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Through the lens of performance and performativity: reframing the research quality and impact of ethnographic digital research archives

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Digital research archives such as PARADISEC were established as part of research projects temporarily funded by government research grants. On the tenth anniversary of PARADISEC, its founders, contributors and users are celebrating, among other achievements, a wealth of knowledge encompassing more than 9 terabytes of data, over 5000 hours of audio recordings of language and music from the Pacific, Asia and worldwide, and prestigious international recognition as a member of the UNESCO Memory of World Register (see Thieberger et al., this volume; Clement et al. 2013). While PARADISEC has received several government grants in the past, the archive’s sustainability is threatened by diminishing government funding and increasingly demanding mechanisms of institutional and government research quality and impact reporting. PARADISEC must balance these challenges with its obligation and responsibility to preserve cultural heritage materials in order to continue to pursue its vision. Many ethnographic digital research archives are facing the same challenge.

This raises questions about how research quality and the impact of ethnographic digital research archives can be articulated more effectively as research outputs for the purposes of reporting and grant writing in order to safeguard the archives’ economic sustainability and further development. Analogue and digital ethnographic research materials that are preserved and accessed through digital archives impact communities in different and more far-reaching ways than initially anticipated. Perhaps this social significance can be used as an entry point for reframing the research quality and impact of ethnographic digital research archives. The lens of performance and performativity can provide a new theoretical perspective or even create a new stage in the development of ethnographic research databases. In an article on the vocabulary of performance, Sruti Bala (2013, 19) states that the concept of performance ‘reveals the attempts of various disciplines of the Humanities to self-critique their working terms by reassessing their mutual relationship’. The lenses of performance, both as a goal and as a process, and performativity, as a way of identifying linguistic traits as actions within a sociocultural context, where identity manifests through iterability and citationality, afford a fresh look into the content and identity of ethnographic digital research archives.

Performance and performativity

The etymology of the word performance references the execution of action. In business terminology, it means ‘the way a job or task is done by an individual, a group or an organisation’ (Statt 2004, 113). There are particular aspects of the operation that can be measured; for example, technical and business performance can be gauged according to how particular technical mechanisms or business processes perform against technological standards and planned output. The technical performance of the structure of digital research archives is constantly assessed against international standards, but is there more room for developing ways to measure the performance of these archives against government and institutional reporting mechanisms? Further, how can this be reflected back into infrastructure? What are the indicators and standards there, and how can the content, services and operations per-
form better in this context? Assessing the research quality and impact of digital research archives and their collections could be considered in the context of performance as a goal.

At the same time, performance is a process. Performance studies scholar Richard Schechner differentiates between ‘is performance’ and ‘as performance’. Dance and music performances, drama spectacles and rituals entail particular traditional, expressive forms and embodied practices within specific cultural contexts. While there are limitations as to what constitutes artistic or cultural performance, Schechner (2006, 38) suggests that ‘just about anything can be studied “as” performance’. This so-called cultural turn indicates a shift towards explorations of process over product and practices that are not perceived as encapsulated in text objects but as living, embodied practices. This has prompted scholars to question the modes of scholarly research and their roles within this research (Bala 2013, 17). The lens of performativity demands realignment from text-based or captured objects to considering their performative nature in the context of the social and cultural processes within which artefacts are born and exist, and where meaning is shaped and interpreted. Besides making its mark on disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, gender studies, literary studies, social sciences, theatre studies and performance studies, performativity has been a potent theoretical grounding for research in information technology (IT) and management. For instance, tracing the linguistic characteristics of communications related to IT in organisations indicates how such discourses perform IT differently depending on the industry and the culture of the organisation (De Vaujany et al. 2012, 19).

