role that popular music has played within policy interventions that cut across issues such as economic regeneration, culture and tourism. During the course of this research, two reports have been commissioned that further point to the increasing importance placed on popular music heritage for economic gain.

In 2011, UK Music, the umbrella organisation that represents the UK commercial music industry, published Destination: Music. Claimed by the organisation as the first report by
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the music industry into the economic impact of music tourism for the UK, the report focused predominately on attendance at live music events, but did provide figures across the three sub sections of the report: Concerts, Festivals and Music Heritage attractions. It reported that 7.7 million overseas and domestic visitors attended events, resulting in economic expenditure of £1.4 billion during their trips. Within the specific sub section of Music Heritage attractions, there was attendance of 400,000 visitors, which equated to 6% of the total music tourists visiting Britain in 2009. Music Heritage attractions were noted as ‘illustrative rather than representative’ (2011 pg 6). UK Music used the findings as a call to local, regional and national policy makers ‘to realise the potential of this considerable economic asset’ (2011 pg 2).

Space does not allow for an in-depth study of this report, although it is clear that such a study would yield some valuable research material; suffice to acknowledge that the breakdown of figures for the regions show that after London (43%) the North West and West Midlands regions attract the highest percent of music tourists, each having a 12% share.

As a direct response to this report, and building on the success of the recent Home of Metal exhibition (http://www.homeofmetal.com/events/events-list/birmingham-museum-art-gallery-home-of-metal/), Birmingham City Council instigated a scrutiny review to gather evidence into Birmingham’s music heritage provision (BCC 2012). The review was concerned with how the city understood and celebrated its music heritage and what role, if any, it played in the current independent music industries in the city. It has suggested a range of recommendations to the council after it sought out the views of
individuals and organisations involved in the promotion and celebration of Birmingham music heritage, most notably the Birmingham Popular Music Archive, Home of Metal, Birmingham Music Heritage and From Soho Rd to the Punjab, to seek how to better capitalise on Birmingham’s music heritage.

It is clear then, even in just these two reports, that policy-makers are viewing music heritage as an economic asset for local and regional bodies to exploit through visitor and tourist strategies.

**Birmingham’s online music archive communities: The official vs the unofficial**

For my research I have studied a number of online spaces that all relate to Birmingham’s popular music archive and history-making. These sites fall into what I have argued are official and unofficial sites of practice. I have defined this as; official sites have received public funding in order to establish and sustain online archive and history music sites and therefore can therefore be understood has carrying public support and authorization for their work; Birmingham Music Heritage, Home of Metal and Soho Rd to the Punjab.

Unofficial sites, therefore, are online sites that have not received any sustained development funding and/or do not have music history-making as their primary concern. By this I am specifically talking about a number of Facebook Group pages and a forum thread on the Birmingham History Forum devoted to nightclubs of the past, and the Birmingham Popular Music Archive site.
I am using the definition of community archival practice derived from Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd’s research of community archives (2008). They define the term thus; ‘By community archives we mean any collection of material that documents one or many aspects of a community’s heritage, collected in, by and for that community and looked after by its members.’ (Stevens, Flinn, Shepherd 2008 pg 1).

For example, then, the community forming around the Birmingham Popular Music Archive (http://birminghammusicarchive.com) identify with being from or connected to Birmingham, regardless of their current physical location, and form this identification through their music activities in the city.

In the Home of Metal project (www.homeofmetal.com), self-definition is firstly through the genre of music — heavy metal — before locating the origins of the genre in the geographical location. The call is to the wider community of ‘metalheads’ but is anchored in the location of where, according to the site, heavy metal first originated, Birmingham and the Black Country.

Here we see two different approaches to creating and understanding communities with online popular music archives. The BPMA seeks out those with connections to the city in order to create its popular music heritage, to find the lost and forgotten, so only those with knowledge of the city who can recall and share experiences, can possibly participate as this is about the city.
The HoM, on the other hand, is appealing to the global heavy metal community to share their love, experiences and ephemera. Individual geographic location and roots are not the primary concern here but the recognition of ‘where the music was born’ is.

So here we have one online community forming and coalescing because of the city and its music; the other online community forming and coalescing because of the music from the city.

**Soho Rd to the Punjab, Home of Metal and Birmingham Music Heritage**

These three online sites of popular music history and archive practice all share similar objectives but use different methods to achieve their aims.

Soho Road to the Punjab (http://www.sohoroadtothepunjab.org) is a mixed media project created by Punch Records in Birmingham and launched in 2005, becoming one of the first major publicly funded music heritage projects in the city. Funded via the Heritage Lottery Fund, the national grant-giving organisation that seeks to sustain and transform Britain’s heritage, Punch also worked in partnership with BBC Asian Network, Eastern Eye and India Eye.

