KULA
Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies

The Oral History of Photographs: Collaboration, Multi-Level Engagement, and Insights from the Adrian Paton Collection

Craig Harkema and Keith Carlson

Cite this article

Article abstract

This paper outlines notable features of the Adrian Paton Photo and Oral History Collection at the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) and discusses aspects of the relationships formed between the local collector, faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, the SHFS, and members of the community-based cultural heritage digitization project during the collection's creation and curation. We also outline the benefits and challenges for university-led digital projects that seek to partner with a wide range of participants, with a focus on community members, local organizations, and students enrolled in programs at their institution. Additionally, we discuss the transformative potential of such partnerships for academic institutions and what to consider when entering into collaborations of this nature.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Oral History of Photographs: Collaboration, Multi-Level Engagement, and Insights from the Adrian Paton Collection

Craig Harkema[1] and Keith Carlson[2]

[1] University Library, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

[2] Department of History, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

Corresponding author: Craig Harkema (craig.harkema@usask.ca)

This paper outlines notable features of the Adrian Paton Photo and Oral History Collection at the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) and discusses aspects of the relationships formed between the local collector, faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, the SHFS, and members of the community-based cultural heritage digitization project during the collection's creation and curation. We also outline the benefits and challenges for university-led digital projects that seek to partner with a wide range of participants, with a focus on community members, local organizations, and students enrolled in programs at their institution. Additionally, we discuss the transformative potential of such partnerships for academic institutions and what to consider when entering into collaborations of this nature.

Keywords: photograph collections; oral history; community engagement; digitization; collaboration

Introduction

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) has spread beyond its original home in the social sciences and is now increasingly common in the humanities. Libraries and archives are likewise beginning to embrace the exciting opportunity of reimagining their roles within the context of community partnerships. Such relationships hold the potential to transform librarians and archivists into intellectual interlocutors and knowledge co-creators rather than simple information providers and research service aids. In recent years, the University of Saskatchewan Library has embraced such opportunities by collaborating with university faculty members, students, and community organisations to produce the Adrian Paton Collection, a digital collection of culturally valuable photographic and oral history material made possible only through the cooperation of these partners.

  In the spring of 2012, Adrian Paton, an elderly collector and local historian in Arcola, Saskatchewan, invited the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) to digitize his voluminous collection of historical photos. The work quickly became more than simple digitization, however, as the SHFS recognized the value not only in the images as historical artifacts, but also in the oral history provenance carried by Paton. When the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society decided to record Paton's commentary on the photographs, the project expanded and transformed into a hybrid visual-audio project. Curating a digital oral history that captured Paton's historical consciousness, and then making both the images and Paton's voice accessible to a wide audience, necessitated collaboration with additional partners. The first was the University of Saskatchewan's Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity (ICCC), which provided matching funds to hire and train an undergraduate student to spend several weeks with Paton in Arcola digitizing his photographs and recording his oral history. The University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library and Saskatchewan History Online (SHO) provided additional expertise in database management and digitization techniques in the humanities. Several years later, as the project progressed, the U of S Department of

History's Community-Engaged History Collaboratorium partnered a second time with SHFS to train and help supervise new students who transcribed Paton's interviews, worked with SHFS staff to create metadata, and ultimately participated in face-to-face meetings with the descendants of Indigenous people depicted in some of the historical photographs. The knowledge about the content of the photos and the context in which they were taken could be genuinely co-created by a new generation. In this way, the project provided U of S students with experiential learning opportunities in community-engaged scholarship, in methodologies in digital humanities, and in oral history. But more importantly, the digitization initiative enriched the original Paton photo collection by not merely making it openly accessible via the world wide web, but by building lines of communication between different communities and organizations that in turn resulted in the development of systems of genuine power sharing that enabled SHFS and Indigenous communities to begin collaboratively working to create filters and protocols for curating the way (and ultimately *if*) the world accessed those images.

Ultimately, each of the partners in this complex web of relationships had overlapping but not necessarily identical objectives. As such, overall success was dependent upon clearly articulating and then collaboratively working towards the accomplishment of each participant's goals – a requirement that created challenges as well as new opportunities. These circumstances also provided several broad lessons that we feel are generally applicable to organizations such as libraries and archives and that might provide guidance as such institutions work to re-think their priorities. By embracing roles as supportive partners in the co-creation of knowledge rather than drivers and central figures in determining what gets preserved and how it gets communicated, librarians and archivists have the potential to become facilitators of grass roots heritage preservation and communication.

This paper speaks to the transformative potential of community partnerships as catalysts for the collaborative preservation and production of knowledge by taking the Paton project as an exemplary case. First, we situate the Paton Collection within the context of oral history and digital cultural heritage research as it relates to theories of historical consciousness and collective memory. Additionally, we discuss the challenges of digital cultural heritage projects (beyond cost and labour) when it comes to digitisation and the philosophical conundrums associated with archives, as well as provide examples of successful projects. Finally, we offer a close examination of how the cooperation of partners involved with the Paton Collection circumvented obstacles, both those inherent to almost all collaborative relationships and those particular to this project.

The Adrian Paton Project(s)

Although Adrian Paton is not a photographer, he has a passion for historical photographs. He is particularly interested in those that reveal something about the history of his home province of Saskatchewan. Paton started collecting historical photographs of the province in the 1970s, when he was in his early 50s. By the time he contacted the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SFHS) in 2011, he had compiled an astounding collection of more than 8,000 photographs that spanned the 1870s to the 1960s (although the vast majority of his photos were taken in the first three decades of the twentieth century). While Saskatchewan, and in particular southeastern Saskatchewan, was his primary focus, Paton also collected photos of its two neighbouring provinces, as well as the Yukon, Ontario, and parts of the United States. A portion of the photos are duplicates available elsewhere, but most are one-of-a-kind images that provide unique glimpses into the lives of early Saskatchewan residents, both First Nation and European settler. In the end, roughly 850 of Paton's images were digitized, those that the SHFS—and Paton himself—considered the most unique (i.e. had not been published elsewhere) and those that shed light on topics not often well represented in the academic and popular histories of the province (i.e. photos of First Nations, women, children, and families). The collection is filled with images such as the one below (**Figure 1**), a photograph of a women's hockey team in Arcola, which serves as historical evidence of women's involvement in sport in small prairie communities.