The concept of performativity was introduced in the discipline of linguistics during the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, when linguist J. L. Austin used the term ‘performatives’ to describe words that constitute action. A typical example of such performatives is the ‘I do’ uttered by the groom and bride during a wedding ceremony. Austin posits that speech is a performatives act, and an important correlation exists between language and action (Bala 2013, 18–19). Furthermore, Austin proposes a multilateral analysis of such performatives utterances that includes the specific words in locution, the purpose of the utterance and the effect of the locutions
These linguistic subtleties can be useful when considering how language and its performative dimension change in the realm of information management. ‘The performative refers to the way things assume shape and are constituted by way of naming, of being called and interpellated’ (Bala 2013, 19). For instance, to ensure that digital collections are semantically accessible, their curators must negotiate the tension between the language used to describe the stored objects and the language familiar to the users, which affects both the discoverability and the interpretation of these objects (Tahmasebi and Risse 2013). Similarly, we can consider the evolution of language when we articulate the purpose, function and value of ethnographic digital research archives and their collections in the context of higher education and society at large. This raises the issue of identity, which has been a major focus of performativity theory, especially in the work of Judith Butler. Butler calls attention to gender identity not as inborn behaviour but as enacted and dependent on social constructs, embodied practice that is ‘tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts’ (Butler 1988, 520). This perspective can inform how we perceive and articulate the identity of digital research archives and the roles of the people involved in their operation and use.

Various types of performance processes, including cultural, linguistic and gender performance processes (Bala 2013, 15–16), co-exist in the operation, use and evaluation of digital research archives. These processes include both the collected content of intangible digital artefacts representing particular, established cultural practices and the performance of the archives as research spaces. The latter plays out within the dynamic realm of the virtual world of digital archives, which is driven by human actors through the technological system processes of locating, storing and providing access to cultural and linguistic artefacts (Reitz 2004, 216).

In science and technology studies, performativity has allowed for deeper scrutiny of the material elements of cultural artefacts in various knowledge cultures and their roles therein (Waterton 2010, 650–52). Waterton suggests that through ‘performativity, we can see the archive as a technology that constitutes not only a record of our representations of the world, but as an active and iterative making of the world and of entities and selves within it’. The digital research archive is a locus
of the performative interplay between the technological components of the system and humans occupying various roles, the involved organisations and specific sociocultural contexts. One of them is the higher education context, upon which the existence and sustainability of such research systems depends.

Digital collections of cultural artefacts in digital research archives could be considered not only as objects of knowledge but as ‘a way of knowing’ (Taylor 2003). Their curation, conversion into digital objects and use create a lens of knowing, where the information object and user, researched and researcher, are intertwined in virtual and embodied material performance processes of cultural practices, information management, cultural preservation, cultural brokerage and the act of research. Performance and performativity provide a different ontological and epistemological perspective that can uncover new strategies for digital research archives and indicate how they can be evaluated in terms of what they do and what role they play in knowledge discovery and production.

Reframing content: cultural performative findings

Digital research archives, such as PARADISEC, hold audio, text and visual (photographic and video) archival material in the form of downloadable files. Despite the fact that they are captured for the purposes of linguistic research, these materials contain considerable by-products in the form of oral history, music and dance narratives that are essential in Indigenous cultures’ knowledge transfer (Christie 2005). Ethnographic fieldwork materials are carriers of performative aspects of speech through paralinguistic signs that include gestures, movements and facial expressions. A good example of such by-products is the new knowledge generated by Rutkowski et al. (2013) of Polish Sign Language (PJM) under the umbrella of the PJM Corpus Project. They created an array of tools for transcribing, systematising and coding video material capturing PJM and, in the process, made a serendipitous discovery of specific cultural intricacies. These videos are an important component of knowledge transfer in the context of the community of
practice to which they belong – in this case, both the scholarly and deaf communities.

In the discipline of linguistics, archives aim to preserve and provide access to data sets as evidence for new research publications in the form of verifiable primary data. Therefore, media-rich archival material is reduced to quantified searchable metadata for the purposes of preservation, access and discoverability. Linguistics scholars aspire to see increasingly direct citations of data in the electronic publishing of linguistic research and a move towards the recognition of curated data as a format of scholarly publication (Musgrave and Hajek 2013). These needs for linguistic scholarly practice and knowledge dissemination are challenging both current publishing practices and research performance indicators. However, the danger is in perceiving media-rich archival materials of linguistic research as only research data (Christie 2005), thus ignoring the depth of the cultural knowledge encrypted in their content by means of performative material signs. This performative nature of archival material that is rendered as data, but is actually made of performative material signs, allows for reframing of how we evaluate the content of archival databases.