Soho Road to the Punjab was initiated to celebrate the role Birmingham musicians and activists have played in bhangra, a musical form arising out of traditional Punjabi folk songs, reggae bass lines, rock guitar and later on, hip hop rhymes and beats, in the process becoming a global music genre. Soho Rd to the Punjab, while centered around
the activity of music, can be seen as a response to the exclusion of sections of our society from the official history and archive discourse that Hall, Samuels, Flinn and other scholars have written about. The absence of such a history has led Punch Records to rectify this omission through their own actions. Hall, similarly, writing about the creation of the African and Asian Visual Artists’ Archive has stated that;

…the case in relation to work from the Afro-Caribbean and Asian diasporas since, in the absence of any sustained attention or critical dialogue within the dominant institutions of the art world, and given a systematic marginalisation over the years (see, *inter alia* Rasheed Araeen's *The Other Story*), practitioners themselves have been obliged to act first as curators, and now as archivists.

(Hall 2001 pg 91)

Formed in the early days of what is now called Web 2.0, Soho Road to the Punjab presents an authorised view of bhangra in and from Birmingham. Consisting of a series of headings, the site provides overviews of the history and development of Bhangra and nominates ‘Champions’, those who are responsible for the artefacts held within the archive. While the use of video, photography (and links to Flickr) and the nascent use of comments by viewers all point in the direction of future archives, the site is less about the sharing of individual memories online. Thereby, it is less about the creation of collective memory through a process of interaction and sharing of knowledge and more about ensuring those marginalised voices are given a platform to be heard (Flinn 2009).
While centered on bhangra music, Soho Rd to the Punjab provides an insight into the social, political and cultural historical struggles of a section of the Asian community in Birmingham allowing for hidden histories to emerge.

**Home of Metal**

Home of Metal (HoM) (http://homeofmetal.com) is a project created by the music and arts organisation, Capsule, that seeks to celebrate the five bands who, according to HoM, ‘are central to the heavy metal creation and evolution over a number of decades’. HoM seeks to corral the knowledge and experiences of the subcultural group known as metalheads ‘with an aim to bring people together to share their passion for Heavy
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Metal.’ (http://www.homeofmetal.com/the-project/about/). In order to achieve this goal, HoM created an online digital archive alongside a number of physical exhibitions that took place across Birmingham and the Black Country in the summer of 2011.

The exhibitions drew substantial crowds and garnered national and international press coverage, not only because of the music history on display, but also for the interleaving of the industrial and social history of the time that the organisers, and indeed the main music protagonists of the exhibition, claimed was a major factor in the sound of heavy metal music. While some of these activities have taken place in the physical realm, the creation of the digital archive was an opportunity for fans from ‘all corners of the globe to share their passion for Heavy Metal and contribute stories and memorabilia by uploading images, sound files and film footage. WE NEED YOU to contribute to the archive with your Heavy Metal related wares, playing a part in securing our identity as the Home of Metal’ (http://www.homeofmetal.com/the-project/about/).

Here the appeal is from HoM is to an unknown (to them) audience that self-identify themselves through a specific music, heavy metal, to create collective and cultural memory. The ambiguous use of the word ‘our’, however, opens up multiple interpretations as to whose identity is to be secured; is it the Home of Metal project?, Capsule?, the fans?, or is it the citizens of Birmingham and the Black Country? While this remains unclear, I suggest that what HoM are seeking to create, intentionally or otherwise, through such appeals, is the realisation of Assman’s theory of the ‘concretion
Multiple voices, multiple memories: Public history-making and activist archivism in online popular music archives of identity', understood in this instance as that which coalesces around heavy metal music and place making, Birmingham and the Black Country.

The site is designed in classic heavy metal black and plays on the notions of authenticity with the use of heavy metal images as icons on the site, as users are encouraged to leave comments or upload digital images of memorabilia.

Figure 2: Home of Metal

The site lists an impressive 732 pieces of digitized material ranging from rarely seen photographs of the bands during their formative years, through to fan memorabilia such as badges and tee-shirts. Just under half of the material relates to, arguably, the most
well known group, certainly the most closely associated with Birmingham and heavy metal, Black Sabbath.

But a closer look at the activity online would suggest the HoM digital archive has yet to achieve the same level of participation or interaction than in the physical environment, where over 16,000 people attended the exhibition at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BCC 2012 pg 21). Why is this? Do metal fans crave the authenticity of the actual artefact, to see it with their own eyes? Are they less inclined to share ephemera and experiences online than other music fans? Has the decision to focus on just the five bands, heralded as central to the creation of heavy metal, resulted in too narrow a definition when taken into the online environment? Has it become a symptom of what Marion Leonard (2007) has argued is a focus on iconic or canonical musical groups within popular music exhibitions which replicate popular music historiographies (Negus 1996, Motti 2002, Wall 2006)?

Such questions, then, pinpoint a need for further research into the users of such sites and into visitors to exhibitions. What connections, if any, exist between the physical and digital environment? Is there a distinction in how the two sets of audiences interact and make sense and meaning out of the material cultures displayed online and physically? Can you simply replicate a physical exhibition of popular music history online or do originators of such sites need to think differently about what, and more importantly how, they celebrate such popular culture?
Birmingham Music Heritage

The Birmingham Music Heritage project (BMH) (http://birminghammusicheritage.org.uk) received a £50,000 funding grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (BMH Presentation Paper 2011) in 2009. BMH is a project of the Creative Community Networks organisation (http://www.creativecommunitynetworks.com/flash/ccn_basic_projects.html).