Primarily, Paton's goal in contacting the SHFS was to find a way to make the images available to a broad audience. He did not want to donate the originals, at least for the time being, but he did want to find a platform to share the images. Although, given his age (Paton was born in 1928), he was concerned about what was going to happen to the collection in the future. Together, Paton and the SHFS reviewed and established a vision for the collection. They decided to digitize what Paton considered the most important images and make them available on the SHFS website. At this point, the SHFS already had a large historical photo collection of over 11,000 colour kodachrome slides donated by the society's founder, Everett Baker,
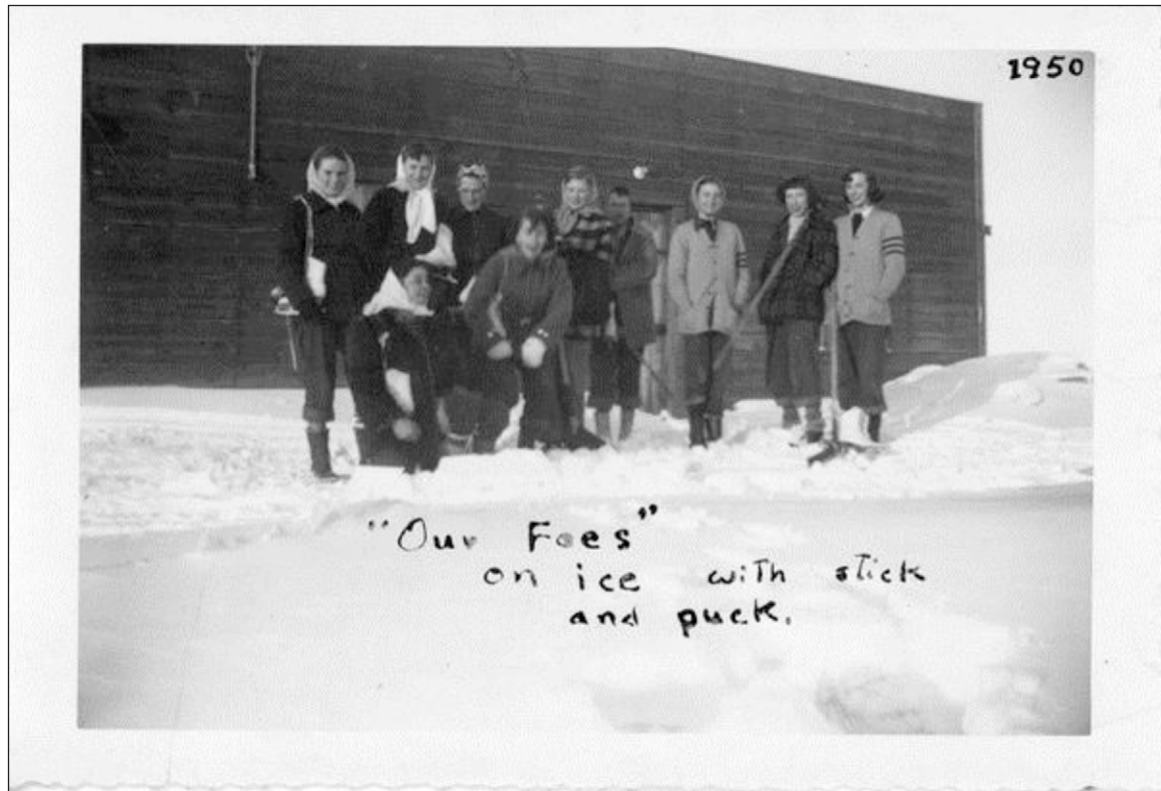
Figure 1: Arcola women's hockey team, 1950, from the Adrian Paton Collection. A player on the Redvers team took this photo in Redvers, Saskatchewan.

depicting rural Saskatchewan life in the 1940s and 1950s. These had recently been digitized through a partnership with Saskatchewan's Western Development Museum and, with assistance from students at the University of Saskatchewan's Education Technology class, made widely accessible through the development of the SHFS's new website. That SHFS already boasted an impressive collection of photos, and that members of the SHFS Board had demonstrated their sincerity and integrity by making several trips to Arcola to meet with Paton to try and understand his concerns and aspirations, paved the way, in the end, for the general agreement that this was the right platform for Paton's collection.

While the project was initially conceptualised as a collection of photographs, the SHFS board members quickly perceived the depth of Paton's knowledge about the content of the images in his collection and were impressed by his remarkable detective-like work tracking down and acquiring the photos, glass slides, and negatives from central Canada, the United States, and France. As such, they requested that Paton also allow them to make audio recordings of him discussing the photos as they were scanned. This was an effort to enrich the historical value of the tangible photographs with his intangible memories and recollections, and vice-versa. The intent of this collaborative project was to preserve and provide access to this provincially-significant heritage collection by not only making the Paton photos available but also the audio commentary to situate and contextualize the photos. In essence, the project was designed to be a digital oral history that captured Paton's historical consciousness as represented by his photo collection. As a collaborative digital research initiative that involved making the photographs, audio files, and metadata available online, the question remained as to just how these files and descriptions would be made accessible to users around the world. Fortunately for those interested in Mr. Paton's collection, collaboration was not only possible, but allowed for useful, if unforeseen, publication options.