Creative practice research has opened a new epistemology that takes into account the practice-led nature of knowledge production and the dissemination that takes place in creative arts disciplines. In response to the specifics of artistic practice research, a third paradigm of scholarly enquiry was identified along with the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Haseman 2006, 2010). Performative research, proposes Haseman (2010, 151), is led by practice and is ‘expressed in non-numeric data, but in symbolic forms of data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.’ Media-rich archival materials could be viewed as collections of cultural performative findings. When accompanied by exegetical writing and peer reviewed in scholarly and professional journals, such curated collections could meet the requirements of existing quality reporting systems and could present stronger research output arguments in grant writing.

The quality assessment of traditional scholarly outputs within the publication categories counted in the Higher Education Research Data
Collection (HERDC), such as books, book chapters, articles in peer-reviewed journals and refereed conference papers (Department of Education 2014, 26–34), pertains largely to traditional processes and formats of scholarly publishing. The content of digital research archives, on the other hand, could be considered in the context of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative, and more precisely in light of non-traditional categories of scholarly outputs.

The ARC’s definition of research is ‘the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings’ (ARC 2012a, 3). This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. Experimental and creative knowledge discoveries are reiterated here in reference to an earlier document elaborating that it is ‘creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise applications’ (OECD 2002, 30). ERA’s non-traditional categories of scholarly outputs, introduced for trial in 2009, constitute a major milestone in the process of recognising performative material signs within artistic practice research as valid evidence of knowledge discovery.

ERA’s submission guidelines specify four categories of non-traditional outputs: original creative works, live performance of creative works, recorded/rendered creative works, and curated or produced substantial public exhibitions and events. There are two categories that can be exploited for the purpose of reporting ethnographic digital research archives as curated research outputs. Computer programs that are often written for ethnographic digital research archives can be categorised as recorded/rendered creative works, while entire websites or curated collections could be considered under curated or produced substantial public exhibitions and events, where the curatorial role of the researcher is at the forefront of the major output (ARC 2012b, 47–48).

Research statements can argue the research background, contribution and significance of such non-traditional outputs. The research contribution of curated databases must relate to both scholarly knowledge and practice and the community of practice regarding open access
transmission. Innovation can be linked to the availability of research outcomes to researchers, specific communities and the public, and it is advantageous if the work is interdisciplinary and funded by multiple organisations. The research significance can be supported by evidence of dissemination at conferences and in the media. Quality or excellence can be argued by means of the peer review of such websites, supported by published critical reviews of these resources and the scholarly essays that reference them, through citations in scholarly writing and in the media, and evidence of a high degree of cultural significance, complexity of structure and innovative techniques of digitally searchable archival content. The standard output in this category implies the curatorial leadership of the scholars involved.

The above mechanism brings to the forefront the decisive role of the peer review process in the humanities as a quality indicator for non-traditional outputs. Since peer review is performed by well-established scholars in the discipline and is predominantly subjective, new ideas that push current boundaries can be promoted from the bottom up by engaging in discipline and higher education research debates, by exemplifying new modes of knowledge discovery and transmission, and by creating new technological pathways. For instance, performance-specific information can be included in the metadata of the databases. This has been demonstrated in the field of the creative arts and specifically in the curation of artistic works with technological components, such as computer-generated musical scores. Boutard et al. address issues of appropriation in the digital creation of music, suggesting that preservation models need to consider the life cycles of archival and creative processes. This includes performance information containing tacit knowledge that is vital for future interpretations of the work and records of knowledge interactions between different stakeholders (Boutard et al. 2013, 19). Another example from creative practice research is the combination between creative artefacts and exegetical writing (Haseman 2010, 156). Exegetical notes often include reflective analysis, reflexive questioning and citations from the researcher’s diary that complement or deliberate the philosophical and practical aspects of the research. Exegetical information could add value to media-rich files within digital archival research collections.
The reiteration of the performative paradigm and media-rich archival content of digital research archives as performative evidence of captured cultural performances will be necessary until it becomes fully recognised in higher education mechanisms of reporting and funding. In addition, performative archival content and systems that hold significant cultural knowledge fit several currently prioritised research themes: Indigenous research, understanding our region and the world, promoting an innovation culture and economy, smart information use, and strengthening Australia’s social and economic fabric (ARC 2012b, 74).

Reframing identity

Judith Butler’s perspective on performativity in gender studies illuminates the formation of identity not as a given and inherited phenomenon but as a series of repeated acts within a social context. This can be transferred to the process of identity building in relation to digital research archives and the individuals and groups of actors involved in their management, operation and use. The current ERA categories of non-traditional research outputs in academic reporting and quality evaluations necessitate that the cultural performative findings housed in ethnographic digital research archives are identified using the notions of ‘exhibition’ and ‘curation/curator’. The questions to be asked are what are digital research archives, and how do they perform in the context of academia, the Indigenous cultures with which they engage and society at large?

By definition, digital research archives or repositories are systems ‘designed for locating, storing, and providing access to digital materials over the long term’ (Reitz 2004, 216). The purpose of digital research archives is to preserve and disseminate research data and information. They hold components of new knowledge discoveries in data and information formats. The processes associated with digital research archives are locating, storing and providing access to data and information, digital preservation, standardised description of content, information access and discovery of primary data and research publications, as well as the direct citation of primary data in research publications.
data or captured media-rich research materials can sit within research archives as separate collections. The above language describes the information content of such research resources using IT terminology to refer to the intrinsic specialised characteristics and processes that are crucial for the maintenance and development of these information systems.

Just as the semantic language of digital library collections needs to develop according to the usability demands driven by users’ language (Tahmasebi and Risse 2013), we in Australia need to consider whether operational IT language does justice to the performance of digital research archives in the current evolved state of their operation and in a climate where impact has become another research quality measurement in academic reporting. IT vocabulary, such as digital archives, archival databases and digital repositories, presupposes a technical interpretation focusing on product and structure, where collections are reduced to the sum of the information objects rather than seen as carriers of performative signs of cultural knowledge and wisdom. This linguistic articulation is derived from information management terminology and predetermines a semantic interpretation that affects how government auditing and funding bodies and administrators perceive and evaluate ethnographic digital research archives. Using IT language to refer to ethnographic digital collections falls short of describing and measuring the significance of this social interaction, the impact these online resources have on Indigenous communities and their cultural sustainability, and the crucial role of scholars as cultural brokers.

Derrida (1996, 29) posits that the archive is ‘only a notion, an impression with a word and for which, together with Freud, we do not have a concept’, as well as ‘an irreducible experience of the future’ (Derrida 1996, 68). The identity of the archive is dynamic and dependent on knowledge actors and social contexts. How identity is articulated and reiterated, therefore, affects how the archival research databases are marketed and reported within the academic context. The scholars involved in the curation of digital research archives need to negotiate the semantic tensions pertaining to language referring to information content and develop a more holistic citation that encompasses the wider impact of digital archival databases on research and sociocultural environments. The ontological aspects of this shift in thinking indicate a
‘move from an archival universe dominated by one cultural paradigm to an archival multiverse; from a world constructed in terms of “the one” and “the other” to a world of multiple ways of knowing and practising, of multiple narratives co-existing in one space’ (Shepherd 2011, 5).

Collections of cultural performative findings are vital cultural documents. They constitute cultural capital which, when in action – or when being accessed and used by scholars, community members or government bodies – impacts new research and community sustainability, and has economic implications. A classic example is the generation of Aboriginal music recordings used in land claims archived by the Native Title Research Unit of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (Koch 2008). Grace Koch (2008) discusses how, owing to the Native Title Act 1993, more ritual songs were recorded as part of the native title claim process, raising issues of responsibility and illuminating the challenges of archival practices. The impact of the repatriation of such collections is gaining importance and contributes to the development of a stronger sense of identity among the younger generations of cultural heritage communities. An intriguing case is the repatriation of Junba dance-songs in Western Australia that has enabled new generations to cherish their musical heritage and engage in the community (Treloyn and Charles, this volume). These examples demonstrate that cultural performative archival content is not composed of frozen data or information but of dynamic cultural artefacts that represent cultural capital with the potential to affect health and wellbeing while also generating knowledge discoveries.

Archival databases have been criticised for not being suited to cultural work with Indigenous communities and for being incapable of finding ‘an active place in knowledge work’ due to their reliance on Western taxonomy and hierarchy with categories and classes that are insufficient when working with Indigenous knowledge (Christie and Verran 2013, 307). Furthermore, Kimberly Christen (2012, 2882) expresses concern that some digital databases come to an end as expensive projects that have addressed only specific needs at a particular point in time without mechanisms for a sustainable future due to lack of ownership by users that would continue to engage with the content and
update the infrastructure. Instead of being spaces of ‘large collections for people who do not know what they might find’ (Christie and Verran 2013, 307), Indigenous archival material is specific and requires culturally sensitive tools that do not resonate with the notions of open access that dominate information management and scholarly dissemination policies (Christen 2012, 2874–81). Christen considers issues of privacy and sociality, and traces how Indigenous people contribute their local understanding and histories to the notions of ‘social relations back to place-based mapping practices’ (2012, 2881).

Michael Christie, however, warns against perceiving archives as repositories of knowledge and suggests seeing them instead as ‘a memory source containing assemblages of traces of previous truth-claim episodes’ (Christie 2005, 64). A new step in this direction is the Mukurtu CMS – a culturally sensitive platform that is flexible to serve and adapt to the cultural needs of any Indigenous community, referred to by its creators as a ‘safe keeping place’ (Christen 2012, 2881–88). Moreover, Turnbull proposes the radical solution of adopting a ‘transmodern’ approach with the capacity to dilute the negative sides of the unequal power between custodians of data and those of Indigenous knowledge. This approach avoids integration by maintaining the tension between different traditions and, in this way, opens possibilities for the concurrent creation of knowledge (Turnbull 2012, 25). Turnbull approaches this work with multiple narratives of different knowledge traditions via complexity theory and distributed systems:

> Performativity and practices come together with complex adaptive systems in sharing a coproducive constructivist account of reality in terms of agency, actions, enactments, and processes in interaction without invoking plans, rules, instructions, laws, or external space or time, everything is to be understood as an emergent effect of systematically connected interactions, where the system and the agents coproduce each other. (Turnbull 2012, 11–12)

Turnbull argues that language and narrative are central to the development of networks, and underscores that languages have local, spatial and temporal dimensions that construct locality and time. In this way, they are performative not of a linear and single dominant historical
narrative but as ‘sites where social and political processes are enacted’ (Turnbull 2012, 14). The practical viability of Turnbull’s proposed framework, which promotes cultural diversity, is demonstrated in the work of the Emergent Databases, Emergent Diversity project.¹ This project allows users to actively engage with the databases of the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Such online spaces depart from the notion of ‘storage facilities’ and approach a new identity that has the potential for significant knowledge discovery and social impact. Digital research archives that contain ethnographic media-rich files that engage with Indigenous cultures can be reframed into platforms marked by complexity, adaptivity and systematicity, where the ways of knowing are considered as social processes (Turnbull 2012, 20). Ethnographic digital research archives are evolving into complex adaptive systems. Their emerging identity as research and knowledge environments that facilitate knowledge transfer and co-creation overrides the perception that their performance is solely constituted of preservation and access to materials about endangered languages and cultural heritage.

Scholars have examined how different disciplines look at archives and archival processes, and have concluded that the future of archives will be embedded in stronger collaborative associations between libraries and scholars (Clement et al. 2013; Manoff 2004). The business model of the Australian Literature Resource (AustLit) demonstrates the successful collaboration between scholars, libraries, the University of Queensland and the National Library. AustLit is a non-profit venture undertaken by scholars and librarians with a mission ‘to be the definitive information resource and research environment for Australian literary, print, and narrative cultures’. AustLit is identified as a multifaceted online centre, organised according to information structure: ‘a database about Australian literature and storytelling’; according to function: ‘a research environment’; as a stakeholder: ‘a publisher of scholarly research’ and ‘a partner and collaborator in scholarly research’; and according to social structure: ‘a team of scholars, librarians, researchers, volunteers’.² This description addresses identity, the

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¹ For more details about this project, see http://www.digitalinnovations.ucla.edu/2007/ccc/projects/Srinivasan.htm.

² This description addresses identity, the
research context and process, and is exemplary of a more holistic approach to marketing the performance and value of this multifaceted resource and community.

One of the implications of the dynamic expansion of digital research archives is that it will progressively motivate more and more structural changes to how societal, research and individual impact data are generated. In a presentation given on 28 June 2012, Professor Aidan Byrne, the CEO of the Australian Research Council (ARC), singled out papers and patents as relevant spin-offs of research activities, due to their commercial value, with impact projected onto new government policy development, new research paradigms and the creation of commercial products and enterprises (Byrne 2013). The ARC’s definition of impact is ‘the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia.’

Calculating impact is challenging for the humanities. Nevertheless, new measurements of research impact in the context of virtual environments are opening the door to rich impact data stories and impact cases that can be applied at the individual file, collection and archive levels. The impact of research articles can be traced more comprehensively through altmetrics (non-traditional citations of research products such as downloads) than bibliometrics (traditional citation metrics such as impact factor) by employing categories such as viewed, saved, discussed, recommended and cited. Impact can be measured not only through the citation of data or symbolic data in scholarly articles but by creating impact statements which are based on the altmetrics applied to various materials and stakeholders that track how research collections perform outside of scholarly publishing in communities of practice and society at large. This includes not only full-text citations but views, downloads, references and presence in the media, and, in some cases, such as in the web-based and open source impact story, separating the impact between the scholarly community and the public depending on the altmetrics sources (Lin and Fenner 2013). In addition, altmet-

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rics can be applied to stakeholders: curator, creator, depositor, collector, custodian and so on, while social networks can be highlighted using webometrics (research data showing the World Wide Web's structure and usage), virtual ethnography and web mining.

Some of these tools have been used in the performing arts database AusStage. AusStage has been described as ‘an accessible online resource for researching live performance in Australia’ that ‘enables research on live performance as a wealth-producing creative industry, a generator of social capital and an indicator of the nation’s cultural vitality.’\(^4\) It is hosted at Flinders University and is supported by a consortium of universities, government agencies, industry organisations and collecting institutions, and funded mainly by government bodies. Since the database’s collections encompass performance events and the artistic personnel involved in those events, networks of artists are a prominent indicator of artistic endeavours, status and collaborations in the field. AusStage has introduced data visualisation technologies to provide visual mapping of geographic displays of live performance data over time, titled the AusStage Mapping Events service, and to illustrate collaborative networks of professionals through the AusStage Navigating Networks service.\(^5\) These tools are capable of creating a detailed picture of the complex networks and knowledge life cycles to reference the sociocultural implications of such knowledge platforms.

Stakeholders and roles become blurred in the process of ethnographic research and the curation of archival collections. Scholar-creators, scholar-curators, scholar-collectors, scholar-librarians, IT experts, research librarians and archivists all work in the digital humanities sphere, relying on interdisciplinary technical and research skills and the ability to perform ethical stewardship while building trust with the custodians of Indigenous communities. These are complex skills which need specialist training and prolonged mentoring as part of the research process. Berez (this volume), for instance, demonstrates the benefits of involving research students in archiving practices at the postgraduate level. Identifying this interdisciplinary capacity is necessary both to source funds and to challenge established roles in acad-

\(^5\) Ibid.
emia. Currently, Australian universities divide their human resources into academic and professional staff, with little space for hybrid roles, such as librarian-scholars working in academic faculties or information expert-scholars working on research projects. While information professionals can integrate more thoroughly into the research processes of open access publishing (Clement et al. 2013, 119), bridging roles would allow digital research archives to tap into university operational infrastructures and their budgets. Hybrid roles can be established by reiterating the need to adapt current staffing categories to the changes in scholarly publishing and can be promoted from the bottom up by scholars and information professionals.

Conclusion

Having established vital infrastructure, collection and digitisation processes, ethnographic digital research archives are evolving into dynamic, multifaceted virtual research spaces and subcultures that work across the quantitative, qualitative and performative paradigms. They are a locus of knowledge preservation and access with the capacity to generate new knowledge through the exchange and interaction between various knowledge actors, such as academics, communities and the public. The lens of performance and performativity enables the strategising of reporting avenues within the ERA framework and funding applications, the creation of new metadata to collect impact metrics and the evolution of language to better reference the identity of ethnographic digital research archives and the social significance of their structure and operation. Reframing archived material content into symbolic data of cultural knowledge and an identity that departs from information management language would allow for a better understanding of what archives do within a social context and of the actions and processes in which scholars, information professionals and community members engage. While the launch of ethnographic digital research archives as complex adaptive systems may not be in full sight for most archives, the example of AustLit is intriguing, as it articulates a hybrid business model that uses the resources and expertise of both information professionals and scholars. Furthermore, the structural
innovations of creative arts research reporting and creative arts databases, as exemplified by AusStage, may be helpful in understanding the ways in which content is presented and described and social data are visualised as maps and networks.

Works cited


1 Through the lens of performance and performativity


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