The BMH website has the tag line ‘untold stories 1965-1985’ providing a clearly defined time span of activity within the city’s music history that BMH covers. No clear rationale is given for the choice of this period, as opposed to 1969-1995, for example. As with the Soho Rd to the Punjab and the HoM, BMH seeks to make a claim for the worth of popular music from Birmingham. The site invites visitors to share memories about the bands and venues of the time and to send photos for use on the site. BMH, in partnership with Creative Community Networks and Radio to Go, have produced an impressive array of filmed interviews and audio productions featuring musicians and members of the Handsworth community, explicitly linking music production and locale. These oral histories, rich with lived experiences, expressed in the voices of musicians and local community members, are examples of popular music as public history.

There is, however, a disjoin between how the BMH presents itself in its written statements and the reality of its online practices. The site lists just forty-six bands and seven venues from its twenty-year time span. The listings are broken down into images
and videos, and these are mixed between You Tube clips and the recorded interviews carried out by BMH. There is no user interaction or user generated material on the site and the band entry pages consist of videos, band personnel and chart position information. There is no opportunity, then, to provide of any sort context to the bands’ history. This then appears to be an issue of engagement for the site. Whereas the HoM does allow for user participation, the BMH appears to discard this option in favour of presenting a more orthodox Birmingham music history, which is at odds with the audio and visual documentaries.

Despite the stated aim of BMH to tell the untold stories of Birmingham popular music, it appears to have retold the better-known stories of bands such as Duran Duran, UB40, Black Sabbath and others. It is the uncovering of the untold stories that promises us new narratives and knowledge about the city and its music that is so appealing about BMH but this has yet to be realised, a trait shared with the Soho Rd to the Punjab and
BMH but this has yet to be realised, a trait shared with the Soho Rd to the Punjab and

Figure 3: Birmingham Music Heritage

HoM sites. These three sites, I claim, can be understood as contributing to creating public histories and community archives around Birmingham music activity, it is also true that they are less concerned with uncovering and teasing out the knowledge that resides within our individual memories and histories in order to share it with their communities. They seek, rather, to present existing knowledge differently.

By this I mean to suggest that the way the sites are constructed, their templates, give rise to a sense of authorial control. Each of the sites seeks to establish the dominant discourses within their chosen subject, the five bands central to heavy metal, or the first
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bhangra artists, for example. There is little scope, though, for users to challenge these assumptions or offer alternative histories that allow multiple voices and multiple narratives to emerge. The power and control then, still resides with the archieons of such sites.

To better understand what is going on in this environment, and to really test the theories, hypotheses and arguments about the inter-relationship between individual, collective and cultural memory on popular music public history-making, community archive and activist archivists’ practice, we need to turn to unofficial sites of popular music histories.

**Birmingham Popular Music Archive**

Birmingham Popular Music Archive (http://birminghammusicarchive.com) (BPMA), was founded by Jez Collins in 2008 (this author). Collins created the archive to engender civic pride born out of frustration at the lack of recognition of the city’s rich musical heritage within the city itself and the portrayal of it within the wider national and international music press and industry

Birmingham, that murky, grey metropolis. It’s easy to think of everything in the ‘second city’ as indistinct and ethereal as a cloud of smoke, a no-man’s land slap bang in the middle of the country […] On first impressions the music scene seems to represent just this, be it Editors’ dreary drone or The Twang’s desperate New Laddism; this is not a place which bands are proud to call home.
And why would they? Birmingham boasts a musical heritage so bland – UB40, Black Sabbath and Duran Duran – that the ‘progressive’ council is trying to concrete over it, tearing down venue after venue until all that remains is a hulking great shopping centre. (Readplatform.com)

For Collins, such a description failed to recognize the breadth of music activities he had experienced and reinforced wider negative perceptions of Birmingham's popular music history. Responding to such provocations then, the BPMA announces its intentions clearly on the home page with the tag line ‘Celebrating Birmingham’s popular music history’. It asks its users to ‘Tell us what you know, tell us what you think’, in an effort to encourage users to help build and shape the archive in order to ‘capture the entire history of popular music activity in and from the city.’ and for ‘Birmingham to take pride in its musical heritage and start shouting out about it.’

(http://birminghammusicarchive.com/about-us/).

Certainly the rhetoric speaks to an agenda of civic pride, but to what extent can an online popular music archive create civic pride within, and between, individuals and communities? Certainly the BPMA is a manifestation of Collins’ own civic pride and to this extent he can be seen as have being successful in his aspirations. But has such rhetoric changed the either the local or wider perception of the city and its music? And how do you measure such sentiments without reducing it to a purely economic value, measured through tourism visits and tourist spend as highlighted in the UK Music report (2011)?
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What the BPMA has successfully achieved though, is new narratives of popular music history created by users to the BPMA. The BPMA claims there are no parameters as to what should or should not be included in such an archive and the website actively promotes the assumption that

music provides us with memories, individual and shared experiences and self expression. For us, these memories and meanings can be stirred by a vast array of music ephemera, it could be a song, it might be a photograph or a ticket stub or it could be someone else’s recollections that make a connection with you and trigger your music experiences. And we aren’t just interested in the ‘star’ names. We want to hear about ALL the music activity in the city.

(http://birminghammusicarchive.com/archive)

Figure 4: Birmingham Popular Music Archive
The BPMA, then, actively seeks the involvement of its users in order to build the archive. This approach has so far generated 464 page entries, most of them without content, by 239 users. In addition, the site has attracted 524 comments in relation to the bands, venues, record shops and so on that are listed, and it attracts on average 400 unique visits per week. There are comments even on pages where no ‘official’ content has been written. For example, the entry for the venue, Bogarts, only lists the name of the venue and yet forty-eight comments have been posted.

Here then, in the response of users in taking up the call of the BPMA to become the active history makers of the BPMA, we see Samuel’s approach to history-making. By thinking of history as an activity and removing it from the sole preserve of the professional, then the ‘numbers of practitioners would be legion’ (Samuel 1994 pg 17). While it is a push for the BPMA to claim legions of Birmingham popular music historians converging on the BPMA site, there is a noticeable difference in the online narrative exchanges between the BPMA and the other sites discussed above. I will return to the nature of these comments in the next section.

I turn now, to other examples of memory formation in online music archives and highlight the way in which they can be seen to create individual, collective and cultural memory within community archive practices. To do this, I will look at comments posted on a number of Facebook Group pages, the BPMA and the Birmingham History Forum, to explore their nature and content and to examine what it is they say and what they can tell us about Birmingham music history.
‘Anyone got any memories and information about nightclubs in Brum, from any time last century?’

The above question was posted on the Birmingham History Forum (http://birminghamhistory.co.uk/forum/showthread.php?t=4001) under a thread titled ‘Nightclubs of the Past – Memories’, on the 28th November 2005, which itself is part of a Birmingham Nightclubs’ dedicated forum. The thread has filled eighty-seven pages of comments over the previous six years. The poster, Mazbeth, listed some of his/her own recollections and invited users to do the same. The thread can be seen as both a memory prompt and an historical resource. While often scrappy in nature, the responses to the question provide us with a narrative — sometimes coherent and chronological, sometimes more random.

Alf: ‘I used to go to a night club on Soho Road on Friday nights in the late 60s anyone remember it :-\’

SuBee: ‘The Monte Carlo Alf?’

Alf: ‘Sue not sure but the Bar was upstairs :)’
SuBee: ‘Paul’ll Know........he’s bound to have frequented the place at some
time.....The Monte Carlo is on the Soho Road, very close to St Michaels Hill if
that helps Alf?’

Alf: ‘Think it was on a corner with side entrance :-\’

Oisin: ‘That Monte Carlo was much too ruff for me! On his first dance with a girl
in the Monte a friend of mine had his wallet lifted. I preferred the Ridgeway
Georgian (in the same area) ‘cos they took yer wages off you a little more slowly
in there. 8) It was a big old... yup, Georgian house. Was that it Alf?’

This type of exchange is common throughout the thread and supports van Dijck’s theory
that music acts as a trigger in the mnemonic function for the recall of everyday events in
our present day lives (2006 pg 359). Van Dijck makes reference to recorded music in
her article, whereas in the above exchange, music’s role is as a site of production in the
form of The Monte Carlo nightclub. Alf then, is trying to locate specific events of his
musical past in the recall of a venue he regularly visited but cannot remember the
details of. Unable to recall the venue, Alf puts his trust in the collective memory of the
forum community to remember on his behalf.

The narrative conversation then unfolds in the responses of other members of the
community as they seek to provide an answer for Alf. Finally, another user replies, not
initially with an answer but with further personal recollections and memories of the
venue in question. In this exchange then, we see individual memory becoming, albeit in
a small way, part of a wider collective memory, which in turn offers new (or forgotten) knowledge of the Monte Carlo club.

For other posters the process of posting online allows them an opportunity to revisit a past life, as a validation that they were there. As Sue McKemmish says: ‘it allows us to evidence and memorialise our lives thereby giving us identity and a sense of place in the world…an evidence of us’ (2001)

Hi, everyone.

I have joined this forum, ‘specially to allow me to contribute to this thread.

At the age of 16, around Easter of 1973, I worked for a few weeks as a dancer at the Locarno. After that, I was offered, and took, a job at La Dolce Vita which was diagonally opposite, on Smallbrook queensway. I worked there, as a go go dancer, for about 18 months and absolutely loved it.

I also frequented the Patrick club [on a couple of occasions when i was taken there] which was up the side of the hippodrome, i think - and also the Garry Owen club in Small Heath. This place didn’t close until the last customer had left, and had the best steak sandwiches in Brum, at that time. We also, sometimes, went across to Barbarellas, The Club Cedar, and Snoopy's.

I loved, with a passion, working at La Dolce Vita - it was the one place where i felt free and confident, and on top of the world. I guess this was partly because this is where i fell in love for the first time - and where i escaped 'normality' for
brief periods of time. This was at the time of the pub bombings, I think - I know we had many bomb scares and often had to evacuate the club.

I only went to the Barn, Solihull [Hockley Heath] a couple of times. I thought it quite fun, at first, but then realised that the revolving dance floor turned it into rather a cattle market - the chaps standing round the edge while a steady procession of young ladies went past their eyes. Not so good. For the same reason, I didn't much like the beer keller - where a balcony on the first floor enabled chaps to look down on the ladies.

Gosh - I have just remembered that the Dolce had a dance floor that lowered and rose. In the cabaret room, upstairs.

I also worked, from time to time, at Bloomers, at the Swan, Yardley - as this club was owned by the same people as La Dolce Vita - so staff were shared as and when necessary.

Thanks to anyone who's taken time to read my little reminiscing.

[I am now a teacher, btw - a far cry from being a little blonde go go dancer]

Impis (c)

Wrapped up then, in just this one comment, is Impis’s musical history in the naming of venues, personal identity and development in the places she worked. There are also implications for sexual politics in the identification of the subjugation of women in ‘the cattle market’ and ‘looking down on’ club environments, for social politics with the pub
bombings, and then finally the separation of past and present. Impis is now a teacher with the implication of leading a very different life. While there can be no claim for this being a full life story, the rich stories of Impis and her musical activities are alive with history, identity and meaning, providing an ‘authentic voice of the past’ (Flinn 2007 pg 152) in the construction of public histories and archives.

While the Birmingham History Forum appears to be an internet bulletin board of the pre Web 2.0 era with little social network facilities, the same cannot be said for Facebook. While I will concern myself here with only what users do and say in Facebook Groups pertaining to music archival practice, Joanne Garde-Hansen (2009) provides a succinct theory on the politics of archives through sites such as Facebook which can be understood as ‘memory practices’ and ‘technologies of memory.’ Garde-Hansen also, correctly, points out that Facebook may ‘not be liberating personal memory at all but rather enslaving it within a corporate collective’ (pg 136). In order to serve commercial interests the company may want to exploit for financial or ideological gain.

As well as allowing the creation of individual profiles, Facebook also allows the formation of Facebook Groups which are based on shared interests. According to Facebook, you do not have to be friends to be in the same group, thus allowing a wider circle of people to join. The process of creating a group is simply a matter of pressing the ‘create a group’ button and naming it and the group can be set to ‘open’, ‘closed’ or ‘secret’. If you are not invited to a group, finding them takes some knowledge of the subject area. In my searches, terms such as Birmingham Music, Birmingham Music History, Birmingham Music Heritage threw up some, but by no means all, of the groups I
have looked at. For example, Upstairs at the Mermaid, Birmingham, (a noted venue in the Anarcho-Punk milieu), can only be located through a specific search using the name of the pub. The groups chosen for this research are, therefore, predominantly drawn from my own knowledge of the city, but there are many others I could have chosen.

‘Upstairs at the Mermaid’ concerns itself with a venerated Anarcho-Punk, Goth and Psychobilly venue of the 80s & 90s. It has 306 members who have contributed 189 photographs.

‘Barrel Organ Digbeth’ was another Punk and Goth venue in the 70s & 80s. It has 430 members who have contributed 292 photographs.

‘Bogarts’ was a rock venue in the 60s — 80s and it has 219 members who have contributed 115 photographs.

‘Crown Punks’ is a group dedicated to the original group of Birmingham punks who used the Crown pub from 1976 onwards as their spiritual home, and has 341 members who have contributed 813 photographs.

The members of these groups use them as a way of re-connecting with, and remembering, the past. Music here, then, is the glue as groups form around music genres, scenes and sites of music activity, but music is not always the primary narrative. However scrappy such narratives appear, there is always meaning embedded in the words written.

For some it is validation of their past;
Al Duffill — Upstairs at the Mermaid: *This place was my spiritual home in the late 1980's, some awesome people and bands. Was mainly into the crusty/punk scene. Missing the last train was a must and would hang out in the all night cafe or sleep on a bus in the station, more often than not though would end up at a party somewhere, anywhere!!*

For others it is a means of memorial to those no longer alive;

Janet Adams — Bogarts group: *billy was a great bloke and friend, always to be remembered.*

And others who seek to remind people they are very much alive;

anok4u2 Bluey — Crown Punks Groups: *greetings my old friends! its Blue! jock told me about this site, and i wanted to find and chat to some of ya, shit all of you really. i heard about the reunions. i gotta come to the next one. best to all of you*

And for popular music historians it is the source of rich research material;

Nic Bullen (founder of Naplam Death) — Upstairs at the Mermaid: *A great place: a lawless hole with rancid drinks ("Can I have more Scrumpy with lumps in please?") and reckless drunks...I went to my first gig there back in February 1984 (Nightingales + Ted Chippington) and then played my first gig there in June 1984 (benefit for the Miners)...We started drinking there in April 1985 (as it was a cheap place to drink before going on into town): a bunch of us would meet up in*
the little back bar downstairs and drink Scrumpy and play crap records on the jukebox, fending off the Christians who would come in to 'save' us...