In order to make the content available online, the SHFS and ICCC needed a partner who had expertise in digitization and digital humanities, and ideally a partner who already had some degree of expertise in the province's social and cultural history. Saskatchewan History Online fit this profile perfectly. SHO is an initiative funded by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and supported by the University Library at the University of Saskatchewan. Its goal is to help various Saskatchewan heritage institutions and collectors create digital collections that people from around the world can explore and use. SHO provided the history
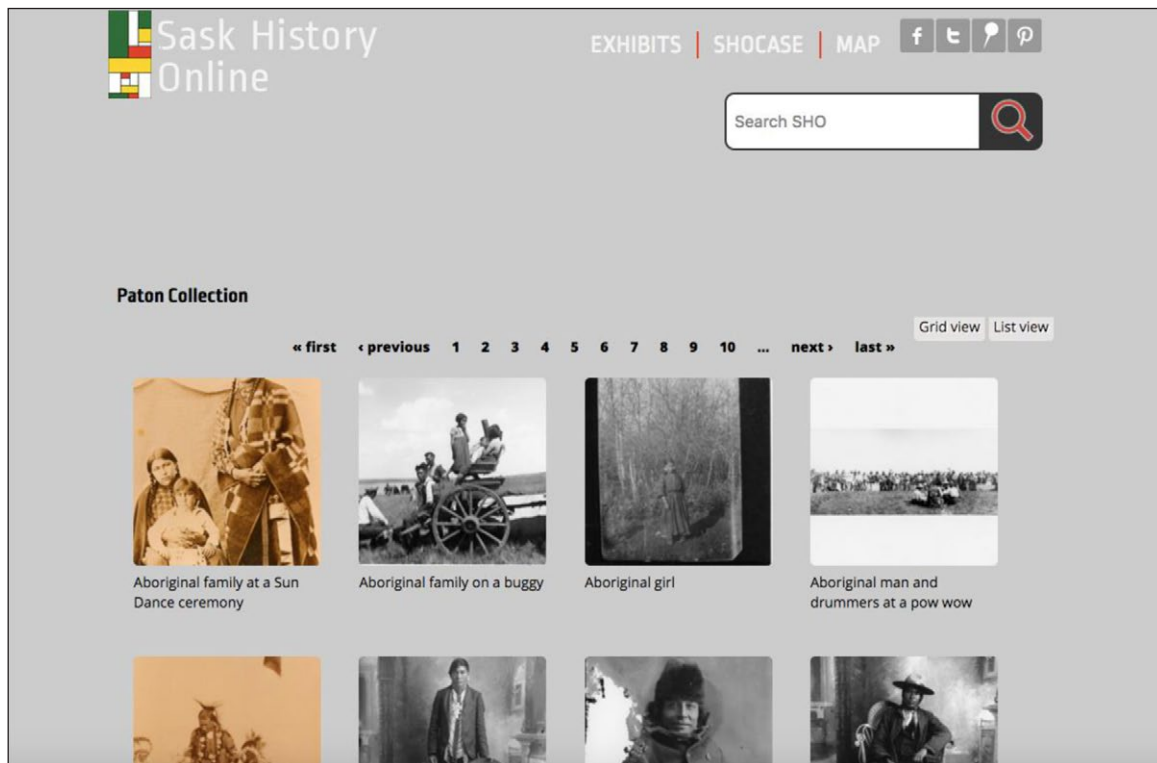
Figure 2: Adrian Paton Collection as it appears in Sask History Online.

students working with Mr. Paton with a scanner, two laptops, and some technical training for the task that lay ahead. SHO staff trained the students to create metadata for the images and audio/video files, and also how to work with the technology to digitize the materials based on current standards and best practices (**Figure 2**). By fusing the goals of the SHFS, ICCC and SHO, the project turned into a multi-website oral history that included written text and oral testimony that was unexpected, but immediately embraced by all parties.

While work with the digitized photos proceeded quickly, insufficient staff resources prevented substantial progress from being made with regards to transcribing and making the oral testimony available online. However, in the summers of 2015 and 2016 (with financial assistance from the Young Canada Works summer student employment initiative, as well as training and supervision of students through a new partnership initiative of the U of S History Department called the Community-Engaged History Collaboratorium), the interviews were fully transcribed and are now being uploaded to a revitalized SHFS website, created through a subsequent partnership with the U of S Library and SHO. Here, researchers will be able to listen to, or read, Adrian Paton's memories and recollections about how he acquired his photos as well as what he knows about their content.

Images, Orality, and Memory

With help from friends and friends of friends, Paton developed prints of several of these photographs himself from fragile glass negatives. But perhaps more impressive is that he has worked tirelessly in tracking down people who originally owned these photographs. One section of the Paton Collection that stands out is what Paton has titled "Aboriginal photographs" (**Figure 3**). A number of men and women from the White Bear Reserve came to Arcola Saskatchewan in the early decades of the twentieth century to have their portraits taken by the local photographer, Donald Buchanan, in his studio. These and other non-studio images of Indigenous people from throughout the southwest region of the province are striking: in some, the subjects are wearing traditional regalia, and in others, European-style clothing. Some have even brought flags and other ritual and symbolic materials to the photograph studio. And while the motivations behind the participation of the Indigenous people who came to Buchanan's studio remain elusive, Paton's knowledge of Buchanan and his aspirations as a photographer enabled the roughly 150 images of indigenous people in

Figure 3: Image entitled "White Bear Indians" from the Adrian Paton Collection in SHO at: http://saskhistoryonline.ca/islandora/object/paton%3A429.

this series to be curated specifically not to prevent Indigenous peoples' ongoing ability to engage with the collection and shape the messaging that emerges from the images.

Another unique dimension of the collection is the stories behind the photographs that Paton has compiled over the years. Typically archivists have only the products of a collector's actions (i.e. the collection itself) from which to try and infer provenance. But Paton's willingness to share his stories with the students, Eric Story and Sam Derksen (who took up residence with him for the two weeks when the digitization took place), made it possible to make his stories and narratives about the way he acquired the images, as well as his own reflections and interpretations on the content of the images, a parallel component of the collection. The recording of his stories resulted in the provenance of the collection not simply being a set of organizing principals used by archivists behind the scenes, but resources that visitors and researchers can engage with themselves.[1] And importantly, the time Paton spent with the students forged friendships that still last today.

The oral history of the Paton Collection is what makes this photograph collection unlike most. Photographs can be quite powerful, but once unknown faces are given names, undisclosed locations are discovered, and the context in which the photographs were originally taken and in which the images came to be part of the Paton Collection revealed, stories emerge with more multifaceted meanings: the images become relatable, placed within a narrative, and more than just 'nice pictures.' This rich background helps the viewer/listener to immerse him or herself in the time period, so that he or she may have a better understanding of what life was like for people from diverse cultural backgrounds in early twentieth-century Saskatchewan. Of course, the recording of Paton's voice does privilege a particular narrative – and the role and view of a particular protagonist (Paton) in that narrative. But this layer of interpretation is presented on the website as a point

---

[1] For example, see http://saskhistoryonline.ca/islandora/object/paton%3A759 archived at: https://perma.cc/S3TG-V5G4.

of entry for further and deeper conversation that, in turn, holds the potential to enrich the collection by facilitating the sharing of diverse interpretations. When the collection was only available in physical form in Paton's private collection, he had the last word; his was the last voice. But in the digital online version, curated by the SHFS with their broader collaborative mandate, Paton's words are transformed into the first voice in what is by definition an expansive conversation where others are invited to challenge, supplement, enhance, or contradict as they see fit.

Oral History and Photograph Collections: Literature Review and Environmental Scan

The history of collaboration associated with Paton's photograph and oral history collections raise interesting theoretical and methodological questions. In the process of archiving artifacts intertwined with oral histories, it is possible to obscure or sever the connection present prior to accession. The Paton collaboration exemplifies the value in preserving these ties and allowing the formats to speak across the archive. Projects initiated within communities and aimed explicitly at linking the process of collection and preservation with communication and interpretation necessitate fresh consideration of how tangible historical objects (such as photographs) relate to the intangible heritage resources of memory and historical consciousness. Community-engaged archiving and interpreting necessitate different approaches to both archival accessioning and digital curation. The unique properties of oral histories account not only for knowledge of an object's provenance but also the historical consciousness associated with the collector's act of collecting and his or her ever-changing interpretation of the object and its meaning. However, opportunities and challenges are also introduced that push the boundaries of what constitute best practices and guidelines for digitizing, describing, preserving, and interpreting image collections. This rich complexity ultimately points to the benefits of embracing a hybrid approach to the digital curation of these combined collections. This is especially significant if the opportunity arises to conduct the oral history interviews over a period of time through what might be referred to as 'sustained conversations' whereby the collector/interviewee as well as the interviewer are able to reflect upon earlier comments and provide supplemental or enriched feedback.

There are notable programs across the world that focus on the curation of digitized oral histories. The Smithsonian Institution's collection of oral histories and ethnographic audio recordings and the American Oral History Association's forum for oral history community-building both work to preserve the voices of largely marginalized communities. Similarly, the Canadian Oral History Association publishes a journal that balances content-driven articles with those that speak to methodological and disciplinary issues facing practitioners of oral history. Among the most dynamic and innovative of the newer digital oral history initiatives is Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) in Montreal. Independently, these digitization initiatives demonstrate the potential for oral history research and interpretation to be richly enhanced through thoughtful digital technological infrastructure with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships.

In part, all digital cultural heritage projects are efforts at addressing what historians refer to as the imbalance in our collective memory created through the politics of forgetting. Powerful corporate and state institutions produce and preserve massive volumes of historical records, and these holdings are inherently politicized; in as much as state- and corporate-funded archivists and records managers are primarily tasked with protecting *documents* (as opposed to stories) they are inevitably caught up in what Enrique Dussel has characterized as the "capitalization of history" (1998, 13). Through this process, culture and community become abstracted and over-simplified, and it follows that history, memory, and the past are likewise simplified. Thus, the challenge facing those of us involved in efforts to digitize and make available the photographic images and audio recordings is, as Sebastian Braun has recently articulated, instead, to recognize that it is listening that makes a text into a story—for in listening, we are necessarily counteracting the simplification and abstraction that creates archival documents (2013, 13).

Digital oral history collections, especially those linked to associated artifacts such as photographs or objects (like the Paton Collection), have the power to illuminate lost, submerged, and eclipsed stories. In this way, they contribute not only to creating a counter-balance to the historical metanarratives of powerful institutions, but they also reveal dimensions of the public's historical consciousness.

Distinct from history, historical consciousness refers to the way people understand their history at a certain period in time – the way many Anglo Canadians living in the 1980s might have understood Canadian involvement in the First World War for example, or the way that Adrian Paton might have understood the motivation behind early twentieth-century Eastern Canadian photographers who came

to the Canadian prairies with their Kodak Brownies to snap images of Indigenous people. In Canada, the study of historical consciousness has been led by Peter Seixas (Seixas 2004; Ercikan and Seixas 2015). Seixas' scholarship has helped to shape and inspire a range of new historiography that seeks not merely to determine what the dominant society *did* in the past, but rather try to assess *how* marginal groups *understand* and *remember* the past – and in turn to uncover the implications of such perceptions for society as a whole. In other words, it is not simply what happened or occurred in the past that shapes people's experiences. The meaning people bring to their experiences (filtered through cultural, gendered, and ethnic lenses), and the ways in which these perceptions and understandings change over time as new information is acquire and internalized, works to shape their behaviour in the present. Within the context of Community-engaged Scholarship (CES), one scholar who has been especially active in applying the theoretical insights of historical consciousness to interpreting Indigenous people's perceptions of the past has been Keith Carlson (Carlson 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011). As a team member on the Paton project (and a co-author of this paper) Carlson's earlier experience trying to account for historical consciousness as something distinct from "history" proved useful in expanding the parameters of the criteria used in defining provenance for the Paton Collection. In particular, they ensured that new information and appraisals of the images and oral history records acquired from guests accessing the collection through the website were not merely adjudicated according to criteria of what was "provable."

Conceiving of the Paton photo collection (and especially those images dealing with Indigenous people, women, children, and labour) within the context of historical consciousness has the potential to transform the images and the oral histories into powerful counterbalances to the politics of forgetting associated with standard pioneer histories of the Canadian prairies – histories that emphasized hardy European settlers struggling to make a living off of lands that appear to be naturally agricultural (rather than created spaces). There were several hundred such images within the Paton Collection that had never been published before – indeed that were completely unique in so far as we could determine. These images showed Indigenous people participating in sacred Sun Dance ceremonies,[2] involved in various forms of work and labour activities, in candid domestic settings, and in forums where they were delivering explicitly political messages about their rights, title, and culture for a settler/colonial audience.

The stories behind (and associated with) some of these images are in some instances relatively straightforward for a contemporary viewer (with any background in Indigenous history) to read/see. In other cases, however, the messages are opaque and obscured behind stereotypical tropes that may have been the products of the photographer's agenda or perhaps the efforts of Indigenous people depicted in the images to live up to settler expectations (**Figure 4**). The assumptions and understandings that contemporary viewers bring to such images reveal information about the present (what people know, what they have forgotten, what they have invented, and what they expect to see) that are almost as important as factual knowledge about the past itself. In having university students interview Paton as each individual image was scanned, we acquired not only glimpses into the historical consciousness of an elderly non-Indigenous man who found First Nations photographs interesting, but through Paton's prior research, also insights into the intentions and assumptions of the photographers who took the photos a century or more ago. Paton's meticulous efforts to determine the context behind each image (information he held primarily in his memory and nowhere else) revealed the extent to which some photographers, such as Donald Buchanan and H.H. Pittman, were sympathetic towards Indigenous people. Buchanan and Pittman seemingly anticipated the interest of future generations (i.e. Paton, the university students, and the audience who can now view the images online) by regarding their work as preserving valuable photographic representations of their subjects and the historical context.

Unlike the study of history, which is ostensibly about finding the best and most accurate historical interpretation of the past based on evidence, the study of historical consciousness is interested in what people know (and what think they know – not always the same thing) about the past. As Steven High, the director of the COHDS has cogently pointed out, oral history of the sort that speaks to historical consciousness is premised upon the notion that it is the very subjectivity of oral history that gives it its most profound intellectual weight. Subjectivity renders oral history (and thereby historical consciousness) different from, and not merely a supplement to, documentary history. This shifts, as High notes, the process from simply "knowing about" into a process that necessitates "knowing with" (High 2014). The digitization

---

[2] Due to the sensitive nature of these images, and that fact that regardless of whether the original photographer acquired the consent of the Indigenous people captured in the images, those of Paton's photos showing Sun Dance and other private ceremonials have been restricted and are not readily available to the general public through websites.

Figure 4: Donated by Barry, Bud and Murray Buchanan and available in SHO at: http://saskhistoryonline.ca/islandora/object/paton%3A333#.

of the Paton Collection has made it possible for people from around the world to access the images and to both add to the knowledge that Paton brought and refine and focus the assumptions that other viewers bring. The SHFS has explicitly sought to pursue both dimensions of these opportunities through a two-pronged communication and research strategy. By sponsoring summer research interns over a two-year period (through the University of Saskatchewan's Community-Engaged Collaboratorium) the SHFS has been able to group and organize the photos according to sophisticated metadata schemes that allow photos that were previously regarded as separate and individual to "speak to each other." With the assistance of these trained students, the SHFS has been able to make culturally sensitive approaches to First Nations communities whose ancestors are depicted in the photographs. SHFS staff and Collaboratorium students were then able to arrange for a series of visits to various Indigenous communities where small groups of Elders and other knowledge keepers were able to look at, and hold, printed copies of the photos and engage in conversations about both the content and context of the photos. In these instances, recorded information from Paton's oral histories was shared by the SHFS staff with the Elders to become part of the conversations. This enabled voices from different generations and across cultural gulfs to collaborate in creating a new historical consciousness.

Why do this sort of work?

Digitizing collections held by private collectors that have not been donated or loaned to an archive or library is uncommon. Concerns over the conditions of the storage of the materials as well as the access to the physical objects are usually enough to prevent formal partnerships of this nature. Perhaps the main reason GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) are reticent in this scenario is because providing access to digitized content often generates a considerable amount of interest in seeing the

Figure 5: Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society homepage.

original. This naturally leads to related reference questions that can be a challenge for organizations because these supplementary reference services cannot be carried out in traditional ways. Additionally, formal agreements pertaining to rights and use are commonly associated with collections that have been purchased or donated and are contained within the physical walls of a GLAM. In light of these issues, we argue the collecting and presenting of oral history content requires a different approach, one that may be useful for mixed collections such as the Paton Collection.

Conducting oral history interviews, whether for private research purposes or online public access, requires formal legal agreements and an understanding of the rights of the interviewer and interviewee. This process involves a host of ethical questions which must be addressed as fully as possible before the interviews are even conducted. Universities and organizations like SHFS have ethics guidelines and procedures; however, each project initiative with an individual or an organization is inherently unique. While it is the personal relationship that facilitates the sharing and exchange of information (digital images, oral histories, etc.) formalized procedures such as ethics approval and legalistic consent forms are essential in that they serve as the mechanism for resolving disputes or misunderstandings that might arise, and certainly they are the foundational records upon which unanticipated future use will be based. More important than the technical aspect of each collaborative research project is the building of personal trust between individuals (not to mention the legal contracts and agreements between institutions and legal entities). For that reason,

these projects must necessarily start slowly and allow for pauses where individuals like Adrian Paton or organizations like the SHFS can take stock and reflect upon the process and the expected outcomes. An undertaking like the Paton Collection necessarily involves gestures of good will, elements of self-sacrifice, and a dedication to listening to and being attentive to any concerns or apprehensions that the community partner might experience over the course of the relationship – considerations that have not always been integrated into historical collections like it (**Figure 5**).

The relationships between institutions and individuals or communities are often complex and call into question the intent of the archive – a contested term that has countless meanings, traditions, and associations with personal, governmental, and cultural figures or groups. In this line of discourse, questions concerning the changing nature of the archive and how those responsible for them are addressing these challenges are paramount. Mike Featherstone outlines the often-conflicting objectives of the archive:

> The custodians of the archive, the trustees, archivists, librarians and curators are pulled in a number of contradictory directions. There is the conflict between storing and access: the view that the archive should be as exhaustive as possible and should collect and house as wide a range of significant documents, which clashes with the view that archives should be more open to the public. With regards to storage, should the focus be on received traditions and the canon, or on local knowledge and diversity? How are decisions on what to collect, what to store, what to throw away and what to catalogue? Today this is not just a question of which material to put on shelves in the stack and which to leave in unlabelled boxes in the back-rooms, but how to deal with potentially unstable electronic archives. (2006, 593)

We believe a collaborative focus provides a solution to many of the philosophical conundrums of the archive. Working with collections in conjunction with collaborators, on campus and off, provides the library/archive a more precise alignment with the needs of the user and the access and preservation requirements of the collection. Rather than attempting to fulfil the needs of a vast, general user group that is difficult to identify, well-defined partnerships allow more effective use of resources and virtually guarantee use of the collection in whatever form it takes — whether physical (preservation and access to the material, exhibits) or digital (preservation and access of digital files, exhibits, tool development etc.).

To this point, digital libraries have underplayed their potential to act as humanities labs or to work with groups and individuals on campus in a way that addresses some specific challenges library and information studies professionals, as experts, are competent with: preservation, digital curation, data and records management, and metadata creation – to name a few. Attempting to provide broad access and preservation to large and undefined collections is not sustainable and not always useful. For example, although SHO should be considered a success in terms of establishing a framework, creating a technical infrastructure, and building relationships outside of the library, the initial lack of focus and broad mandate consumed a great deal of energy and resources. The focused, community-engaged Paton project, with the enthusiasm that came from the SHFS partners who sought to drive the project forward to completion, became more productive as it was more immediately relevant and meaningful to people outside of academia.

The most useful content and components of this project, therefore, seem to be the result of working directly with individuals and organizations on a project that has a concentrated focus. Working with the SHSF on the Paton Collection is one such example. Indeed, as the Paton Collection project demonstrated the following year, having a focus can also lead to unanticipated supplemental outcomes. The combined emphasis on tangible photographic objects with the intangible oral histories associated with the collector's historical consciousness led the University of Saskatchewan to implement an innovative new program through the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach that provides storage and specialized access for oral content from faculty and graduate student researchers on campus.

Cultural Memory

Collaborations between archivists and scholars are critical to establishing sustainable oral history programs that serve both scholarly and community needs. Libraries that want to provide support for new oral history creation, along with developing better access and use of existing collections, would benefit from strong partnerships with established scholars in the field. According to Ellen Swain, "archivists who used oral history to supplement existing documentation were joined by historians who capitalized on oral sources to understand those members of society with little or no documentary record" (2003, 141). Swain goes

on to outline the history of archival philosophy, from neutrally collecting cultural memory to inevitably contributing to the "multiple truths" of the postmodern perspective (147). Swain discusses some of the challenges, both philosophical and technical, facing archivists and librarians who engage in creating oral histories. Among the issues are concerns over professional biases, lack of time, conflicting responsibilities of the archivist/librarian, and the technical challenges of digital preservation and access. Again, our experience in the Paton project leads us to suggest that many of these challenges can be addressed more effectively through strategic collaborations. For example, the increased capacity associated with the initial partnership between SHFS and SHO enabled SHFS to successfully secure additional resources and academic allies to revitalize their oral history collecting mandate – an initiative that had been dormant since the 1980s. With support from the U of S History Department, the SHFS was able to secure funding to employ several top students to serve as summer interns to digitize and create metadata associated with the 1980s oral history interviews while also conducting new interviews with several of Saskatoon's newest residents. The partnership with the SHFS also sponsored an undergraduate oral history class where students not only studied the history of recent immigration and refugee migration to Saskatchewan, but actually worked through a corollary partnership with the Open Door Society to have students conduct interviews with recently arrived newcomers to Saskatoon.

The effective distribution of effort, time, and expertise provides opportunities for projects to come together in more focused and useful ways. For libraries and archives to continue working in this area they must actively embrace and even create the possibilities inherent in Swain's observation that "Oral history will have an important documentary role in the twenty-first century as more and more information, crucial to historical understanding, is disseminated over electronic media" (2003, 148). This is particularly true of projects like the Paton project digitization, where multiple media can be brought together to provide a better foundation for understanding and collaboration.

Inclusive Cultural Heritage

Melissa Terras challenges us to consider the implications of the fact that amateurs are often better at creating digital resources than formal memory institutions (i.e. libraries and archives) at connecting with their audience (2010, 426). To move beyond the criticism and embrace the possibilities imbedded in Terras' observation requires archivists and librarians shift their perspective away from thinking of themselves as the sole authorities of preservation and conservation to an entirely different perspective where their role is to nimbly respond to initiatives emerging at the grassroots level from community partners. From this supportive position these professionals and their institutions can reimagine themselves as enablers of community partners who themselves play a key role in identifying not only what is important but the criteria against which importance is judged. Photographs and local history were of interest to Mr. Paton for many years; however, he did not have the capacity to organize and digitize his collection, nor did he have a strategy for making the collection easily and meaningfully accessible to the public. The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society had a mandate to work toward the preservation, interpretation, and communication of both tangible and intangible heritage resources, and the community connections to identify opportunities in this field, but they did not have the equipment or the technical expertise to make social history and folkloric resources available in a digital form to a wide audience. The University of Saskatchewan, meanwhile, had recently begun to talk about engagement in ways that disentangle it from old-fashioned "outreach" or "extension" (where faculty took the results of their research and shared it with communities). The emerging vision is one that distinguishes engagement from outreach so as to highlight the distinct methods and processes that are involved in genuinely community-engaged scholarship, and where faculty and academic units on campus work to be responsive to research priorities that emerge from communities. Good, community-engaged scholarship, by definition, requires community partners be involved not only in designing the research initiative but in being involved in conducting the research and in interpreting and communicating the results of that research. In the end, CES is not just about doing the same thing in a new way, it is about finding new ways to do new things, and using community identified needs as guides for charting the course of scholarly research programs.

The act of partnering does not necessarily meet everyone's needs and aspirations. Even though SHO has provided a space for significant amount of content and has made it accessible alongside many academic and publicly funded memory institutions, its large scope, broad target audience, and one-time funding model, makes it difficult to sustain connections to communities of invested users. By contrast, the SHFS, primarily through the work of social-media savvy summer students, have seen remarkable growth in online engagement with the Paton photo collection (and, to a lesser extent, the oral history files). In June
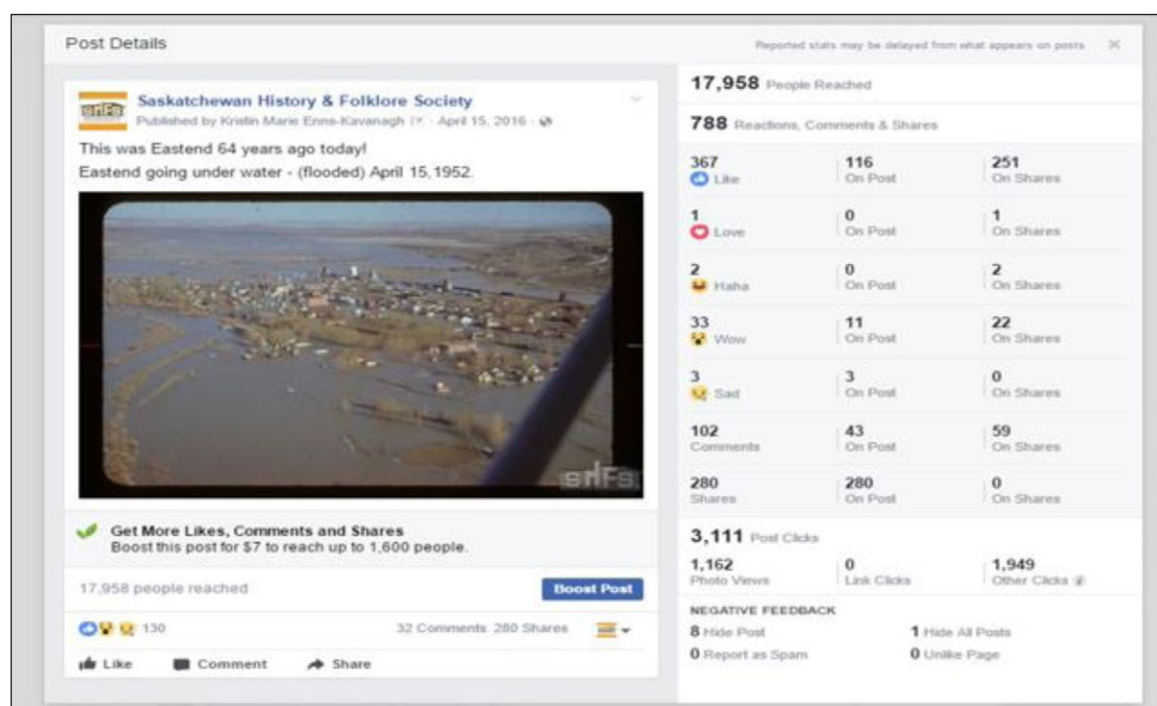
Figure 6: Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society Facebook statistics.

2016, for example, images from the Paton Collection posted to the new SHFS Facebook page, promoted by the SHFS Twitter account, reached over 17,000 people and a groundswell of supportive users from all age demographics are increasingly commenting upon, and adding further context to, the images that SHFS highlight on Facebook (see **Figure 6**. In this regard, SHO assumes more of a behind-the-scenes profile than was at first anticipated, but the overall goals of the partners are being met in unanticipated ways.

Unforeseen factors like the rapidly growing social media presence of SHFS have helped the Paton Collection reach a wider and more engaged audience, albeit in new and surprising ways. This is an interesting observation to make for GLAMs – and confirms the observations of Terras that despite higher quality digitization, metadata, and digital asset management systems, amateur websites often see much more use than their institutional counterparts (2010, 432). This, in turn, raises the questions: what type of "use" is desired and how should success be measured? The success of amateur sites are typically a result of relationship building rather than simple access provision. This suggests a more thoughtful, engaging, and focused approach to digital curation from larger initiatives is in order.

The Paton Collection provides us with an opportunity to build relationships with people across the province and to do so in a multi-format way that recognizes that digital access has not, and likely will not, replace all other forms of communication. Using the high resolution scans created through the SHO partnership, the SHFS has also created a traveling physical exhibit that highlights roughly 40 of the most evocative of Paton's photos. The exhibit consists of printed images and text displayed on an eight-foot-tall and ten-foot-long double-sided exhibit stand. Accompanying the traveling exhibit is a teachers' guide that provides elementary school teachers with lesson plan activities that incorporate the Paton images directly into the provincially approved curriculum. SHFS launched the exhibit in November 2015 and it garnered attention throughout Saskatchewan with bookings that extended well into 2017.

In addition to the SHFS traveling exhibit and the online exhibit in SHO, access to additional items and alternative points of contact (such as the mobile-friendly app, Historypin) are being considered. The make-up of this partnership also provides a built-in audience as the members of the SHFS are spread throughout the province, attending events and participating in activities throughout the course of the year.

In the end, it is the potential for these infrastructures to create the sort of links between quality information sources that Tim Berners-Lee envisioned so many years ago.

Useful metadata and content shared between archives (however defined) further enriches and distributes the kinds of CES we have described above. The possibilities for contextualizing (and decontextualizing) and

connecting resources are unlimited. Or as Beer and Burrows suggest, "We can begin to see how data generated moves between archives and how archives feed into one another – we can also begin to think about how these '*agencements*' – the manner in which 'agency and action are contingent upon and constituted by the sociotechnical arrangements that make them up' [Ruppert] – enact subjectivity and produce populations" (2013, 52). Working with the community throughout the digitization lifecycle can help ensure the content is developed to be most useful to those who use it the most, be they the digital curators, the people depicted in the images, or the end users.

Conclusion

Complex multi-partner relationships of the kind that emerged in the Adrian Paton project are very much in line with the direction many progressive memory institutions believe they should be taking. In fact a major report put out by the Council of Canadian Academies, *Leading in the Digital World,* highlights this area as one of the most critical to the nation's memory institutions in the coming years: "digital projects, which may be national or even international, must establish roots in the community in order to succeed" (Council of Canadian Academies 2015, xiv). It is a simple enough statement, but one we feel needs to be understood as a complicated process that, despite its intricacies and inevitable difficulties, should be at the core of any successful digital initiatives program. While this does not seem revolutionary, embracing this philosophy in an academic institution may seem at odds with these organizations' missions. It is important to clarify, therefore, that we are not suggesting that publicly funded universities should be under obligations to make information available to a citizenry that extends beyond faculty and students. Nor are we advocating that universities should adopt policies that see them providing digital resource services to communities simply because communities approach them with requests, although there may be occasions when this is appropriate. Rather, our point is that university library staff need to be coordinating their activities so that their skills and resources are deployed as components of larger CES partnerships that are being forged between faculty and communities. Libraries, in other words, should position themselves so that they are regarded by faculty and communities as integral partners in all stages of CES research initiatives, and not merely as preservers and providers of already completed scholarship. What better way for libraries and archives to build collections that are of research interest than involving researchers firsthand in the delivery, metadata, outreach, preservation, and access to primary source materials?

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

References

Beer, David, and Roger Burrows. 2013. "Popular Culture, Digital Archives and the New Social Life of Data." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30(4): 47–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276413476542

Braun, Sebastian, (ed.). 2013. *Transforming Ethnohistories: Narrative, Meaning, and Community.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Carlson, Keith Thor. 2005. "Rethinking Dialogue and History: The King's Promise and the 1906 Aboriginal Delegation to London." *Native Studies Review* 16(2): 1–38.

Carlson, Keith Thor. 2006. "The Indians and the Crown: Aboriginal Memories of Royal Promises in Pacific Canada." In: *Majesty in Canada*, edited by Colin Coates, 68–97. Edinburgh, Scotland: Dundurn Press.

Carlson, Keith Thor. 2007. "Toward An Indigenous Historiography: Events, Migrations, and the Formation of 'Post-Contact' Coast Salish Collective Identities." In: "*Be of Good Mind": Essays on the Coast Salish*, edited by Bruce G. Miller, 138–81. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Carlson, Keith Thor. 2010. *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Carlson, Keith Thor. 2011. "Orality About Literacy: The 'Black and White' of Salish History." In: *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines,* edited by Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, 43–72. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.Centre for Oral History and Storytelling. Concordia University. http://storytelling.concordia.ca/, archived at: https://perma.cc/2Z89-KGUZ.

Council of Canadian Academies. 2015. *Leading in the Digital World: Opportunities for Canada's Memory Institutions.* Ottawa, ON: The Expert Panel on Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution,

Council of Canadian Academies. http://www.scienceadvice.ca/uploads/eng/assessments%20and%20 publications%20and%20news%20releases/memory/CofCA_14-377_MemoryInstitutions_WEB_E.PDF.

Dussel, Enrique. 1998. "Beyond Ethnocentrism: The World System and the Limits of Modernity." In: *The Cultures of Globalization,* edited by Frederic Jameson, and Masao Miyoshi, 3–31. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ercikan, Kadriye, and Peter Seixas, (eds.) 2015 *New Directions in Assessing Historical Thinking.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Featherstone, Mike. 2006. "Archive." *Theory, Culture, Society* 23(2–3): 591–596. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406023002106

High, Steven. 2014. *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Seixas, Peter, (ed.). 2004. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Swain, Ellen D. 2003. "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century." *The American Archivist* 66(1): 139–158. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.66.1.9284q6r604858h40

Terras, Melissa. 2010. Digital curiosities: resource creation via amateur digitization. *Literary and Linguist Computing* 25(4): 425–38. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqq019