Collections of Trauma: Exploring Generative Frictions

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Abstract
Through this paper we identify systemic challenges that face efforts to ethically steward collections of trauma in a conflict-ridden world. Our scholarly reflections are grounded in the context of a centre being created to hold materials related to Canada's ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We report on initial discussions with those involved in the Centre's development and our ongoing review of court documents and media accounts related to the Centre. We call attention to the amalgamation of socio-technical, political, and legal structures that influence the actions of those managing collections of trauma. We highlight how those involved in the Centre's development (including the researchers) are participants in and descendants of Canada's legacy of colonizing initiatives. We identify generative frictions related to issues of conflict, plurality, agency, and distrust that underlie the design and management of collections of trauma. These reflections guide our ongoing investigation.

1   Introduction

Through this paper we identify systemic challenges that face efforts to steward collections of trauma. There are deliberate efforts around the world to curate material related to human atrocities with aspirations to acknowledge, learn from, and perhaps lessen the probability of further harm. Still, there remain ethically fraught questions of *how* to do this work. Understandings of the potentiality of the material within the collections (e.g., records, images, testimonials) and the information systems that hold them are shifting, in part, because professionals are attempting to develop practices that account for pluralistic understandings of these materials (e.g., Caswell, 2010, 2014; McKemmish, Faulkhead, & Russell, 2011; Punzalan, 2005; White, 2009;). Yet, how do we take action while simultaneously acknowledging that: 1) there is no single *truth* when it comes to making sense of human activity, and 2) the many truths are not equally valid across situations (JafariNaimi, Nathan, & Hargraves, in press)? How do those who are tasked with designing and managing information systems that document horrendous events in human history guide their actions?

While the capabilities of contemporary digital tools increase the potential for diverse audiences to engage these collections, scholarship in the areas of multi-lifespan information system design (e.g. Friedman & Nathan, 2010), post colonial computing (e.g., Dourish & Mainwaring, 2012), traumatic collections (e.g. Caswell, 2013, Huskamp-Peterson, 2008; Wierviorka, 2006), and community archives (e.g. Bastian & Alexander, 2009; Caswell, 2014; Cook, 2013; Kumbier, 2014) articulate the challenges of doing so in ways that either avoid reifying and perpetuating past injustices or lead to a different system of inequalities.

Recognizing diversity within and across these collections and the unique conditions of each, our scholarly reflections are situated in the context of the National Research Centre (NRC) being created to hold records related to Canada's ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Milloy, 2014). We focus our inquiry on the design and implementation of information policies that guide the development and management of the collections, recognizing that policy instruments are necessary in an ever-shifting information ecosystem wherein tools and socio-political infrastructures evolve and cycles of interpretation are necessary (Braman, 2009). We recognize that materials related to injustice likely exist in all collections; however, we chose to work within the specificities of projects whose raison d'etre is to acknowledge and address harm.

We begin by framing our efforts in relation to inspiring scholarship, acknowledging archivists, technologists, critical thinkers, and philosophers who inform our work. We proceed to outline the context that grounds our thinking, Canada's recently established National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (hereafter the Centre) that is being created to house the digital and digitized materials related to the Commission. We position ourselves as researchers in relation to this context and discuss the material we draw upon as data to inform our inquiry. Finally, we identify and discuss three related areas of generative friction that face those working to develop the Centre, which in turn will inform the next phase of our project as we continue to investigate questions related to information policies that guide the creation and management of collections that document unjust events in a conflict-ridden world.

2   Traumatic Collections

For the purposes of this inquiry, we define traumatic collections as purposeful gatherings of materials that seek to include the records of disruptive, violent histories; efforts to document (e.g. via testimonials) these events; and/or the subsequent activities that engage truth telling, justice, and/or reconciliation. There has been an attempt in the twentieth century to document atrocities and build collections that facilitate inquiry into these events for purposes that range from legal redress, reconciliation and healing, scholarly research, pedagogical use, and activities of remembrance and commemoration. While the intentionalities of these projects share a broad, common goal of documenting atrocities and injustices, the projects range in areas of content, context, approach, and scope. Each collection carries with it the decisions made in selection, documentation, description, and access that inherently encompass issues of inclusion and exclusion as well as inevitable bias at all levels. Following are exemplars of such projects, selected to demonstrate the complexity of issues and diversity of decisions surrounding the stewardship of traumatic collections in contemporary socio-technical environments.

We begin by juxtaposing two collections of Holocaust testimonies: the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. The Fortunoff Video Archive has its roots in the community of New Haven, CT. In 1979 members of the community sought to document the experiences of local Holocaust survivors. The impetus for the collection, "to allow the survivor to speak," has informed its method of recording testimonies, which developed in stages (Wierviorka, 2006, p. 108). Deposited to Yale in 1981, the current collection counts over 4,400 testimonies. Access to the Fortunoff testimonies is facilitated by a searchable bibliographic database (both online and in-house). Each testimony is catalogued by geographic names and topics discussed in the testimonies (Yale University Library, 2009). While curated vignettes are viewable online and educational resources available by request, access to view the full testimonies occurs only on-site with the Archives open to the public by appointment, following a Western European archival access model.

In contrast, the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation established in 1994 by filmmaker Steven Spielberg "changed the scale of testimony collection" (Wierviorka, 2006, p. 110). Today, the collection is housed at the University of Southern California at the USC Shoah Institute of Visual History and Education and contains over 53,000 testimonies. The interview model for the USC Shoah testimonies differs from that of Yale in its "regulation" vis-à-vis fixed length, structure, and the inclusion of a section at the end of the interview that Wierviorka terms "the equivalent of the epilogue to *Schindler's List*" (2006, p. 114). At the conclusion of a Shoah testimony interview, the survivor is asked to leave a message indicating "what he or she would hope to leave as a legacy for future generations" (Wierviorka, 2006, p. 114) and, unless the survivor opposes it, his or her family is invited to reunite with the survivor on camera. The collection has also expanded beyond the Holocaust to include testimonies from the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide, 1917-38 Nanjing Massacre, and there are plans to include testimonies from the Armenian Genocide (USC Shoah Foundation, n.d.). The USC Shoah collection is indexed to one-minute segments with terms covering names, dates, geographic places, etc., designed to facilitate search via the web-based software developed for the project, Visual History Archive (VHA). Access to the VHA is through subscriber universities and institutions equipped with Internet2 capability.

Another collection example is related to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. The Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal is an online collection of 49 audiovisual interviews with personnel from the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) (Nathan et al., 2011). The interviews were conducted in 2008 by a research team from the Information School at the University of Washington, USA. The team of information scientists, legal experts, and videographers set out to document the reflections of

those involved in the ICTR and its processes, recording the personnel's "unique insight into the difficulties of attempting to achieve justice and reconciliation in response to the horrors of genocide" (University of Washington, 2009a). The interviews are presented in an online public platform that indexes each interview by the individual's role and categorizes them into sections such as "Defense," "Investigator," "Prosecutor," etc., as well as providing a time coded listing of some topics discussed at the level of the individual interview that act as points of entry. The project also facilitates public curation of the collection, inviting visitors to watch, tag, curate, and even download content to use in their own projects. Efforts have been taken to ensure encourage widespread use and verification of the content, including issuing the content under a Creative Commons Attribution License and ensuring users can verify the integrity of the video obtained from the online collection (University of Washington, 2009b).

The brief descriptions above show differences between the collections in terms of collection scope, documentation, access, and curation. The distinctive contexts of these collections, and the varied approaches to their management touched on above provide hints of the complex choices that led to their current manifestations. In part, it is the recognition that these distinctly positioned choices directly influence others' engagements with the collections' holdings that has led to calls to account for pluralism (e.g., Caswell, 2013).

3   Pluralism and the Collection

Cultural theories such as post-colonialism, feminism, and deconstructionism have informed critical scholarship across many fields related to information studies (e.g., Bardzell, 2010; Dourish & Mainwaring, 2012; Feinberg, 2012). In part, these theories challenge notions of neutrality, objectivity, and universalism, and information professionals continue to (re)imagine the implications of inter-subjective discourse on the design and management of information systems (e.g., Feinberg, 2012, Feinberg, Carter, & Bullard, 2014; Kumbier, 2014). It remains a difficult task to incorporate these critical perspectives into the work of designing and managing "real-world" information systems (as demonstrated by Halbert & Nathan, 2015). Recently computer scientists Borning and Muller (2012) suggested that drawing upon theories of pluralism, particularly when engaged in ethical (i.e., value sensitive) information system design, could help system designers address the challenges of inter-subjectivism.

Such calls are not new to archival scholars. Over a decade ago, Schwartz and Cook (2002) stressed the need to design more representative collections to challenge dominant accounts of history and to include materials that have been neglected or misrepresented by mainstream repositories. There is now a range of community-led archival projects by, with, and for marginalized social groups (Kumbier, 2014). In part, this work documents and preserves historical narratives that fall outside Western European approaches to archival acquisition that can perpetuate dominant power structures and negate alternative socio-political narratives (Caswell, 2014; Flinn 2009; Flinn, Stevens, & Sheperd, 2009).

Although not novel, conceptualizations of pluralism to inform archival practice (theory and education) are nascent, evolving, and, of course, multiple. As an example, McKemmish and Russell (2011) consider Indigenous philosophies of memory and oral record keeping in their work *Trust and Technology: Building Archival Systems for Indigenous Archival Memory*. The work represents an attempt to foster dialog between Western and Indigenous practices of memory through collaborative archival practice (McKemmish & Russell, 2011). The inclusion of both divergent and collaborative voices is meant to account for pluralism, in this case acknowledging multiple perspectives as a force to invigorate rather than stymie a commitment to stewarding records across time and space.

In her article, "On Archival Pluralism: What Religious Pluralism (And Its Critics) Can Teach Us About Archives", Caswell (2013) presents another interpretation of archival pluralism. Her version of archival pluralism includes a set of aspirational criteria. These criteria, which include critical self-reflection, attention to inequalities of power, and the valuation of dissent over cohesion, primarily assert that traditional archival notions such as records, evidence, and memory are contingent rather than fixed and, thus, are continually redefined through context. Caswell's archival pluralism is distinctive in that she claims that, although it is open to multiple perspectives and requires engagement with multiple and coexisting contextual realities, it cannot be undertaken through the dominant Western European model of archival theory and practice. Thus many, but not all, perspectives are put forward as possibilities.

In addition to these boundaries on pluralism, Caswell's work can be read as a call for information professionals involved in this work, through education and self-study, to understand all perspectives: "Our education is never finished. We must continually learn new languages, read outside of our areas of expertise, and challenge ourselves to confront ideas that push our boundaries and reach beyond our comfort zones" (Caswell, 2013, p. 285). This aspirational pronouncement calls into question professionals' obligations, responsibilities, and capabilities. She goes on to reflect, "I must continue the significant work of filling in the gaps in my own education, learning, for example, about indigenous philosophies and transgender politics and postcolonial theory" (2013, p. 286). Is she suggesting that there are certain philosophies and positionalities that archivists must understand, particular gaps that must be filled, or, that professionals should strive to understand all of them? Unchecked, this stance can slip into practices of appropriation as social groups may find it problematic and potentially harmful for outsiders to learn about community memory practices and other details of the group's culture. Caswell's form of pluralism appears to rest on the idea that it is through increased understandings on the part of the archivist, an über-awareness of multiple perspectives, that one works towards archival pluralism. Despite passages that state otherwise, portions of the writing describe archival pluralism as a universalizing, singular approach that can position anyone to understand a multiplicity of, if not all, perspectives.

For a different framing of pluralism that arises from human computer interaction scholarship, we turn to the design-oriented work of Durrant and her colleagues who studied archivists collecting and managing the Kigali Memorial Museum in Rwanda (Durrant, Kirk, & Reeves, 2014). Through their work they identify the importance of voice to the museum. They propose that other voices, those who might call into question aspects of the museum's story telling, have no place in the museum. Rather than suggest that this is a flaw in the museum's work, the authors suggest that this approach arises from the unique context of the collection and is integral to its position and identity.

> In the context of handling sensitive materials at KGM-DC, given the relationship between the staff as members of the survivor community and the archive materials, it seems problematic to suggest that diverse cultural values could be supported through ICT design for this institution, when the potential for appropriation of materials by those with differing and potentially opposing values is considered to be of serious concern. Interaction designers working with this community to develop ICT support to the archive would need to acknowledge the specificity of the cultural values at play within it. (Durrant et al., 2014, p. 2693)

In the discussion of their work, an awareness of and appreciation for pluralism is cited (via Borning & Muller, 2012). Here, pluralism refers to designers being aware that they will be working for and with peoples with different positionalities, and their work will need to acknowledge and speak to those positions. The collection and the system that houses it are not expected to be all things to all people (i.e. represent all perspectives) nor are the archivists supposed to be able to understand all positions. Rather an awareness and respect for pluralism guides the work of the designer so she or he realizes that different systems hold distinctly different stories based on the worldviews of those who enact the system. Here pluralism is in the awareness of difference across systems rather than an expectation that all differences can be represented by one system (Durrant, et. al., 2014).

We propose that a significant amount of intellectual and pragmatic work remains in order to deepen our understanding of ethical decision making around traumatic collections. How do we take action while simultaneously acknowledging that: 1) there is no single *truth* when it comes to making sense of human activity, and 2) the many truths are not equally valid across situations (JafariNaimi et al., in press)? It is in this turbulent arena that the collection for Canada's National Research Centre is taking shape.

4   Context

For more than 130 years, the government of Canada and the Catholic, Anglican, and United churches established and operated Indian Residential Schools for the "education" of Aboriginal children (Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, 2006). These institutions were part of a systemic, multi-pronged effort to address "the Indian Problem" by taking the "Indian out of the child." The schools' purpose was to limit or eliminate parental involvement in the socio-cultural development of Aboriginal children. In addition to removal from their loved ones, home, language, and land, additional horrific abuses were committed against many young children sent to these schools (further outlined in, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). The last residential school was closed in the mid 1990s.

The legacy of trauma from these experiences continues to influence survivors, the families of those sent to residential schools, their communities, and Canadian society.

In 2006, after decades of nation-wide silence and denial, federal court cases forced the Canadian government and religious organizations to work with residential school survivor societies to negotiate a settlement (Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, 2006). As a result of this agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created to investigate and address select portions of Canada's Indian Residential School history. The history of the TRC is far more convoluted than this presentation, but for more than five years, the current TRC commissioners (three) and their staff traveled across the vast Canadian countryside to bear witness to survivors' stories, conduct and write reports, and engage with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians to foster processes of truth telling and reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

In addition to establishing the Commission, the Settlement Agreement stipulates the creation of a national centre (the Centre) including the establishment of an archival repository. This collection related to the TRC is intended to be "as complete as possible" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2013) in an attempt to collect, preserve, and provide access to materials related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission including: the lives, family, and community experiences of Aboriginal peoples who attended residential schools; the creation, administration, and funding of the schools (including any abuses that occurred); as well as apologies, litigation, and attempted resolution. In addition, the Centre is charged with providing a safe environment for the ongoing collection of testimony from those directly affected by the schools. The archival repository is nested in the larger planned infrastructure of the NRC, which is intended to act as a broader centre of engagement, education, and research on residential schools and their impact on Aboriginal communities and cultures. There are no monies provided by the federal government or the churches for the NRC's development or operational budget. In 2013 the University of Manitoba won the bid to create the NRC. The Centre is scheduled to open in 2015, and plans are underway to have a series of partners or hubs across Canada as additional access points to the Centre's material (Rabson, 2013).

As noted, this research team is explicitly engaged with the development of the NRC out of Canada's TRC process. This paper is thus particularly focused on the practices and possibilities surrounding the creation, design, and management processes of collections with traumatic effects. Yet, this focus does not preclude the recognition that distressing materials are currently dispersed throughout and embedded within other collections that do not, as a whole, consider their content traumatic. This, in part, stems from the fact that these collections may be void of a context that acknowledges their potential harms or may exist within a framework that conceals or hides their traumatic implications (Kumbier, 2014). Additionally, in employing pluralism, it is recognized what may be a traumatic resource or collection for some is not for others. By focusing explicitly on entire collections framed as traumatic, it is not presumed that the practices will be directly transferable or applicable to instances of trauma that arise in archival contexts where this is not anticipated. Though, the generative frictions discussed here have the potential to bring insight regarding how to act in scenarios where trauma arises perhaps unexpectedly. Further, the development of more explicitly traumatic collections that, at times, entail the transfer of particular resources, reframing them as traumatic when this was previously concealed or unacknowledged, is a part of the process for designing and managing collections of trauma.

5   Positioning the Research Team

The research team consists of non-Indigenous people. As settlers in Canada we have direct experience with the ongoing, multi-faceted legacy of colonization in Canada (e.g., by living and working on the unceded, traditional, ancestral land of the Musqueam people, involuntary *hosts* of the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus). We make no claims of holding or having access to Indigenous perspectives. We are inspired by the political philosophy scholarship of Iris Marion Young (1990), highlighting the importance of *situated, reflective discussions* of justice and attempting to avoid making pronouncements that describe idealized, universalized, normative (in our case) information systems.

6   Research Approach

To date data for this inquiry has been drawn from two strands of inquiry: 1) written documents (court documents, media accounts, blog postings), and 2) transcriptions of oral conversations with those

involved in the development of the TRC Centre's collection. The research team is engaged in a process of deep reading of these materials, guided by Charmaz's (2014) inclusive, interpretive approach to grounded theory: "My approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (p. 10).

The written material related to the National Research Centre is collected through the following steps:

- Federated searches through Canadian print journalism databases to locate articles from 1980-2014 using search terms "residential school"; "truth and reconciliation"; "Indian affairs"; and "Independent Assessment Process" that resulted in over 200 media articles relating to the residential schools up to the recent August, 2014 court case determining the fate of nearly ten years worth of Independent Assessment Process documents
- Collection of documents related to legal cases (both lawsuits and court-cases for civil charges of abuse) mentioned in the news articles above through the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) database
- Reports and updates on the ongoing activities of the NRC through news media, online blog posting, and institutional websites

The second strand of research consists of a series of conversations over a two-year time period with systems analysts, librarians, records professionals, archivists, faculty, and other professionals associated with the NRC. These are individuals who are working to inform and/or build the system(s) that will hold and provide access to the NRC's material collection as well as those professionals (archivists, record keepers) who were stewards of the materials before they were brought into the TRC process. Approximately every six months discussions with newly recruited or continuing participants are planned to develop our understanding of changes over time.

In recognition of the potential to unintentionally re-traumatize survivors of residential schools or their family members, we limit recruitment to participants who have (or had) a professional role in the development of the Centre at the University of Manitoba or one of the Centre's planned partners (hubs). As individuals who have stepped forward to be involved in the development of the Centre and/or associated hubs, they hold or have held positions that provide them with first hand knowledge of the potential for harm in engaging with the materials held by these entities, directly or through discussion. Therefore, they are well positioned to choose whether they want to participate in a research project discussing the development of information policies related to the NRC. Similarly we recruit individuals who have taken a professional role in an organization or institution that holds records related to the TRC (e.g., church or government archivists). Again, these individuals are knowledgeable of the issues, and are well positioned to determine whether they want to participate in a research project discussing potentially distressing topics.

Once a research participant has been identified, recruited, and their consent obtained, a member of the research team has a conversation with her or him regarding their professional opinions on the development of the Centre's collection, specifically asking for reflections on the policy development process. The interviews take place face to face or over Skype. Digital audio recordings are made after the participant has provided consent. After each set of interviews, interviewees are provided with a transcript of their interview for corrections and clarification.

We completed the first round of discussions with twelve people and five more are planned in the months ahead. Our conversations with participants have ranged in length from forty minutes to two hours. In these initial interviews we asked participants to describe their professional roles in relation to the TRC and/or Centre's activities and to tell us about the goals of the Centre as they understood them. We also asked them to speak to challenges and opportunities of the Centre.

7 Identifying Areas of Generative Friction

Below we identify and discuss areas of friction that we propose create possibilities, spaces for new understandings, as this project and the Centre progress in their development: ongoing and necessary conflict; shifting agency; the plurality paradox; and the potential of distrust.

7.1   Ongoing and Necessary Conflict

Trudi Huskamp-Peterson (2011), a preeminent scholar on truth commissions and their records, defines truth commissions as: 1) temporary bodies; 2) established to look at and report on a pattern of abuses; 3) by a previous repressive regime; 4) oftentimes during or directly after a regime change. The first two attributes apply to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is a temporary body and was established to look at and report on a limited pattern of abuses to Aboriginal children. Other government-initiated abuses against Canada's Aboriginal children are not included in the TRC's activities. However, reflecting on the latter two characteristics, along with the writing and conversations we have engaged over the past year, we question whether it is reasonable to state that there has been a repressive regime change in Canada. Rather, we propose that neither phrase, post-colonial regime nor post conflict context, accurately describes the Canadian context. Repression and conflict continue, just in different forms.

Ongoing conflict led to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is through civil court action, protests, and marches that space was created for a TRC. Even the conflict behind the TRC's court filings to force the federal government to improve the collection and digitization of documents related to residential schools was necessary to make room for change. Yet, it is through these conflicts that generative opportunities for change are made possible.

The information policies of the NRC will be bound by federal and provincial legislation, court agreements, and the policies and practices of the University of Manitoba and those of the institutions that host NRC hubs. Yet, when one reads the vision statement of the NRC, there is no recognition of the ongoing influence and need for conflict in order to make room for changes to colonizing practices and norms within these institutional structures. A lack of explicit recognition of these conflicts and the need for conflict in order to make room for change can be a place of significant friction for those trying to achieve the goals set forward in the NRC's visioning statement.

7.2   Shifting Agency

> "How can we enhance our capacities to respond?" (Schiff, 2013, p. 59)

The question above, posed by Schiff, reflects awareness that our capacities, abilities, and agency are fluid and change over time. Shifting contexts enhance and constrain our access to resources and capacity to take action. In turn, our capacities—rather than quantifiable—are responsive and generative to our environments. Specifically, Schiff is seeking ways to understand power that is "not available for *use*" and singular but rather multiple and characterized as "emergent," "circulat[ory]" and "generat[ive of] social positions and relations between them" (Schiff, 2013, p. 44). Through these observations, we wish to call attention to discussions of the professional responsibilities of archivists, record keepers, technologists, and information professionals in relation to agency. Discussions, such as Caswell's noted earlier in terms of the obligations and responsibilities of archivists, are important to engage. By recognizing and articulating both one's obligations and responsibilities individuals can identify capacities to foster in order to work towards fulfilling obligations that they are currently incapable of addressing (Johnson & Michaelis, 2013*). We* further suggest that it is critical to identify and acknowledge the frictions surrounding limitations to agency present in environments such as the Centre that operate within often competing and/or conflicting political paradigms. Although the positions of information professionals may be one of *privilege* they, as much as positions of privation, may inhibit professionals' capacity to respond because the roles and associated practices become to be viewed as naturalized, fixed, or neutral. What are the potentials made available through recognizing shifting agency?

7.3   The Plurality Paradox

> "[T]he sense in which truth is one, despite the multiplicity of forms in its expression, and the sense in which what is on some grounds or in some circumstances true is at other times false and dangerous." (McKeon, 1952, p. 132)

The quote above is from the work of Richard McKeon, an American pragmatist philosopher whose intellectual legacy is found across disciplines, languages, and continents. Throughout his work he builds upon the idea that the principles, ideas, and values that are "true" in some uses will be found to be false in other uses. It is not simply a matter of many perspectives, but rather that the perspectives themselves

are plural in their manifestations. This is the paradox of pluralism (JafariNaimi et al., in press). It is a paradox that creates obstacles and opportunities for archival practitioners and scholars. As much effort as dedicated professionals put into developing archival holdings that are trustworthy, authentic, and reliable, whether viewed as fixed or contingent, there will be situations that render the "truth" of the collection's materials false. The work of Durrant et al. (2014) reinforce this point by acknowledging that material within the Kigali Genocide Memorial collection, although trustworthy, authentic, and reliable to its stewards, could be rendered false by those who disagree with the framing of the atrocities that the memorial puts forward. What possibilities can the friction created by the paradox of pluralism generate for those creating collections related to traumatic events?

7.4   Potential of Distrust

As we have attempted to show in this short paper, the same juridical and political systems that conceptualized, created, managed, and perpetuated the harms of the Indian residential school system continue to be forces that shape the work of the Centre. The mechanisms in the process of being created to address the harms are bounded by the institutions that inflicted the harms. Whereas we began the project with a focus on opportunities for building trust through information policies, through our conversations we now recognize the importance of making room for distrust. There are opportunities for engagement with the collection to support the facility for critical thinking. How might acknowledging and recognizing distrust force the system and make space for its agents to work harder to address problematic areas? Here we are considering what might happen if the collection made explicit that those engaging with the material are operating in a space of distrust, rather than ignore the potential forces that can arise from distrust.

8   Future Work

We are early days in our project as are those designing the Centre. We continue to collect and review court documents and media coverage related to the Centre and its partners while engaging in conversations with those involved in the development of the collection. Through these materials and conversations we continue to develop our understandings of the frictions involved in designing and managing traumatic collections and in turn the generative possibilities for developing policies that inform and guide ethical, reflective, and situated information practices.

9   Conclusion

Through this paper we identify systemic challenges that face efforts to ethically steward collections of trauma in a conflict-ridden world. We reflect on initial discussions with those involved in the Centre's development and our ongoing review of court documents and media accounts related to the Centre. We highlight how those involved in the Centre's development (including the researchers) are participants in and descendants of Canada's legacy of colonizing initiatives. We identify frictions related to questions of conflict, agency, plurality, and trust that underlie the design of collections of trauma. These reflections guide our ongoing investigation, and we offer them for other scholars and designers to question, build upon, and refute.

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