But it is not just written text that provokes narrative comments on these sites. Increasingly digitised images — photographs, ticket stubs, posters and other ephemera — the ‘material objects’ (Leonard 2007 pg 148) of popular music, also evoke reaction. People invest, and take meaning from such images, even if they aren’t directly related to them. As Kirk and Sellen write, while appearing mundane, digital copies, can simultaneously be emotive and ‘devoid of value, but in other respects be rich with it’ (2010 pg 11). Responding to a picture of two goths sitting on some stairs in a nightclub, the following narrative discussion developed over a period of a couple of months:

Abigail Chesterton: Was this in Eddies?

Cheryl Ann Hardy: powerhouse

Paul Richard McCarthy: God i remember those stairs !! lol

Sarah May: Never thought I'd see those stairs again - ahh brings back so many memories
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Susie D Ramone: *i have a photot just like this - that is my mate tania, i remember her from years ago, she was such a laff x*

Susie D Ramone: *(who posted the photograph): and i remember bez wow i use to go to your house, i had black hair and we all use to go out and get pissed down powerhouse, zigzags and we hated the squares lol x*

Susan Latham: *You'll find Susie that Tanya is still the same, a nutter, a laugh only one thing she actually looks younger than she did 20 years ago!!!! x*

Martin Ashton: *oh the memories! great pics too. remember a lot of the faces. xxx*

Susie D Ramone: *wow how cool, i did love taNIA XX*

Susan Latham: *I still do, she's ace!! xx*

Susie D Ramone: *is she still in brum/? x*

Here, the photograph becomes the archival artefact that is ‘the memory glue’ (Bastian & Alexander 2009) for individuals and communities in recalling and sharing music-based experiences. The photograph, then, becomes the memory trigger which gives rise to the
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development of multiple narratives. Such online practices offer us new ways of thinking about, and approaching the creation and sharing of people’s living histories.

But what about the music? What all of the sites of this study share is their desire to celebrate the wide range of music activities of, and from, the city. What they also share is the complete lack of the recorded music they seek to celebrate. While a number of the sites embed ‘You Tube’ videos and ‘Soundcloud’ files into their sites, none seem to be actively pursuing, or they certainly do not publicise, an acquisition policy for recorded pieces of music. Leonard argues that material culture artefacts alone ‘cannot stand in for, or be detached from the sonic and bodily experience of music’ (2007 pg 148). While issues pertaining to copyright restrictions may be to blame for this lack of recorded music, the experience of the BPMA would seem to suggest that this issue has not affected users recalling and celebrating those bands who may be considered as ‘also rans’, even ‘never rans’. Those bands were central to micro-scenes and sub-cultural identity and activity. Again, we can understand this remembrance as individual memory which ‘become vehicles for collective identity construction’ (van Dijck 2006) which in turn binds them into cultural memories, offering insight into social, cultural and political histories that span multiple communities, all uncovered in online music archives. The comments below support this claim:

John Keenan: ‘Anyone remember Special Clinic, Eazie, Ocean Boulevard or any of the other superb bands that used to play the Sheldon pub ?’
Annie Sparks: I too started going to the Railway in 1974 to see the Steve Gibbons Band, they had a regular night on a Wednesday (I think it was), this was the original band with Bob Griffin on bass (before Trevor Burton joined them). Re Roger Hill playing at the Railway – am hoping this info is correct as my memory isn’t quite what it was! Roger originally played there on a Sunday night with Trevor Burton and Harry Rix, (they were all in Raymond Froggatt’s backing band at the time. At some point Roger moved to the Friday night slot with Bob Griffin, Nick Pentelow, Bob Brady and Charlie Grima (the latter three were also members of Wizzard at the time) This was in 75 I think. That band went through a few member changes and finally became Spitfire and yes Martin, you are right with the names!

Debbie Jones lists a huge range of bands and venues: Red Sun at The Locarno on the revolving stage, the BRMB birthday parties and Birmingham City F.C dances at either The Locarno or Top Rank, Dale End. Robin Valk on BRMB and the outdoor extravaganza’s he produced at Cannon Hill Park’s outdoor arena ‘The Lark in the Park’..featuring bands like, Slender Loris, Rainmaker, Little Acre, Ruby Turner, City Boy, Fashion. Live bands at the Barrel Organ, Digbeth, Hooker, who changed their name to School Sports, (to name one…) …Well there’s a few things to think about! How about you?
Here, we can reflect on the individual’s pride and fondness for reliving and sharing both their own past, and knowledge of obscure music activity and culture in the city. For Debbie and Annie then, this process of autobiographical remembering leads to an appeal to the community to also remember, a ‘mnemonic transmission’ that seeks to corral the communities musical cultural memory (Wang & Brockmeier 2002).

All of the sites I have interrogated and analysed concern themselves with documenting and recording aspects of Birmingham music activity but there are marked differences in the approaches to the ways in which such these sites seek to achieve their goals. This, I argue, is due to the difference between the official and unofficial status of the sites of my study. It emerged that official sites, those sites that had received public funding to establish and sustain their activities (authorised sites of practice) were specific in their scope of interest; Soho Rd to the Punjab was concerned with bhangra, HoM with five heavy metal bands and BMH with activities defined by the years 1965-1985.

Such neatly defined parameters, I argue, merely imitates conventional popular music history formation, with the presentation of a canonical and totalising historiography in their chosen subject matter. My research has revealed that, in comparison to the other sites of study, user interaction and participation was significantly less active on these sites. This is not to criticise the sites as it can clearly be seen that they provide ‘mere traces of personal pasts’ and therefore ‘not the stuff to excite conventional historians’ (Kean & Kirsch 2009 p 187). Rather they seek to offer public history, derived from popular music, which sits outside the mainstream archival and history domain and can
be seen to support Flinn and Stevens theory that such practices are inherently political in their nature (Flinn & Stevens 2009). For these sites then, the telling of the stories is the important aspect, less so the sense that the community could, or should, play a more active role in the history-making.

It is in the unofficial sites of practice then, those created, curated, and populated those people I have argued are public history-makers and activist archivists, which support my claim that new public histories and archival activism is emerging in online popular music heritage sites. It is within these sites that rich material exits, material that enabled me to explore the relationships between popular music, individual and collective memories, public history-making and community archive practice.

Although rather scrappy in nature, people’s narrative responses indicated a keenness to recall and share in written, and visual format, long buried memories from their past in. There are few, or no, in-depth descriptions, instead users limit their interaction to providing and sharing collective and autobiographical memories and histories. The sharing of such materials within these communities has led to new understandings of the function popular music has played within the cultural and social history of Birmingham and its role in peoples lives; providing meaning and identity. Through individual and collective memory, users map out places and spaces, often no longer in existence, with a fondness which invokes civic pride within the individual and, I argue, the wider communities of shared interest.
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It would be easy to dismiss such narratives due their vernacular and scrappy prose, to do so, though, would be to miss the rich layers of texture that emerge from within individual memory and history which provides new chapters of understanding of the city and its cultures.

These online narratives, then, are about the cultural and social practices that surround music and not just about the music itself. Narratives emerge that provide insight into the social habits of past generations, the places they visited for cultural entertainment, how these spaces were ever-evolving to cater for new audiences or simply lost to the city’s changing built environment. Sub-cultural histories form around long forgotten bands or nights, travel and work are discussed and friendships are re-united online and then consolidated offline in re-union get togethers.
Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that recent creative industry and cultural policy interventions have begun to utilise concepts of popular music heritage for economic and tourist stimuli. But, I claim, popular music heritage is a contested space and this has led to two distinct sets of practice to emerge. These, I have stated, can be understood as official sites of practice, publically funded and authorised, and unofficial sites of practice, non-funded and independent.

My research focused on a number of official and unofficial online sites concerned with Birmingham and its music activities. Unsurprisingly, the sites uncovered reflect on Birmingham as a location with a sustained history of music making activities and they seek to promote these activities to a wider audience. In this respect then, such activities can also be seen as being civically minded, created with the intention of imbuing a notion of civic pride in, of, and for, the city, through its popular music heritage.

Through an analysis of narrative responses drawn from users of a number of online popular music archive sites of practice, my research has produced evidence to support my assertion that it is in the unofficial, participatory, online sites of practice pertaining to popular music heritage, sites created, curated, and populated by public history-makers and activist archivists, which are challenging the traditional gatekeepers of popular music heritage and dominant popular music historiography. The recall of local bands
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who played the Birmingham circuit in long gone venues, or of local characters and friendships lost and remembered has provided a catalyst for the excavation of unheard narrative discourses that have revealed new insight, not only into popular music histories, but also its inter-relationships with social and cultural activities in the city.

Individual and collective memory, then, are vital ingredients in the formation of history and in the creation of archives. These disciplines overlap and share a complex relationship, but the ability to now record and store memories in digital form has also blurred the boundaries between the traditional gatekeepers and amateur practitioners within history-making and archival practice. This combination has provided fertile ground upon which online popular music history-making and archival activism has blossomed. As stated, these practices are not only concerned with music, but also with community archives and public-history making. They are infused with individual and collective memories which contribute to the formation of cultural memory. Such is the wealth of material presented in this dissertation, I argue, that social historians and community archivists have ample research material with which to really engage with a city’s cultural life in order to provide new insight about Birmingham and its communities. But as Andrew Flinn has noted: ‘the mainstream or formal archive sector does not contain and represent the voices of the non-elites, the grassroots, the marginalised. Or at least if it does, the archive rarely allows them to speak with their voice, through their own records.’ (Flinn 2007). This research, then, demonstrates a need for much closer collaboration between scholars, institutions of history and archive practice, and public
history-makers and activist archivists, in order to truly fulfill the potential offered by sites dedicated to popular music histories and archives.

While new practices have undoubtedly led to the emergence of new and hidden histories, we should ask whether the contested nature of popular music heritage is merely exacerbating what Andy Linehan has written about. Namely, the lack of cohesion in and across popular music archive collections, which is due to the individual and ad-hoc manner archives have developed (Linehan 2004)? Evidence would suggest that this might be the case. As I have shown, popular music heritage occupies a contested space enmeshed with complex relationships. Across the four sites of practice dedicated solely to music from Birmingham, there is not even a sense of what it is they seek to do. I am not talking here about the aims or objectives of their practices, this is clear, but rather the expressions of what it is that they are. Are they archives, fan sites, public history forums, or heritage sites? This lack of a common approach and understanding is replicated in the academic literature where issues of personal and community archiving, history and memory making, and storing in the digital environment overlaps across disciplines. While this is to be expected considering how relatively new this field of study and practice is, if the academy is yet to reach a consensus on terminology, then it becomes easier to understand the wide disparity in the practices themselves.

Clearly, interest in and activity around popular music heritage, history and archives, existed before the internet. But the rapid development of this technology has provided
the opportunities for those who had a pre-existing interest to find, connect, build and share with other ‘communities of interest’ (Castells 2002), in order to produce new knowledge and provide new popular music history discourses, through multiple voices and multiple narratives. This means extending the research field to include what Kirk and Sellen call the Human-Computer Interface discipline. Kirk and Sellen (2010), suggest the development of what they term the ‘integrated digital archive’, which, in essence, is a single integrated database. Such a system, they suggest, would allow for flexible organisation, for the creation of new digital collections, and for associations within those materials which would provide ways to search through networked connections (pg 36). Can we now begin to see an opportunity where individual and distinct online music archives have a single, standardised, technological base from which to build their practices, a base which links to other popular music archives and in turn, creates a powerful new popular music history, built from multiple narratives drawn from multiple voices?

I have also drawn attention to the recent policy activity around popular music heritage, in particular, to Birmingham City Council’s recent report (2012). Such reports highlight what is at stake with music heritage practice as a wide range of institutions, organisations, individuals and communities contest whose music heritage is remembered, by whom and for what purpose. Undoubtedly there are economic, as well as cultural, interests at play here. Further research, then, is required to investigate the
relationship of popular music heritage policy, within wider traditional heritage policymaking and between the wide and diverse range of stakeholders within the popular music heritage discipline.

While I have restricted myself to online sites that pertain to the city of Birmingham, this can only be considered as a mere marker in staking out the territory. It is clear from this research that there is a growing field of online popular music archive practice and activity, which combines elements of individual and collective memory making, personal histories and archival practice. This field of activity is now so substantial and rich with material, that it is worthy of further scholarly attention. This research into online popular music archives has inevitably created more questions than can be answered in this paper. This research, then, has laid the foundation for the establishment of a field of study that speaks to, and calls for, greater collaboration from across the academic disciplines to systematically unpick the issues raised in this thesis. Issues that sit within the fields of study of popular music, cultural policy, history and archives, memory and memory making, media, and digital cultures. Such research into this newly emerging and sparsely populated area, inter, and multi-disciplinary in scope and approach, would I believe, aid in providing clearer methodologies for the field which will result in new understanding about popular music heritage and in turn lead to abundant research opportunities.

As Edward Hathaway wrote:
it is clear that local music reflects in some way the lives of the communities in which it is written or published. The importance of recognising and nurturing local pride should not be discounted, however. One writer has observed that collections of local music are often “created out of local pride, preserving past, present, and future efforts and contributions, and giving recognition to deserving individuals. People are commonly identified with their place of birth, and the local music archivist should take this fact into account. (1989 pg 488)

More than at any time in the past, the academy, professional and amateur music archivists, and historians are being confronted with multiple voices and multiple narratives that support Hathaway’s statement but also challenge dominant and traditional popular music histories, and it is here, I have argued, that research should now be directed.
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**Electronic Resources**

Birmingham History Forum


Facebook

a) Barrel Organ Group:


b) Bogarts Group: [http://www.facebook.com/groups/22536038106/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/22536038106/)
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c) Crown Punks Group: http://www.facebook.com/groups/108486069179177/

Accessed 15/12/2011

d) Upstairs at the Mermaid: http://www.facebook.com/groups/77042988445/

Accessed 15/12/2011


Appendix

Online Popular Music Archive and History Sites


Coventry Music History: http://coventrymusichistory.typepad.com/blog/ Accessed 13/05/2011.


The Pirate Archive: http://www.thepiratearchive.net/ Accessed 13/05/2011.
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Uncommon People: http://uncommonpeople.co.uk/ Accessed 13/05/2011.

Women’s Liberation Music Archive: