

Archival Foote-steps: The Lewis B. Foote First World War Photographs and Approaches  
to Digital Exhibitions

by

Danna Slessor-Cobb

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History (Archival Studies)  
Joint Master's Program  
University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## **ABSTRACT**

The creation of exhibits and exhibit-going have been part of popular culture for centuries and have long been hallmarks of outreach to new audiences for archival services. With the explosion of digital technologies there are many new and exciting avenues for archivists to create exhibitions to display their collections and engage with their users. Websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Tumbler and Flickr as well as increasingly diverse website functionalities have greatly contributed to a new understanding of visual literacy both within and outside the archival profession. Web 2.0 technologies and web analytics have opened up opportunities for archives to curate their records in many different ways for much larger audiences.

This study will examine how visual records, specifically the archival photographs from the Lewis B. Foote fonds at the Archives of Manitoba, could be used to commemorate the First World War and shape our understanding of it. During the centennial anniversary of the war it is important to study how such images relating to this conflict might be used today to create specific narratives for understanding it through archival outreach activities such as exhibitions. This can help us rethink the aims and characteristics of archival exhibitions, thereby shedding greater light on the role of archives in creating public memory and enhancing societal understanding of archives and their relevance to important public interests.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first to thank my supervisor Professor Tom Nesmith and Professor Greg Bak for the knowledge and love of archives they so willingly passed on throughout my course work and the support and advice they have provided over many years. I thank you for your insight and encouragement throughout this process. Your work is appreciated more than you know. A special thank you to Tom Nesmith for providing help at any and all times of the day and for supervision throughout many hectic years.

To Anne Lindsay my friend and colleague whose wisdom and work as editor-in-chief is directly responsible for the completion of this thesis.

Thank you to Raegan Swanson, Ellen Cobb-Friesen and Shannon Weibe who acted as friends, editors and hand-holders when I needed it the most. You provided motivation and support that will never be forgotten.

Thank you to all my family and friends but specifically my friends and colleagues in the archival studies program. Thank you for all the Saturday writing dates, cups of coffee and understanding. I am so happy to find myself in such a wonderful community of people.

To my mother who has always supported me in all my endeavours, this thesis has been no exception. Thank you for never questioning why I went into archives mum!

Lastly, for Chris without whom this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for your love, patience and chip buying. You have lived this thesis with me for so long it also belongs to you.



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## INTRODUCTION

Archival exhibitions are trapped between imagination and practicality. The archival profession has typically been more comfortable exploring and developing the practical side of exhibitions. The development of exhibitions in archival practice over time has been hindered by the requirement to “fill cases” without stopping to consider the more nuanced ways narrative or context can be created.<sup>1</sup> By melding artistic and photographic knowledge with public programming and postmodern archival literature, archives can learn to harness collections around moments of historical importance and create more nuanced narratives for exhibitions. These exhibitions could provide a variety of ways to look at records, including a discussion of the archival actions involved in shaping that understanding, adding to greater contextualization of the records. This may facilitate an examination of the purpose and characteristics of archival exhibitions, thereby shedding greater light on the role of archives in creating public memory and enhancing societal understanding of archives and their relevance to important public interests.

An exhibit should allow the archivist to showcase important records *and* the practices of the archives themselves, while also creating a space to work out ideas, play with design and explore new approaches. This thesis intends to re-conceptualize the exhibition, and how the work of interpretation and creation of narrative can be redefined as an integral form of scholarship. This would address symbolic, historical, social and

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 9.

cultural, and intellectual aspects of archives.<sup>2</sup> As former Dominion Archivist of Canada (1948-1969) W.K. Lamb eloquently noted that the archivist is not simply a person who takes records off shelves whenever a historian wants them. His or her work can “call for intelligence, knowledge, and judgment to such a degree that the assignment can be a little frightening.”<sup>3</sup> Exhibits are spaces for archivists to challenge Jenkinsonian ideas of objectivity and neutrality that have haunted the archival profession well into the twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup> As more First World War content goes online archivists need to re-examine the role of the archives itself and the part the archives plays in remembering and forgetting in collective memory.<sup>5</sup>

Archives create exhibitions to mark and often celebrate milestones, anniversaries and other significant events.<sup>6</sup> With the advent of the centenary of the First World War and the multitude of First World War themed exhibits showcased online, it is important to examine the creation of exhibitions in the archival community. Archivists need to better define their methods and their role in this integral aspect of archival work. This leads us to the topic of war records, which will serve as the case study from which to theorize this exploration of the archival exhibition. Why First World War records? The timely arrival of the First World War centenary has seen an explosion of First World War content from archives, libraries and museums all wanting to use the prodigious interest in war records to stimulate further use of their institutions. This renewed interest in First World War records provides an interesting case study of theorizing commemoration of a

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>3</sup> Terry Cook, “The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists and the Changing Archival Landscape,” *The American Archivist* 74 (Fall/Winter 2011): 609.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 5.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Schwartz, “‘We make our tools and our tools make us’: Lessons from Photographs for the Practice, Politics, and Poetics of Diplomats,” *Archivaria* 40 (1995): 62.

<sup>6</sup> Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*, 8.

topic. Archivists must problematize the ways in which they commemorate the First World War. The centenary of the war presents an excellent opportunity to rethink the exhibition. The majority of archives across Canada and the world have some records relating to the First World War and many are now being digitized and displayed at an increasingly fast pace and high volume. How are archivists dealing with the challenges of displaying these records? Are they exhibiting photographs, one of the most often used document types in exhibitions, based on previous practices and ideas or are they attempting to incorporate ideas from photographic archivists such as Joan Schwartz and other scholars on representing the functional origins of and ways to read visual images? How are they using exhibitions to engage with new and experienced archival users? Has the information facilitated any information sharing? These are some of the questions that archivists might set out to answer during the process of creating an exhibition.

Whereas archives hold a wide variety of visual materials such as documentary art, material objects, and textual documents that combine both text and imagery, this study focuses upon the vast photographic collections contained in archives in Canada and around the world. There is a rich literature both inside and outside the archival field on photography. Several past studies have more adequately analyzed decolonizing the archive, unpacking gender and the photograph as a vehicle of social reform to name a few. This thesis hopes to address the gap between reading photographs and the archivists using historical photographs to create exhibitions. This will speak to how archivists think about exhibiting First World War records and analyze examples of exhibits that have combined many media. The focus, however, will be the First World War photographs in the Lewis B. Foote fonds at the Archives of Manitoba.

As a prominent early twentieth-century Winnipeg commercial photographer, Foote exemplifies the power of commercial photography in this emerging industrial centre. Among his vast collection of photographs are many that document Winnipeg throughout the First World War. The centennial of the outbreak of the war provides an opportunity to study how images from the Foote fonds relating to this period can be used to create specific narratives and shape understandings of the First World War. This study focuses on Foote specifically rather than a time period or general subject matter such as First World War photographs from Winnipeg. As Canadian historian Esyllt Jones notes, “Foote’s images have seldom been brought together and considered as the work of a single cultural producer, certain images have been reproduced over and over again, while others have never been viewed outside the archive.”<sup>7</sup> Focusing on Foote limits this study to Winnipeg’s rich history but also provides a good model for others interested in investigating other photographers and genres in Manitoba and abroad.

Many scholars have noted that the archival and other scholarly literature on photography has not yet had much impact on mainstream archival practice.<sup>8</sup> This in turn has delayed the development of archival thought in regard to the use of visual records to create engaging digital exhibitions. Photographs have been used most often in archival exhibits in a decontextualized state as “pictures of something.”<sup>9</sup> This inherently un-archival methodology has led to underdeveloped archival exhibitions with an accelerated obsolescence that is troubling given the current digital climate.

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<sup>7</sup> Esyllt Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg: History through the Photographs of L.B. Foote* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012): ix.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Schlak, “Framing Photographs, denying archives: the difficulty of focusing on archival photographs,” *Archival Science* 8 (2008): 86.

<sup>9</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 63.

This study will deal predominantly with photographs to define the scope of a possible digital archival exhibition. This choice was made deliberately as most archival exhibits feature photographs prominently or at least make use of them in an exhibition. This choice was also made with the intention of incorporating the work of photo-archivists such as Joan Schwartz into the lexicon of exhibition creation. There have been no studies that have adequately attempted to integrate this knowledge into archival thought to support the creation of a distinct archival exhibition theory. Photographic theory produced by the Canadian archival community provides the most well articulated and rich source for discussion that looks beyond a traditional public programming format. The exhibit is not only a place to deconstruct history but to begin the construction of new and unexplored visions of the past. Schwartz illuminates one key way that the archivist can begin to incorporate the ideas of postmodernism into their exhibits: by examining the intended initial function and use of the photographs archivists can begin to change the way they exhibit photographs.<sup>10</sup>

Memory is not photographic, and by extension archives and the exhibitions they create do not provide a simple reflection of history. “We create or reconstruct our experiences, adding feelings, beliefs and biases.”<sup>11</sup> Archival users bring those biases and beliefs to their interactions with archival documents. Historical photographs have always been used in exhibitions to illustrate grander points and invite users to view the world “as it was”.<sup>12</sup> Their perceived authenticity has always centred on the media’s ability to depict a perceived reality. In actuality they are more than simple reflections or illustrations. In

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>11</sup> Jay Winter, *Remembering the War: the Great War between memory and history in the twentieth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 45.

examining the Foote fonds and the ways Foote's First World War photographs have been used to create specific narratives and perceived wartime experiences we can learn what types of information could be included in a digital archival exhibition.

In this thesis archival outreach is understood as the activities and actions that create new access to archival records. Public programming and outreach is a vital field that is only growing more relevant in a digital landscape, and the exhibit plays a central role in this. According to the Society of American Archivist's (SAA) glossary aspects of a robust outreach program include "exhibits, workshops, publications, and educational programs".<sup>13</sup> Other aspects of public programming such as the creation of a marketing strategy and assessment of user response will feature in this thesis. The bulk of archival literature on outreach is done from the perspective of actions an archivist can take to facilitate an exhibition and the benefits an exhibition could provide for an archival institution. This thesis will focus primarily on conceptualizing the theoretical foundation for creating exhibition content and structure and how to best represent the photographs from the Foote fonds in the digital sphere. It focuses on the role the archivist plays by illustrating the importance of the records they choose to present and what aspects of archival work are integrated into digital exhibitions.

The records of the Foote fonds at the Archives of Manitoba have been chosen to highlight the potential of digital exhibitions to improve our understandings of photography and the First World War. Jay Winter argues that "family albums are filled with scenes enabling us to conjure up a now vanished world of encounters and gestures,

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<sup>13</sup> Society of American Archivists, "Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology", <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/outreach> (accessed March 28, 2015)

which taken together, describe the stories families tell about themselves.”<sup>14</sup> The Foote fonds acts as Winnipeg’s family album. The photographs are a familiar place to return to, to contextualize, make sense of our civic identity and create an imagined version of the city’s past. To begin to analyze Foote is to recognize the importance of photography in the reconstruction of wartime experience and the role it has played in constructing memory.<sup>15</sup> Exhibitions can allow archives and their users to see the power the archive wields in constructing narrative. In a local context they can illustrate how photographs have been used and can be used to construct and commemorate Winnipeg’s wartime memory.

Many First World War collections have significant and often unexplored photographs. With increasing amounts of digital content found online, this highlights the unprecedented power of archives in disseminating this information. To do so in a meaningful way requires a closer examination of the question *What is an archival exhibition?* Is it simply an exhibition that features archival materials? The SAA defines an exhibit as “1. An organized display of materials. - 2. A public demonstration of skills.”<sup>16</sup> There is no mention of what types of materials or skills are required to create an archival exhibition. The SAA definition illustrates the long history of exhibitions in the art and museum world, one that came to its zenith in the nineteenth century, during a culture of collecting and curiosities.<sup>17</sup> As the archival profession was similarly born in this period the exhibit has been the longstanding focus of archival public programming.

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<sup>14</sup> Winter, *Remembering the War*, 79.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>16</sup> Society of American Archivists, “Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology,” <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/outreach> (accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>17</sup> Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.



The archival community has continued to use guidelines from other heritage or information professions without taking part in the evolution of thought that has occurred due to the monumental changes in exhibition practice over the twentieth century. It should be mentioned that this definition is the only one of its kind from the English-speaking archival community despite the robust curatorial and art historical literature that features the creation of exhibitions.

The SAA definition further notes that

An exhibition generally includes materials such as artworks, documents, or objects that have been selected and ordered so that their interaction demonstrates an idea or theme for cultural or educational purposes.<sup>18</sup>

This definition focuses on the media that archivists may choose to present their exhibition; however it does not refer to the theory or ways in which they curate and create exhibitions. Even in this more recent definition the concept of the exhibit has been constructed around the traditional medium of art; art works rather than archival documents occupies the primary focus of the archival lexicon.

Archives have long been involved in cultural production and education, although they have not defined these practices in regard to creating archival exhibitions. In creating exhibitions, archives have borrowed heavily from museology, and internalized the museum world's understanding of education, which up until recently held that "placing objects on view was sufficient to ensure learning."<sup>19</sup> This viewpoint has since been discarded and the archival community should also attempt to evolve past this one-dimensional conception of exhibition thought. The archival exhibition should include a meaningful message about history to the viewer, and also explain the role archives have

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<sup>18</sup> Society of American Archivists, "Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology," <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/exhibition> (accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>19</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 2.

played in constructing that history. These choices may redefine the archival record in the digital sphere.

For the purposes of this thesis the understanding of digital exhibition is a place in the online environment that archives outside traditional archival descriptions or online catalogues where archives exhibit archival records. This thesis has limited its discussion of online platforms to those that are more user-friendly, open-sourced and make use of some aspect of social media. By limiting this study to digital platforms that are readily and easily available to archivists, particularly those working alone or with very little funding, it is my hope that any findings will have some resonance for future archival practice. It is in these digital spaces that archives can attempt to insert insights from recent archival theory into the multiple voices and multiple meanings evident in the history of the record. There is no longer one truth, and therefore no one exhibition to contain it. In the digital sphere an archival exhibit must continue to contextualize and recontextualize to add narratives from different user communities who use archives to learn to remember in new ways as Jay Winters suggests.<sup>20</sup>

In order to better understand the digital means used to display First World War records this study will begin in Chapter One with an analysis of what constitutes an archival exhibition and provide some contextual history of the evolution and approaches taken to archival exhibitions. In Chapter Two there is a shift to the photographs from the Foote fonds. This includes an examination of how they can be better read to provide more complex constructions of the First World War and the role that Foote himself played in constructing historical narrative through this own work, and later within the archive.

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<sup>20</sup> Winter, *Remembering the War*, 1.

Chapter Three features the analysis of several digital exhibition models and proposes how to best use features of those exhibitions within a potential Foote exhibit.

In previous literature the means of evaluating archival exhibits have been limited to the more outward aspects of the exhibit, such as how the media or users respond to the exhibit, essentially asking if it was considered a public critical success for the institution.<sup>21</sup> This study will evaluate exhibits in terms of how well they engage with current archival and museum theory, and propose that archivists use digital tools such as analytics as a new means to guide the creation of digital exhibitions and push forward new understandings of archives.

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<sup>21</sup> Catherine Nicholls, "Exhibiting Evidence: A Case Study," *Archivaria* 55 (Spring 2003): 32.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A STEP TOWARDS CREATING AN ARCHIVAL EXHIBITION THEORY

“The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place is a language of images.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the mid-twentieth century, exhibitions have been the staple of archival public programming. They have been seen as the most appropriate way in which to interact with the public and more importantly retain the loyalty of communities of archival stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> Traditional analogue methods of creating exhibitions are being used less and less because the curation of collections and the interaction between archive and user are now occurring more and more in the digital realm.<sup>3</sup> And digital exhibits have the ability to make more of an impact than their physical predecessors ever could. Instead of seeing the digital world as one disconnected from previous archival traditions, exhibitions are a facet of archival work that is ripe for a reinvigorated view from archival professionals.

Much of the knowledge within the archival community on analogue exhibits comes from landmark works led by American archivists Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor.<sup>4</sup> They provide step-by-step guidance for creating an exhibit for

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<sup>1</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1972), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Lynne Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor with Helena Zinkham, Brett Carnell and Kit Peterson, *Photographs: Archival Care and Management* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), 408.

<sup>3</sup> Emily Monks-Leeson, “Archives on the Internet: Representing Contexts and Provenance from Repository to Website,” *The American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ritzenthaler et al, *Photographs: Archival Care and Management* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), James Gregory Bradsher, ed., *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 and Joan Rabins, “Archival Exhibits: Considerations and Caveats,” in *A Modern Archives Reader* Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, U.S. General Services Administration, 1984), 289-296. All the works cited

(predominantly larger) archival institutions. As the analogue exhibit becomes less prominent in an increasingly digital world, the commitment to presenting narrative, selecting and highlighting the records of archives should remain. As Jessica Lacher-Feldman states, if we want to “disseminate knowledge, share excitement, and provide entertainment to an audience” we must look closely at what constitutes an archival exhibition in the physical sense and how we have taken that tradition into the digital world.<sup>5</sup> If we are successful at re-conceptualizing the archival exhibit we can include the exhibit as a fundamental part of the archival mandate.<sup>6</sup>

According to Ritzenthaler and Vogt-O'Connor exhibits are intended to “tell stories, facilitate learning, stimulate imagination, and may provide a richer understanding of geographic, institutional, thematic and temporal contexts of photographs shown.”<sup>7</sup> The heart of their statement is correct in that a good exhibit should not simply be a list or a timeline of historic events, it should engage viewers and encourage further historical investigation and reflection. Many of the guidelines for exhibiting photographs or indeed any archival documents can focus too heavily on the preservation or marketing aspects of that work. Considerations for mounting of archival documents and instructions such as “the exteriors of exhibit cases must be cleaned on a regular basis to remove dirt and fingerprints” do not provide much guidance for archivists creating online exhibitions.<sup>8</sup> Many of these authors only speak slightly about one of the most important things archivists can bring to an exhibit: context. Bradsher and Ritzenthaler write that there are

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are prominent examples of American archivists creating a step-by-step guide for facilitating the creation of archival exhibitions and highlight the administrative mindset of archivists in the 1970s and 1980s in public programming.

<sup>5</sup> Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ritzenthaler and Vogt-O'Connor, *Photographs: Archival Care and Management*, 417.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Bradsher and Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, “Archival Exhibits,” in *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions*, 235.

two basic kinds of exhibitions -- the subject or object type or commemoration and those that present the archival institution in a favourable light.<sup>9</sup> Using the exhibit as a public relations tool is not quite the same as attempting to infuse the exhibition with information about the affect of archival actions on the history of the record. The postmodern emphasis on communication, multiple meanings and context have only highlighted the work of the archival profession.<sup>10</sup> It is this work that we need to begin to bring into archival exhibition theory. Nesmith advocates the importance of reframing key archival concepts in light of this greater knowledge of provenance.<sup>11</sup> This core concept at the heart of archival work has not always been seen in the exhibits produced by archives.

Nesmith's definition of public programming stresses that "public programming would no longer be only about informing society about the existence of archival records and their possible uses, but also about explaining how recording and archiving actions help make our sense of reality or truth, and about the social and political power of archiving processes."<sup>12</sup> In digital exhibits we have the ability to better articulate this new and more complex definition of public programming.

The reconceptualization of the museum audience relationship is relevant to the work of archivists engaging in the creation of exhibitions. The basic purpose of a museum exhibition and by extension archival exhibition has been education.<sup>13</sup> While education is still a vital component of an exhibition it requires a new way of thinking about the role of the archivist and the archive and their effect on knowledge and society.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 60 (2005): 260.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 266-267.

<sup>13</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 1.

One aspect of a new exhibition theory could be to educate the public on the role the archivist has played in the creation of memory. This can inform the structure and theme of an exhibit and be explicit in the text of an exhibit. As Lilly Koltun notes, “Archivists have rarely admitted the extensive reach of creation in our own activities of heritage preservation...”<sup>14</sup> Koltun refers not only to the obvious archival selection and appraisal process, but how descriptions orient the direction of research and thus facilitate new access to records that often redefines the value of the record.<sup>15</sup> Exhibiting archival records can directly impact the life and value of archival records.

Integrating ideas from museology is imperative for re-conceptualizing the archival exhibit. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill advocates examining museum exhibits by investigating “what is said, and how it is said.”<sup>16</sup> By examining museum literature we see how the narratives constructed and the ways in which we communicate these narratives are imperative for interacting with the public. Hooper-Greenhill also questions why particular objects have been collected, what is known about them and from which perspective?<sup>17</sup> These questions, if applied to archival collections, would support some of the thinking advocated by Schwartz, Nesmith and other archival scholars. Meaning will come from understanding the functions of images. Looking at the functional contexts and administrative and appraisal history of records before exhibiting them would assist in

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<sup>14</sup> Lilly Koltun, “The Promise and Threat of Digital Options in an Archival Age,” *Archivaria* 47, no.1 (1999): 119.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

creating a better depiction of archival work.<sup>18</sup> This would prevent the often times simplistic “sepia-tinged view of the past” from being put on display in archives.<sup>19</sup>

A critical element in museum literature and practice that desperately needs to be incorporated into archival thought is the construction of meaning through the presence or absence of particular objects.<sup>20</sup> The exhibition is a space where archivists and the public should explore the silences in archival collections. Joanna Sassoon’s work illustrates the importance of function and form over content and is a significant example of the necessity of recognizing the silences within the archive.<sup>21</sup> Why particular records or collections have been destroyed or were not placed in the archive at all can affect archival exhibitions and thus public conceptions of history. This idea is only more significant when dealing the images from the First World War. Many of the records of the First World War have complex histories of creation and custodianship that are often not expressed throughout the exhibition, which has typically placed the focus on content. Official war diaries, maps and most relevant for this study, photographs, have been manipulated both on the battlefield and the home front to create particular narratives. As we will see in chapters two and three significant silences within the Foote fonds can tell a viewer about the attitudes towards particular cultural groups in Winnipeg, how subjects of photographs wished to be portrayed and how archival arrangements and descriptions can alter a person’s view of the past. By providing different perspectives to explore within a digital exhibition, photographs that have been censored or sit unused speak just

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<sup>18</sup> John Berger, “Uses of Photography,” in *John Berger Selected Essays*, ed. Geoff Dyer (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 288.

<sup>19</sup> Winter, *Remembering the War*, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Joanna Sassoon, “Chasing Phantoms in the Archives: The Australia House Photograph Collection,” *Archivaria* 50 (2000): 118.



as loudly as those images included in archival collections. Often the users of archives fail to think of the process of appraisal, arrangement and description undertaken by the archives. Digital exhibitions have the opportunity to encourage more critical thought from archival users as well as incorporate different perspectives into the archive.

The archival community has to begin to bring such concerns more explicitly into creating exhibition theory and if “objects in museums are assembled to make visual statements which combine to produce visual narratives” so too can archival exhibits.<sup>22</sup> However, rarely have archivists seen the exhibit as worthy of serious study or as a window into archival collections for scholars or interested users.<sup>23</sup> The archival profession has devoted little time to understanding the power of archival exhibitions in creating narrative and as a way for the archival community to contribute to new ways of thinking visually.<sup>24</sup> Creating more sophisticated methods of analysis with the tools now available in the digital world can better reflect the complex nature of the records within the archives. And attempting to understand how users are interacting with digital exhibits will produce more user-centric design that will in turn create more socially engaging and relevant exhibitions for the future.

The idea that archiving is an ongoing process or action has not been fully integrated into archival exhibition practice. The dynamic nature of records cannot be

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<sup>22</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Many archivists have written on the topic of visual literacy in conjunction with archival photographs, often attempting to encourage the archival community to adapt and interpret the idea of visual literacy within archival practice. Rarely if ever have they made mention of the exhibit as a means of undertaking this work. Some examples include Tim Schlak, “Framing Photographs, denying archives: the difficulty of focusing on archival photographs,” *Archival Science* 8 (2008): 85-101, Elizabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin, “Mind and Sight: Visual Literacy and the Archivist,” *Archival Issues* 21, no. 2 (1996): 107-127. Jim Burant, “Visual Archives and the Writing of Canadian History: A Personal Review,” *Archivaria* 54 (Fall 2002), and Paul Conway and Ricardo Punzalan “Fields of Vision: Toward a New Theory of Visual Literacy for Digitized Archival Photographs” *Archivaria* 71 (Spring, 2011): 63-97.

contained in one exhibition nor is it best represented in the linear exhibits that characterized archival public programming in the early twentieth century. The exhibit itself acts as a public method of contextualization and can be more far reaching than other form of contextualization.<sup>25</sup> Archives have long been in the business of memory making and the exhibition is a space that exemplifies Nesmith's more nuanced definition of archiving as a multifaceted process of "performing remembered or otherwise recorded acts, transmitting such accounts over time and space, organizing, interpreting, forgetting and even destroying them, [that] produces constructions of some prior activity or condition."<sup>26</sup> Exhibits are themselves a product of their time that shows the attitudes archival institutions had towards their collections and how they have displayed them. The practical advice of the past on how to put an exhibition together may not seem relevant as we begin to re-conceptualize the exhibit but when deconstructed it illustrates some foundation issues we need to bring forward into a new concept of curation.

If context is virtually boundless we have an opportunity with archival exhibitions to revisit records, and bring new contexts of understanding to the records.<sup>27</sup> Digital technologies allow archivists the ability to create multiple arrangements and highlight multiple narratives present in archival documents. The focus on digital exhibitions highlights the possibilities that lay dormant in many archival collections. The practice of an exhibition is one that provides the space to rethink and add those further contextualizations far better than any other facet of archival work. Archivists can use the exhibit to critique ideas that have been historically embedded in the archive as well as

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<sup>25</sup> Nesmith, "Reopening Archives," 262.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives," *The American Archivist* 65, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 26.

<sup>27</sup> Nesmith, "Reopening Archives," 260.

open up a space for dialogue between contradictory ideas rather than promoting one overall narrative.

Long before discussions of budget, title or work plan, the first thing archivists should survey is what records they have, decide what kind of story they want to tell and how that story takes shape. That should include the archivist's acknowledgement of what the archives does not possess and why. In doing so the archival profession can attempt to shed the mantle of objectivity that has been passed down as a legacy of Jenkinsonian concept of archives.<sup>28</sup> In no place in archival work is this more important than in exhibitions. In successful exhibits an archives can challenge the ideas of a viewer, engage them, and in that process they learn something about the collection that they may never have encountered before. Throwing off past conceptions of the role of the archivist and creating a more transparent relationship with archival users is perhaps the real start to an exhibition. Archivists may find themselves becoming a facilitator and co-creator rather than an authority figure in this new conception of the archival exhibition.

To create an exhibit the archivist or curator must deliberately select records for archival users and present them in a creative and well-designed way. Referring back to the SAA definition which notes that "the selection of materials for an exhibit is sometimes called curation, and the individual responsible a curator."<sup>29</sup> If we accept this aspect of the SAA definition does that not make an archivist a curator? Archivists select, inscribe and make materials accessible in exhibits yet most archivists would not call

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<sup>28</sup> Schwartz and Cook, "Archives Records and Power," 5.

<sup>29</sup> Society of American Archivists, "Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology," <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/exhibition> (accessed March 28, 2015)

themselves curators. The opposite extreme is more common with archivists hiring outside curatorial professionals to create exhibits.<sup>30</sup>

Outside curatorial professionals bring a wealth of knowledge and a tendency to focus on artistic merit or connoisseurship.<sup>31</sup> That perspective, while valuable, does not adequately showcase the archival perspective or the knowledge the archival profession brings to visual records. Art curators tend to separate individual images rather than highlight their contextualities. It should therefore be the project of current archival professionals to redefine the term curatorship in ways that better incorporate the work of archivists when creating digital exhibitions. Providing access and information about our holdings is one of the foundations of archival work and the exhibit can be seen as yet another way for archivists to provide information on our collections.<sup>32</sup> Yet, archival exhibits have suffered from a lack of theorization and therefore have not been integrated into more complex postmodern thinking. This has led the exhibition to stagnate as an archival function and to relegate it to the bottom of the long list of professional obligations.

The role of the archivist in this process cannot be underestimated. To create an exhibit exemplifies Ian Wilson's belief that "archivists as custodians of social memory, cannot be spectators, we take part in the creation of memory by the records we preserve."<sup>33</sup> Archivists cannot go forward in the digital age to curate exhibits in any form without beginning to examine their own role in the history of archives and how they can

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<sup>30</sup> Nicholls, "Exhibiting Evidence," 36.

<sup>31</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 56.

<sup>32</sup> Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Governor General to Open Exhibition at the National Archives," Government of Canada Press Release (Ottawa, 1 July 2002), quoted in J. Keri Cronin, "Assimilation and Difference: Two Recent Exhibitions of Archival Photographs" *Archivaria* 54 (2002): 131.

take the excellent work on archival theory and apply it to the exhibit. The exhibit is an odd function of the archives as it illustrates almost every facet of archival work from appraisal to preservation and it showcases the archivist and the archives as vital parts of the memory making process. Brien Brothman's work on the role of archivists in creating value implicates the authority of the archivist in perpetuating societal norms and cultural hierarchies throughout the course of their work.<sup>34</sup> Archivists should think about the ways that they and the institutions they work for have given meaning to archival documents and how that relationship can be explored within archival exhibitions. In the past the linear timeline model used for archival exhibitions, which chooses specific images from our collections usually based on perceived aesthetic value and separates them from the context of their creation has enforced specific narratives that have assisted in supporting the dominant social and cultural narrative. Understanding those concepts helps us to re-conceptualize the exhibit in archival practice.

Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook perhaps best explain the power archivists have in creating societal memory. In their conception, the archive wields considerable power over the "shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups and societies."<sup>35</sup> What tools do archivists use to wield this power? If we follow Nesmith's conception of provenance and archives one can see that the influence of the archivist is present in most aspects of archival work, yet the exhibit is noticeably absent in many of these discussions. Despite being one of the most public functions of archival practice the mark left by the archivist in creating narrative and reshaping collections for exhibitions is not examined in any

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<sup>34</sup> Brien Brothman, "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 82.

<sup>35</sup> Schwartz and Cook, "Archives Records, and Power," 2.

detail in the archival literature. John Tagg believes that “like the state, the camera is never neutral. The representations it produces are highly coded, and the power it wields is never its own.”<sup>36</sup> If the camera is never neutral then without doubt the archivist cannot be. The power of choosing, highlighting and creating narrative around a select group of records is one that only grows more important as more and more archival content goes online.<sup>37</sup> Recognizing this power makes it open and accountable for questioning and for a dialogue that can enrich our understanding of archives.<sup>38</sup> If we begin to examine the records as Schwartz and Cook have advocated -- as documentary means of expressing power relationships -- we can begin to create more nuanced exhibitions in the digital age.

How then do we begin to construct a narrative in an exhibit? In today's image saturated environment archivists must learn to incorporate knowledge of visual literacy into archival work.<sup>39</sup> Many archivists are familiar with the ways of reading photographs but that has not been sufficiently expressed in the exhibitions they create.

The writings of John Berger on art and advertising are relevant to the ways we take records out of the archive and begin to formulate new archival exhibition theory. Berger focuses on the exclusion of particular classes of society from the practice of art or cultural production.<sup>40</sup> More than forty years ago Berger stated that “the art of the past has now become a political issue”. Archivists creating archival exhibitions have not approached their work as a political action. By illustrating the provenance and some of

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<sup>36</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 63.

<sup>37</sup> Cook, “The Archive(s) is a foreign country,” 613.

<sup>38</sup> Schwartz and Cook, “Archives Records, and Power,” 2.

<sup>39</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 58.

<sup>40</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 33.

the complex class and historical concepts embedded in the archival record archivists could begin to create exhibitions in unexplored depth.

We can gain an understanding of how the Canadian archival community has viewed photographs by examining the structures they have created to arrange and describe them. They have a large impact on the ways archival photographs are subsequently used to create digital exhibitions. The Rules for Archival Description (RAD) have been embraced and adapted by various Canadian archivists and illustrate how archival institutions view their visual records. Chapter Four of RAD groups art and photography together rather than giving them their own distinct chapters.<sup>41</sup> This illustrates the importance the archival profession places on visual media as well as the significance of placing photography and art together. Photographs possess many of the same qualities both intellectual and physical as art, however attitudes towards the medium of photography have also been embedded with the empiricism of the nineteenth century. To put the two media together separates photography from its greater context of creation and complex history.<sup>42</sup> The photograph has been seen as conveyor of truth without the interpretation of an artist. The photograph became a way of communicating empirical facts supposedly unmediated across time and space.<sup>43</sup> Art is often meant to be a standalone medium where as photographs, particularly archival photographs, rarely exist as individual items. Archival photographs treated as individual items can become divorced from their collections and viewed as illustrations rather than archival documents that are part of rich collections with multiple meanings and functions. Who better than

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<sup>41</sup> Joan Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Linguistic 'Othering,' and the Margins of Archivry," *Archivaria* 54 (2002), 149.

<sup>42</sup> Joan Schwartz, " 'Records of Simple Truth and Precision': Photography, Archives and the Illusion of Control," *Archivaria* 50, (2000), 5.

<sup>43</sup> Schwartz, " 'Records of Simple Truth and Precision,' " 11.

the archivist who has been grappling with our role and the complicated nature of archival records and institutions to open up this dialogue?

In recent years the Canadian archival community has begun to address some of these issues – as they relate to exhibiting archival records concerning indigenous rights and residential schools. Photographer and curator Jeff Thomas’s exhibit *Where are the Children?* is an example of an exhibit that has been installed with the intent that viewers bring their own experience when interacting with the exhibit. The dictatorial tone of so many other archival exhibitions will not only reinforce the efforts of the colonizers in this particular instance but it also supports outdated curatorial practice that underestimates the viewer and allows for little to no engagement with the work. It may walk the fine line of providing context, narrative and theme but not simply informing people of a pre-conceptualized “truth.”<sup>44</sup>

One of the most profound opportunities the digital world offers archivists is the ability to interact with new users and encourage their use of archives. Archivists are able to connect with a much larger and more diverse group of archival users than ever before. The exhibit that makes the most of digital technologies can serve as the window into the archives for our new users. Digital technologies are distinctive in their ability to open up dialogue and alternative viewpoints, allowing multiple voices to coexist in the exhibit space. Users tagging or uploading their own images brings new context and sometimes records to interact with existing archival collections. Creating scrapbooks, images or new metadata for records profoundly changes the archival record and helps records to illustrate the complexity of their societal and other provenances. The promise of the

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<sup>44</sup> Cronin, “Assimilation and Difference,” 134.



digital for archival exhibits is its ability to better represent a fuller history of the records. The exhibit is no longer tied to linear lines and one major voice but can also represent dissenting voices and evolving themes. The digital is able to provide non-static contexts for records that continue to grow and create new meaning.

Most archival collections are diverse with records of different media, time periods and from both institutional, private or community creators. This diversity should encourage the use of our collections by a wide range of users beyond the traditional ones: academic researchers (predominantly historians); genealogists; and amateur enthusiasts. Also the traditional relationship with users did not encourage collaboration with them. These relationships resulted in certain preconceived ideas about the research output. Family trees, personal histories, academic publications or student theses are all understandable outputs for archival users.<sup>45</sup> However when we invite the public to co-curate an exhibition with us and to bring their knowledge, interests and skills to engage with archival material, we open up the concept of an archival exhibition, user relationships, outputs, and dramatically change the nature of that function of archival work.

Another new challenge facing archivists when creating digital exhibits is collaborating with technical professionals. The people who build and maintain web platforms used by the archives are increasingly important to the creation of exhibition theory. As discussed later in Chapter Three many of the of the limitations faced by archivists when creating digital exhibits are the result of the archival profession's own lack of technical skill, and its inability to articulate its needs and concerns to technical

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<sup>45</sup> Karl Magee and Susannah Waters, "Archives, Artists and Designers," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no.2 (October 2011): 282.

professionals. Developing a closer relationship with information technologists and website designers will help to increase the usefulness of digital exhibits. This process will only benefit the archive and allow archivists to better engage with archival users. Only by creating new partnerships and redefining what an archival exhibition is will exhibition theory begin to evolve within the archives.

Karl Magee and Susannah Water's discussion of the University of Stirling Archives ongoing collaboration with Stirling's contemporary art gallery and the 2007 *Is that all there is?* exhibition provides an excellent example of what collaboration with different fields can look like with archivists involved.<sup>46</sup> This particular exhibition highlights the collaboration between archivist, gallery curator and artists where each participant brought their own area of experience and specialty to the creation of the exhibit. This collaboration is significant for the dialogue that can occur between different but interrelated professions. Magee and Waters state that the selection process maintained a constant dialogue between all collaborators and strongly illustrated the viewpoints from each participant.<sup>47</sup> The exhibit focused on an artist who worked predominantly in collage and with a "rather laissez-faire attitude to publicly available material."<sup>48</sup> The authors felt that the content itself generated interesting discussion surrounding issues of use, access and the display of archival materials. It is telling that the archivist wanted to present the didactic chronological account of the artist's life and the artist stepped in and suggested something less linear and more impressionistic.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Magee and Waters, "Archives, Artists and Designers," 276.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

In the Magee and Water's example the artist and other creative professionals brought out aspects of archives that had not been addressed by archivists such as colour, texture, shape and format and began asking questions about how archives create stories about individuals or subjects.<sup>50</sup> Magee and Waters do however make a distinction between the creative professionals and archivists, which unfortunately does not assist in incorporating this kind of knowledge into the mainstream of archival practice.<sup>51</sup> By perpetuating an "us and them" mentality with the so called creative community only teaches new archivists that that is not an aspect of their professional knowledge.

Noted photographic archivists such as Joan Schwartz and Joanna Sassoon provide the theoretical underpinnings that can guide the archival profession's attitude to photography today. Their work speaks to the complexity and importance of archival photographs. No study, however, has attempted to combine their work with exhibition theory. Most other exhibition guides are more practical guidelines than spaces for theoretical negotiation.<sup>52</sup> In defence of these authors they are providing a much-needed service for archivists who feel uncomfortable with photographs and public programming more generally. However that approach has very significant limitations in the digital sphere and seems quite short sighted in a world that is if anything increasingly more visual. In the digital world there is a lack of hierarchy, a breadth of interest outside local geographic regions and an expectation for high quality images to connect the online world. Social media websites, in particular those tied to the advancement of mobile technology such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr all have significant visual

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ritzenthaler et al, *Photographs: Archival Care and Management* and Lacher-Feldman, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries* both make vague references to using theory and incorporating design ideas but rarely elaborate in any meaningful way.

components that attract users of all ages. These users then internalize these components to create expectations for their other online experiences. If the archival community devotes no time to investigating these ideas their exhibits will suffer and the once hallmark of archival public programming could fade entirely from archival practice.

Scholars such as Schwartz advocate for a greater integration of visual literacy into archival theory and practice.<sup>53</sup> Archivists need to cultivate this knowledge of visual literacy and also make better use of it by incorporating it into archival exhibitions. Suggestions for best practice include incorporating knowledge from many disciplines and melding it with an increased visual literacy to begin to address archival photographs in a more realistic reading than they have received previously. Tim Schlak quite rightly notes that photographs are “compelling subjects with their capacity to evoke rather than tell, to suggest rather than explain.”<sup>54</sup> Schwartz has advocated for the importance of the “work outside the field of archives... [and how it can] help us understand the material in our care.”<sup>55</sup> The legacy of Schwartz, Sassoon and other archival scholars is the inclusion of postmodern theory into the archival lexicon in regard to photography. They show that records are no longer static and unchanging, but evolve in meaning when viewed from varying contextual perspectives. This approach is now integral to reading the archives. Scholars were asking “who and what are being represented, and by whom for what purpose (conscious or unconscious) and what effect on the which viewers?”<sup>56</sup> This archival perspective on photographs that should be better incorporated into exhibitions.

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<sup>53</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 58.

<sup>54</sup> Schlak, “Framing Photographs,” 85.

<sup>55</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 58.

<sup>56</sup> Schlak, “Framing Photographs,” 87.

Taking this knowledge of multiple contextualities is the first step archivists can take to creating more nuanced exhibitions. Photographs are a part of power dynamics that affect the whole of the archive and this dynamic has rarely if ever been incorporated into archival exhibitions. Engaging with photographic and visual scholarship is the first step to creating a new concept of what an archival exhibition is.

One possible way to address photographs in a new way within the exhibit is to focus on breaking what Schwartz calls “the presumed link between photographic image and visual ‘truth’ by revealing the photograph to be a mediated representation of reality: the product of a series of decisions; created by a will, for a purpose, to convey a message to an audience.”<sup>57</sup> It is in this line of thinking that archivists can begin to share their knowledge, their work and to re-conceptualize the archival exhibit and finally showcase the wonderful depth of knowledge that illuminates the understanding of photographs.

Schwartz’s study of photography has brought about a better understanding of the functional contexts of archival photographs that should be integrated into archival exhibition theory. Authority and control are inexplicably linked with function. As we begin to re-conceptualize the exhibit how do we take this new knowledge into exhibit creation? Schwartz examines the ways that photographs create or interact with archival authority. Photographs created for government projects and those taken for personal use differ greatly in how they are presented and later used by archives. Schwartz asks telling questions of photography such as how do “a geological survey or public works construction progress...convey authority as documents created by government?”<sup>58</sup> If we expand that line of questioning one begins to see the ways photographs are constructed to

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<sup>57</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 60.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 44.

act with authority and create a version of the culture and ideology. If we accept Schwartz's and other scholars' challenge of the illusion of photographs as truth, or an objective record of reality made from a mechanized process that is a neutral means of documentation, we open new avenues for viewing photographs within an archival exhibition.<sup>59</sup>

Schwartz argues that the function of a photograph or its intended use influences the character/composition of a photograph.<sup>60</sup> That is why she sees the need for a greater contextualization of photography, and the photographers themselves. To delve into the motivation or uses of a photograph opens up new avenues of discussion and ways to arrange and present archival photographs. An archivist approaching photographs to use in an exhibition should begin to ask who has intervened in the creation of this photograph, who commissioned it, what was this photograph used for? And who communicated these images to a wider audience?<sup>61</sup> These questions may seem overwhelming to any archivist beginning to create an exhibition but too few archival exhibitions have attempted to engage with these concepts.

Words and images communicate differently and while the archival profession may feel more comfortable with textual records, visual records are being used more and more frequently as archival content goes online.<sup>62</sup> Photographs are more akin to born digital records in their ability to be "decontextualized and re-contextualized... and in the process assume new functions and acquire new meanings within new contextual

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Koltun, "The Promise and Threat of Digital Options in an Archival Age," 118.

configurations.”<sup>63</sup> As Terry Cook notes in relation to born digital records “Behind the document...lies the action, the process, the broader function of the records creator.”<sup>64</sup>

This should be applied to photographs within the archives especially as they begin to go online. This shift in focus from content to function is inherently archival and should be brought out more in archival work more generally as well as in the exhibit.

If we recognize archival value in photographs by what Schwartz calls the “interrelationships between photographs and the creating structures, animating functions, programmes, and information technology that created them” we will better represent the work and knowledge of the archivists in future exhibitions.<sup>65</sup> Some critics would say that the functional approach is only suitable for governmental photographs where there has been a more obvious intention to shape and create photographic records for a political purpose. This approach to archival photographs can transcend a governmental model and apply to personal records, records of an institution, newspaper or as this thesis will show the work of Foote as a commercial photographer. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the production and consumption of photographs was poised to take a new step. A rapidly expanding middle class and its growing appetite for photographs through advertising and journalism and in domestic life set the stage for amateur and industrious photographers like Foote.<sup>66</sup> The Foote collection illustrates many of these themes and offers an excellent opportunity to construct an exhibition.

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<sup>63</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 50.

<sup>64</sup> Terry Cook, “Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era,” *Archives & Manuscripts* 22 (November 1994): 302.

<sup>65</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 50.

<sup>66</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 60.

Audience is an important concept in all forms of communication and commemoration and is particularly relevant in visual communication as we attempt to define archival exhibition theory. The audience of an exhibit takes in and defines the information of the exhibit based on their own experiences and societal contexts. The multiplicity of function of photographs is only proliferated in the many uses of photographs. John Berger and Joan Schwartz aptly conclude that “photographs do not in themselves preserve meanings...meaning is the result of understanding functions.”<sup>67</sup> Identical prints, documents we consider the archival “original” can be created for one purpose and used for many different purposes over time.<sup>68</sup> New users or audiences can find a number of new uses for and viewpoints in archival records that have stagnated in one form and description. Bringing that complexity of function to an exhibition is potentially challenging but it will make more archival exhibits more engaging and will provide a more rewarding experience for archivists themselves. Placing visual records in an exhibit that allows them to curate and create narrative that is more representative of the work that they do and allows the audience to read and engage with the records in new and different ways is an exciting prospect. Digital technologies allow for dissenting voices to be heard as well as allowing the records themselves to evolve rather than remain static. In a new conception of the exhibit archivists may more openly play new roles as mediators and make space for these other new voices. The exhibit could then show that archives may only hold part of the story and encourage the user to take the records in new directions.

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<sup>67</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 51.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



Schwartz underscores this diversity of view when comparing how a photograph held at two institutions will garner vastly different treatment and reading.<sup>69</sup> A photograph held at an art gallery will be read as art, but at an archival institution it will more likely be seen within its functional context, rather than as an artistic record. In the case of the Foote fonds the photographs have resided in an archive (the Archives of Manitoba), and despite being reproduced in various formats have not been made digitally available until more recently.<sup>70</sup> Making these records available outside the archival institution has allowed them to take on new meaning and to find new uses. Opening up of the archives gives the archivist/curator new avenues and opportunities to present their records in exhibitions.

Using the insights of Schwartz and likeminded scholars into visual literacy, archivists stand to gain a better understanding of how the Foote photographs were used within the context of the First World War to foster and reflect an ideology supportive of the British Empire's war effort. Bringing this information to an exhibit of Foote photographs is crucial to beginning new conversations with archival audiences about the character and meanings of photographs.<sup>71</sup> Incorporating societal provenance and multiple contextualities allows the archivist to bring out the functions and impact of photographs rather than simply their more obvious surface level content. Exhibitions will no longer use photographs as illustrations, but as records that shape our perceptions of history and

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>70</sup> University of Manitoba Press, "Lost Foote Photos," <http://lostfootephotos.blogspot.ca/> (Accessed March 28, 2015) "Vintage Winnipeg's facebook page," <https://www.facebook.com/VintageWinnipeg?fref=ts> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

Archives of Manitoba, "At Home and Away: Remembering the First World War through Records at the Archives of Manitoba," <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/ww1blog/index.html> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>71</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 54.

appeal to different societal beliefs through the codified system of messages.<sup>72</sup> This new understanding of archival exhibitions is particularly significant, as it will provide the tools to best represent the complex world of First World War commemoration.

The First World War was the first conflict that was heavily photographed at home and abroad, with concise messages about the conflict constructed for Canada by Lord Beaverbrook.<sup>73</sup> While there may be less photographic evidence compared to later conflicts due to technical advancements the conflict enlisted the help of the photograph early on in recruiting efforts. Photographs from the front or of the home front were thought to portray accurately the struggles of those living through the First World War. If we begin to examine First World War photographs by applying photographic theory we know that no photograph represents a single truth or entirely reliable representation of the past.<sup>74</sup> Using digital technologies to raise questions, introduce different narratives, and information about how the records were archived over time would greatly expand our understanding of First World War photographs and exhibitions as an archival function.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>73</sup> Robert McIntosh, "The Great War, Archives, and Modern Memory," *Archivaria* 46 (1998): 5.

<sup>74</sup> Schwartz, " 'We Make our Tools and Our Tools make us' ", 52.

## CHAPTER TWO

### L. B FOOTE AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

“...photographs do not in themselves preserve meaning. They offer appearances...Meaning is the result of understanding functions.”<sup>1</sup>

Photographs and other visual records have been used commemoratively to support particular versions of history. The literature exploring history, commemoration, and memory has been applied to many facets of archival work but rarely extends to archival exhibitions. As an archivist approaching the Foote fonds there are many opportunities to present the photographs from this vibrant collection in radically new ways. As an archivist mounting a potential Foote exhibit what would you choose to focus on? What is the necessary information? Can a potential Foote exhibition be used to critique historical narrative? Through a more nuanced analysis of the content, style, and function of the Foote fonds at the Archives of Manitoba it is possible to broaden our understanding both of this collection, and of the types of information archivists can use to create First World War exhibitions about the homefront. Understanding the genre of a photograph be it representational, pictorial, abstract, or symbolic can tease out new clues that can contribute significant contextual information and provide a greater body of information to those interested in using Foote's photographs in an exhibition. As will also be discussed, the work that the Archives of Manitoba has done to select, describe and preserve records has contributed significantly to the dominance of specific narratives and is a new opportunity to redefine the archivist and user relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Berger, “Uses of Photography”, 288.

The Foote collection at the Archives of Manitoba is composed of approximately 2557 photographs with 55 depicting First World War subjects. Within that grouping several genres are visible such as parade images, group portraiture, family portraiture, images of the crowd and the portraits of individual officers. The Foote fonds was officially purchased from the Foote family in 1971 and 1973 with additional gifts in 1977, and later made accessible to public.<sup>2</sup> Due to the lack of information surrounding most of Foote's work we can only guess what some of the intended uses for his photographs were. We do not know who bought particular images when they were made, or if they were commissioned. However Foote's personal history is a necessary foundation for understanding the Foote collection, and how his images have come to represent Winnipeg's wartime memory. The context of Foote's life offers a window on the role Foote played in shaping his now iconic images, and how his conceptions of value and ideology have come to define the way his collection is viewed even today. Foote's life as a commercial photographer invites comparison with the lives and works of photographers all over the world, and provides insight into the importance of going beyond simple content to investigate the functional context of archival photographs.

Foote (known personally and professionally as L.B Foote) immigrated to Winnipeg from Newfoundland in 1902, soon becoming a respected and well-established commercial photographer who excelled in creating images of Winnipeg as the "Gateway to the West."<sup>3</sup> Although his career would span fifty years, Foote's primary years of activity were from 1902 to 1930. By making the Foote fonds accessible, and

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<sup>2</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote fonds Finding Aid, MG14 C18 (Accessed March 9, 2015) Finding aid is available in the archives reading room

<sup>3</sup> Doug Smith and Michael Olito, *The Best Possible Face: LB Foote's Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1985), 1.

subsequently featuring and publicizing the collection, the archives has become an agent of creation of the narrative of Winnipeg's wartime identity. Emphasizing the role of archives and placing the Foote fonds within this context is essential in conceptualizing a First World War exhibit involving the Foote photographs.

With such a large number of images, the Foote collection dominates the Archives' photographic records collections relating to life in Winnipeg at the turn of the century. A self-taught photographer, Foote was able to capture the crowded and industrial feeling of Winnipeg during its boom years. His images depicting the dominant mainstream western settlement narratives of the time helped to forge the face of Canadian settler colonialism.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Foote's work showcases both his technical aptitude and affinity for constructing a collective memory through visual storytelling.<sup>5</sup> Foote was both technically able and personally willing to shape his images to galvanize thought around the dominant narratives of his time.

A businessman himself, Foote forged relationships with many of the influential news outlets and businessmen during Winnipeg's period of rapid expansion. Commercial photographers were not simply in the business of documenting events, they needed to sell their product.<sup>6</sup> Foote's success lay in his ability to appeal to the sensibilities of Winnipeg's elite. By exploiting contemporary ideas of class, gender, and race, Foote created a product that could be sold more effectively. In his own time, Foote was best known for his portraits of royalty. His most famous portraits were of Edward, Prince of Wales made in 1919. Foote would go on to become a press photographer, photographing

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, viii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lili Corbus Bezner, "Wedding Photography: 'A Shining Language'," *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation* 18, no. 1 (2002): 4.

political leaders and members of the social elite in Winnipeg and throughout Canada.<sup>7</sup> As well, Foote's extensive correspondence with Paramount Pictures regarding work he sent to the film studio demonstrates the long reach and versatility his images possessed.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, Foote's long association with cultural institutions, both local and international, would come to affect the subjects and aesthetic quality of Foote's work as much as his preoccupation with working with the upper echelons of society. Foote was part of a larger community of commercial photographers who supported the project of empire through their work.

Foote was a personally charismatic man, developing relationships with people of social distinction and members of government with apparent ease. This ability to promote himself and to "Foote-o-graphes the people with a smile" established his place among Winnipeg photographers early on.<sup>9</sup> In 1909 Foote entered into a partnership with George James under the understanding that James would handle the studio work, while Foote would work with subjects and take commercial assignments that benefited from his more outgoing personality. Foote soon capitalized on these qualities, becoming the official photographer of Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and the Prince of Wales when in Canada for a Royal tour.<sup>10</sup> The Foote fonds is a rich collection for a potential archival exhibition on Foote's First World War home front photographs as they can illustrate some of the ideas about exhibitions discussed here.

Over time the Foote fonds has continued to be reshaped. Renewed interest in Foote's work is manifest in new publications such as Esyllt Jones's, *Imagining Winnipeg*:

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<sup>7</sup> Smith and Olito, *The Best Possible Face*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote Fonds, MG14 C18, File 1 & 2.

<sup>9</sup> Smith and Olito, *The Best Possible Face*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*History through the Photographs of L.B. Foote* (Winnipeg, 2012). Images from the collection have been featured in blogs, including the “Lost Foote Photos blog” curated by the University of Manitoba Press and have been taken up on various social media accounts like “Vintage Winnipeg.”<sup>11</sup> Through these new lenses of digital curation viewers are exposed to Foote’s work in new forms which allow users to engage with Foote’s representations of Winnipeg at the turn of the century as more than a simple study of content, but as a complex communication that engages with the history and meanings of photography and the world Foote was actively helping to shape. Through digital curation audiences continue to engage with Foote and his work and perception of Winnipeg while shaping their own narratives.

Compared with other events from the same period, the First World War has been well commemorated, but archival collections generally still lack the volume of visual images the Second World War and other more recent conflicts have contributed to the visual records of many archives. The need to mount exhibitions that are both fresh and engaging while having access to a limited number of images makes it particularly important, especially in the context of the centenary years (2014 to 2018), to explore alternative and more robust avenues through which to mount First World War archival materials. By examining the narratives contained within the Foote fonds and considering them from different perspectives, it is possible to imagine new and exciting possibilities for creating First World War archival exhibitions.

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<sup>11</sup> “Vintage Winnipeg’s facebook page”, <https://www.facebook.com/VintageWinnipeg?fref=ts> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

Archives of Manitoba, “At Home and Away: Remembering the First World War through Records at the Archives of Manitoba” <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/ww1blog/index.html> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

As well, with the increasing number of First World War photographic images being made available online, it is more important than ever to analyze new avenues of exploration and contextualization before mounting an exhibit. While the inherent value of archival documents has always been based on the authority of the archives itself, without providing more user-centric and appealing methods to access the archive's records, the perceived value of archival records will soon dwindle. The medium of the exhibit can play a role in identifying and presenting the distinct voices of creators and users, as well as those of the archivists who curate such an exhibit.

Conceptualizing a new approach to mounting an archival Foote photography exhibition begins with a consideration of the reasons behind including or excluding specific pieces. The idea of choosing only a few images from such a rich collection is itself a daunting task, especially in the case of Foote's captivating First World War work. While it is almost a truism that Foote's images are important, why is this the case? Is it simply because they are considered of great historical value? Is it due to their rarity? Are they important because of Foote's association with the Winnipeg General Strike?<sup>12</sup> Or is it an unquantifiable mixture of all of these factors? By asking these questions before exhibiting Foote's work online archivists can bring forward larger issues of social history and archival practice to larger audiences. The exhibit can examine issues that have yet to be represented in any formal archival description of Foote at the Archives of Manitoba. Opening this dialogue would assist the viewer in understanding their own reactions to

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<sup>12</sup> Foote's place in the labour and social history of Winnipeg has been defined by his images of the Winnipeg General Strike and his "slum" photos of Winnipeg's north end. These are the most highly reproduced and well known of his images and there are relatively few photographs from this period besides Foote's. This has allowed the *Winnipeg Free Press* and Archives of Manitoba to leverage these photos as iconic within the city. See also Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, xv.



historical photos and bring about a new understanding how of archives shape user relationships to historical records.

This approach is not without its challenges, however. Missing contextual information can make the job of mounting a rich and well-framed archival exhibition more complex. In the case of the Foote collection, the photos are of such newsworthy subjects that at the time they were accessioned their content would have been familiar to most Canadians, and their significance would have seemed obvious. In other cases certain information may not have seemed important enough to be recorded at the time the images were taken or when they were accessioned. For these reasons many archives do not have a great deal of information about the context and content of the photographs in their care. What information many archivists would consider significant today could have been considered not important enough to record or conversely that the information was so obvious it did not need to be stated at all. To mount an exhibition an archivist may have to become detective, looking for a name or a date written on the back of an image, and perhaps some record of the custodial history of a collection in an accessioning file. In many cases only a few images will have named individuals in photographs or records that place them explicitly within a particular event. It is rare that archival documentation will explain the significance of a photograph, particularly if the photographs in the collection were originally taken for personal use by the donor or donor's family. Many original creators would not have anticipated the need to explain the significance of the images outside of their own circle of reference.

Always popular with researchers from a range of backgrounds, interest in the Foote collection continues to grow. This interest can be ascribed to two main causes:

because Foote was an effective commercial photographer, his body of work can stand on its own, and, I would argue, because Foote actively archived his own work. Foote exerted considerable influence over the collective memory of Winnipeggers by establishing himself so effectively as a well-known and well-connected photographer. However, it was his later efforts to memorialize his career and establish his photographs as an enduring historical record that make Foote's work an essential piece of Winnipeg's historical narrative.

This effort began in 1948 with a series of articles featuring Foote's photographs from the 1890s to 1930s in the magazine *Manitoba Calling*.<sup>13</sup> This "Pictures of the Past" series showcased Foote's older works from the 1900s to the 1930s. These articles also provided a platform for Foote to write about himself, about what brought him to Winnipeg and what he did to capture the "true" history of the city.<sup>14</sup> Foote would act as archivist by highlighting, arranging and describing what he felt was his most significant or crowd pleasing works. In effect, just as he had controlled the narratives in his photographs, Foote now created his own personal mythology, engaging nostalgia and the rhetoric of photographic witnessing to legitimize his own career and assert his place in history.

In the early 1950s Foote wrote several articles for the *Winnipeg Tribune* and *Winnipeg Free Press* showcasing older photographs from his most successful period. Through these articles he had become a social commentator recognized as having made a significant contribution to the city. He was able to romanticize and commemorate his career highs, while effectively legitimizing his own version of Winnipeg history that has

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<sup>13</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote Fonds, MG14 C18, File 1 & 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

been internalized by the archive. Despite the large legacy of photographic and textual record left behind by Foote he remains a mystery to the archives that house his collections and the commentators and historians that have studied his work since its inclusion in the archive.<sup>15</sup> Analyzing how Foote wanted to show himself and his work to the world is telling for those archivists creating a Foote exhibition and would be an ideal starting place to begin dialogue within an exhibition. Creating more transparency in the way Foote and simultaneously the archive have created historical narrative would be an important and much needed line of inquiry when taking the Foote fonds online.

Foote's logbook housed at the Archives of Manitoba illustrates how he thought about his photographs as a commercial photographer and demonstrates the original organizational system he used to track his images on an item-by-item basis.<sup>16</sup> The logbook provides interesting context and allows users to see how Foote created his work. Within the Archives of Manitoba the book is artificially separated from the photographs, which has led it to be overlooked and underutilized as a research tool. As noted by Terry Cook as early as the 1980s, "while media separation *need* not blur the functional integrity of the total records of an agency or individual, there is growing evidence that separation *does* just that."<sup>17</sup> Individual stray items removed from their context, no matter how great their informational value, had no place in Cook's new conception of Canadian archives. In this case the separation of Foote's logbook from the photographs it references have done nothing to further our understandings of Foote, provenance or the history of the

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<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, vii.

<sup>16</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote Fonds, MG14 C18, File 1 & 2.

<sup>17</sup> Terry Cook, "Counterpoint: Media Myopia," *Archivaria* 12, no.1 (1981): 148. Original passage emphasis by Terry Cook.

record. However digital exhibitions allow for both textual photographic records to coexist in a new space, despite their physical separation within the archive.

Looking at the work of Foote and other commercial photographers functionally and not seeing the photographers alone as the ultimate and only creators of their photographic images provides a more nuanced way of viewing their work. As photographs are reprinted and re-contextualized, a photographer's agency cannot be denied but it is only one facet of the origin of the photograph. Who commissioned the images, how they were used, who was represented in them, and what the intended message was are some of the more important pieces of information that can and should be explored in an archival exhibit.

Writing in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London, 2003), Schwartz and geographer James R. Ryan argue that an understanding of the processes of production of visual information are essential for exploring the cultural production of imagined geographies.<sup>18</sup> To understand the function of photographic records is to understand the complex nature of history and the role that photography, and by extension the exhibit, have played in constructing historical narrative. A more nuanced archival methodology shifts the focus of analysis from subject-based categorizations to the intended use and form of photographs, and illustrates how that information can be used in digital exhibits. In this new realm of heightened visual literacy photographs are no longer passive representations of history, they provide a greater

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<sup>18</sup> Joan Schwartz and James Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

understanding of the actions by which they were created, and how these images functioned in a broader societal context.<sup>19</sup>

Schwartz's conception of photographs as an expression and not as a reflection of social values speaks to the idea of Foote as an active agent of nation- and narrative-building.<sup>20</sup> Foote's diverse photographic work showcasing theatre companies, the coroner's office, and his rich and extensive collection of First World War images is far more than a simple visual reflection of Winnipeg in the early twentieth century. Foote's work is a record of how commercial photographers, including the individuals and agencies they worked for, created and shaped ideologies using photography in order to market their construction to the public.<sup>21</sup> Photography, constructed as a "truthful" record of history, was used to entrench ideologies of its own time and place, but the ideas and ideals embodied in photography's social construction have been internalized and preserved, often unselfconsciously, by the archives. In turn, these constructions have helped to shape the historical meaning of Winnipeg.

Schwartz argues that "photographs are an integral part of a means by which governments and businesses communicate legislation, implement policy, and manufacture consent."<sup>22</sup> In this context, Foote as photographer played a significant role in manufacturing that consent for the government, and his voice, while not always overt, continues to shape our understanding of Winnipeg in the early twentieth century. How does this understanding inform the role of the archivist when working with Foote's photographs? How can a closer and more nuanced understanding of the larger context of

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<sup>19</sup> Joanna Sassoon, "The Politics of Pictures: A Cultural History of the Western Australian Government Print Collection," *Australian Historical Studies* 35 (2004): 17.

<sup>20</sup> Schwartz, " 'We Make our Tools and Our Tools make us' ", 54.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Foote's life and times contribute to the richness of the collection, its use, and its public display?

As a commercial photographer Foote's attempts to appeal to the interests of the governing bodies of the time can be seen in his awareness of what visual narratives best represented the ruling ideology. Photography's lengthy association with the growth of the state places Foote firmly within this evolution.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, his mastery of these subject areas suggests that he was himself engaged with these ideologies. While we often lack the information of who commissioned Foote's work or how it was intended to be used his long standing relationship with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, royalty, and government institutions indicates that Foote was not overtly cultivating a dissenting voice within his own time. Foote's images exist, as Schwartz describes, at the point of interface between the state and the individual when she writes: "And because photographs convey, in a non-verbal way, the ideological context of values and beliefs that inform and animate official policies and practices, they constitute an important interface between institution and individual."<sup>24</sup>

Foote himself was a part of a larger movement engaged in taking agency to define wartime messages. Perhaps the best-known Canadian example of manufacturing the messages of the First World War can be found in the work of the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO). Max Aitken's (later Lord Beaverbrook) active creation, manipulation and censorship of wartime records came to define the contemporary narrative on the war.<sup>25</sup> The deliberate creation of records of historical value characterizes the approach of the Canadian government and others in positions of power during the First World War,

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<sup>23</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 61.

<sup>24</sup> Schwartz, " 'We Make our Tools and Our Tools make us,' " 53.

<sup>25</sup> McIntosh, "The Great War," 7.

defining the tone for other government organizations and media in Canada. As part of its efforts, the CWRO regularly appealed for records including private photographs of distinguished servicemen, often writing to their families for these photographs.<sup>26</sup> These efforts not only fostered a cult of hero worship, but also supported the existence of a bureaucratic machine that actively sought out and collected the records of others. The CWRO would go on to document the battlefield by actively creating, and not simply curating, records such as diaries, films, art and photographs.<sup>27</sup> Beaverbrook's strategy would prove so successful that, as archivist Robert McIntosh writes, "John Buchan director of the British Department of Information, said that Canadian publicity was leading people to believe 'that Canada is running the war'."<sup>28</sup> Beaverbrook's aggressive record creation and collection policy would prove more influential than the then Dominion Archivist of Canada Arthur Doughty's more traditional views - which resulted in the archival voice being sidelined for most of the war.<sup>29</sup>

In April of 1916 the CWRO appointed Captain Harry Edward Knobel as the first Official Canadian Photographer.<sup>30</sup> Initially the photographer was tasked with documenting places near the front that Canadian troops were currently occupying or had previously occupied.<sup>31</sup> The aggressive documentary collection strategy of Lord Beaverbrook was animated by the desire to "see our men climbing out of the trenches to the assault."<sup>32</sup> This interest in photographic documentation and its perceived authenticity is imbedded within the culture of the archive. Schwartz notes the vast photographic

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid..

<sup>30</sup> Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography* 2, no.1 (1978): 41.

<sup>31</sup> McIntosh, "The Great War," 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

legacy of the CWRO generated by its use of photos that illustrate the government's creation of wartime narrative.<sup>33</sup> The CWRO recognized early on the importance of controlling narrative and particularly the significance of the strategic use of images in that struggle for control.

Hosting government sponsored exhibitions allowed the CWRO to control the visual messages that were conveyed to the public in Europe and to government and military personnel.<sup>34</sup> These same messages would make it across the Atlantic and back home to Canada. The CWRO recognized the importance of access to and control of these materials. The exhibits the CWRO would create would define how these records would be accessed and engaged. Beyond the creation of individual narrative images, the creation of narrative exhibits would play a significant part in conveying intended messages, and would create a canon of war images that would set the standard for the work that Foote and other photographers like him across Canada would produce.

In July 1917 the CWRO created a multi-panel panorama that showed Canadian troops advancing on Vimy Ridge.<sup>35</sup> Intended to express a sense of immediacy already being cultivated in war imagery, the images were actually a combination of two negatives, and shellfire was later added to the image through retouching.<sup>36</sup> Despite trading on photography's apparent objectivity, this image illustrates the level of technical manipulation present even in photography of this period.

Whether manipulated in the darkroom or through careful and intentional composition and lighting, the intended message of a photograph can often be drawn on to

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<sup>33</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 53.

<sup>34</sup> Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism," 39.

<sup>35</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 53.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



show the viewer why the image was composed a particular way. The government as a corporate body wanted to communicate the courage, heroism and inevitable if demanding march towards victory of the Canadian troops.<sup>37</sup> It was a march that every Canadian, struggling through wartime privations and personal losses, could take pride in being at least a small part of. While the Vimy Ridge panorama example casts doubt on simple ideas about truth and authenticity in photography, it also raises an important question: how is a photograph's interaction with history and intentional manipulation of its narrative reflected in its historical importance? These constructed photographs represent not only what people thought about how the military was functioning in a way that an un-doctored photograph does not but they also represent the narrative the Canadian government wanted to promote.

During the war, many photographs and paintings were exhibited in London. News services reported to the Canadian public on the exhibits and their reception. Much of the wartime narrative was constructed through visual exhibitions intended to foster a personal connection with those fighting and struggling in Europe, engaging empathy by using the well-honed concept of eyewitness photographs. This program would inform the way Winnipeggers saw and expected to see the war, a visual narrative that was then expressed through many of Foote's photographs. As some of the most visible images of the First World War, published and distributed widely across Canada, it is most likely Foote would have seen these images and that they helped to direct his own work in Winnipeg. Examining the Foote fonds within this larger context of Canada's response to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

the First World War, Foote's work becomes a part of a larger movement that came to define popular wartime memory.

The presumed immediacy of photography (or its ability to capture a true image) has shaped understanding of photographs since the dawn of the photographic process. The photograph uses photographic realism as a way of communicating apparently empirical facts supposedly unmediated across time and space.<sup>38</sup> The CWRO set the standard in Canada for the use of first-hand accounts and photographic witnessing to support this myth of immediacy. It is especially deceptive to associate photography with immediacy when the technical requirements of photography -- transporting cumbersome equipment, for example -- involve an intentional and deliberate decision to document and not simply a passive ability to be in the right place at the right time.<sup>39</sup>

Schwartz notes that this makes the photograph more an emulation of a commemorative or newsworthy event than a record of action.<sup>40</sup> As she writes, "Commissions and assignments for governments, businesses or newspapers make photography a premeditated act."<sup>41</sup> This premeditation permeates not only the creation of narrative by larger organizations like the CWRO, but also the deliberate acts of creation by photographers who must take an active role in creating their visual messages. Foote is a prime example of this. As a commercial photographer his ability to compose photographs that spoke to a larger audience directly influenced his ability to acquire more lucrative commissions, and I would argue that this deliberate creation of a marketable image has contributed to the dominance of his narrative within the archive. Images that

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>39</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 48.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

appeal to more people often see more use and prominence within an archive than the records that are thought to contain a dissenting voice.

According to historian John Gillis national memory “is shared by people who have never seen or heard one another, yet regard themselves as having a common history.”<sup>42</sup> Foote’s images offer a vast collection of evidence of how Winnipeg and Canadian leaders attempted to harness the power of commemoration to further Canada’s participation in the war effort by creating a national memory. Foote’s early war images, many of which would become iconic images shaping Winnipeg’s identity, capture many patriotic parades. Street parades were a popular propaganda tool engaged throughout the war to educate the populace on government war aims.<sup>43</sup> Parades were public exhibitions that reached large numbers of people and could communicate understandable and exciting messages to an often poorly educated populace. By photographing these events, Foote was expertly creating a common historical narrative through his skillful use of photography. This has been internalized by the archives through the very acquisition of the Foote fonds and given the authority of history.

Foote became so successful as a commercial photographer during this period in Winnipeg history precisely because of his ability to exploit the dominant societal values using the accessible symbolism of photography. This connected Foote not only with the war effort, but also with the Winnipeg social and political elite who had pledged their support to the war effort. Their task was to ensure that the general populace was loyal to their own middle-class Anglo-Canadian ideology and leadership. Foote’s own identity

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<sup>42</sup> John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>43</sup> Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg’s Great War: A City Comes of Age* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 15.

“fit comfortably within the scope of Anglo-Canadian masculinity in a frontier city.”<sup>44</sup> The parades and public demonstrations conducted in Winnipeg throughout the war tapped into and shaped the public consciousness. These demonstrations gave the illusion that all elements of Winnipeg society actively supported the war effort.<sup>45</sup> The focus on the crowd within many of Foote’s images illustrates the new power of the labouring masses of Winnipeg, and how influential public opinion could be within large urban centers. Photographic commemoration of parades illustrates the importance that society placed on visual spectacle in communicating and reinforcing societal values suggesting that public opinion was solidly behind Winnipeg’s involvement in the war. At the onset of the war parades communicated the quality and strength of troops that Canada could raise.<sup>46</sup> Images of significant events such as Foote’s parade photos are often leveraged by archives because of their popular content enables them to be used in multiple ways to establish the importance of the records and the archives that holds them. The Archives of Manitoba has effectively used the prominence of crowd images in collective memory to present images from its collection as iconic, and through this, the Foote photographs have come to represent the image of the crowd in Winnipeg history.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, xi.

<sup>45</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg’s Great War*, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Figure 1- Archives of Manitoba, L B. Foote fonds, “Soldiers on Parade south Main Street, ca.1915,” Foote 2279.

Figure 2- Archives of Manitoba, L B. Foote fonds, “Band of Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders at the Union Station, ca.1915,” Foote 2199, N2920.

**Figure 1 Soldiers on Parade south Main Street 1915, Foote 2279**



**Figure 2 Band of Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders at the Union Station 1915, Foote 2199**



While there is no information on who commissioned these images or if and where they were published, Figures 1 and 2 illustrate some of the new patriotic parades happening in Winnipeg at the start of the war. They also illustrate the focus on the soldiers and very little of the diverse population of the city. Foote's images show that in Winnipeg acts of public commemoration were used as an effective tool to eliminate citizen indifference towards current political events, and to promote behavior that conformed to acceptable societal values. See for example the crowds that watch from the sidelines or from above in the train station in an orderly fashion, with only scattered policemen to enforce peaceful behavior throughout the event. Closer examination of the images reveals that the cultural make up of the crowd and the soldiers is predominantly white and male.

Winnipeg was a large and diverse industrial city at the start of the First World War. In Figure 1 the Anglo-Canadian element is emphasized, by focusing on the soldiers who were mainly from Winnipeg's middle and elite classes. The men in the crowd are largely men in uniform, indicating the adoption of this new military culture and the desire to present an outward visual support of the war. Foote was also able to capture the increased importance of public events in Winnipeg's construction of public memory throughout the First World War.

The celebratory tone at the beginning of the war in Winnipeg was typical of the period, it was also indicative of the culture of loyalty and service that was entrenched in Canadian society. It is these characteristics that were intentionally and consistently explored and exploited by the Canadian government and by Foote over the course of the First World War. Historian John Bodnar asserts that "cultural leaders orchestrate

commemorative events to calm anxiety over change or political events, eliminate citizen indifference towards official concerns and promote exemplary patterns of citizen behavior and stress citizen duties over rights and freedoms.”<sup>48</sup>

Throughout his years as a photographer, crowd images made by looking down from high locations were a signature of Foote’s technique. As seen in Figure 2 it is stylistically characteristic of Foote to focus on the wide angle from a significant height, thus capturing both a large crowd and significant elements of turn of the century Winnipeg architecture. The city and the growing crowds of its citizens are connected visually in Foote’s version of Winnipeg. The over exposure on Figure 1 completely negates the organic landscape, transforming it into an angular white background. This deliberate de-emphasis of the natural landscape focuses the light and the power behind the image on the cityscape and the people within it. Architecture and not nature is the prominent setting for the soldiers marching along Portage Avenue. The soldiers form regular, ordered lines across the streets of Winnipeg. The viewer’s eye is skillfully drawn to the marching soldiers. The angle and contrasting composition of the soldiers visually accents the architecture and technological innovations, deliberately constructing an image of Winnipeg as an urban, modern, and industrial city. Winnipeg as a site of modernity is a central component in its civic identity at the turn of the century.

Foote’s parade images rely on the implied sense of immediacy and the idea of photographic reliability. Through his use of parade images throughout the First World War, Foote represents himself as a reliable witness who is capturing the “truth.” Foote’s parade images also tie into his skill as a photographer to capitalize on so-called important

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<sup>48</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15.

events in Winnipeg. In hindsight, the First World War might seem of obvious importance, but it was contemporary opinion that the war would be over by Christmas. Foote recognized and attempted to capture the early reactions of military groups and the public. That makes Foote's images an excellent case study for the deliberate cultivation of narrative. The spirit of immediacy that Foote deliberately cultivates in his crowd shots is mirrored in many of the other images Foote would create over the course of the First World War. It is a continual theme and this intentionally manufactured photojournalistic style is one of Foote's most defining attributes over the course of his career.

If we accept the premise that Foote exercised agency in creating a specific version of history, we can find a different perspective on both Foote and his diverse and often difficult to decipher collection. Looking at how Foote framed his photographs and why is an engaging and new way to approach an exhibit using Foote's work. By analyzing different aspects of Foote's work, not simply all of his parade images or his portraiture, we are able to tie together some of the greater themes in his work, revealing some of the functional and archival aspects of Foote's collection and the layers applied by the later work of the archives that could be used for future exhibitions. Only by looking at the whole Foote collection can we begin to see some of the genres that Foote would revisit over his career, breaking down some of the myths he created about photography, Winnipeg and himself, and providing new and exciting ways to approach an archival exhibition.



**Figure 3 Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca. 1916, Foote 2309**



**Figure 4 Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca.1916, Foote 2310**



One of the most compelling examples of how Foote created images to control narrative can be found in the images of artificial trenches in Winnipeg during World War One.<sup>49</sup> By reexamining these photographs, Foote's direct manipulation of the audience's feelings to create an emotional and supportive response to the war effort becomes apparent. These 1916 photos illustrate a created event intended to assist in a new and more aggressive recruitment drive. Trenches were dug at Main Street and Water Avenue (near what is now The Forks) to represent to Winnipeggers the perceived reality of soldiers at the front. No photo could better express what First World War historian Paul

<sup>49</sup> Figure 3-Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca. 1916," Foote 2309, N2971.

Figure 4- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca.1916," Foote 2310, N2972.

Fussell calls the “theatre” of war than the recruitment drive of 1916.<sup>50</sup> Theatre requires the participation of an audience as well as the players.<sup>51</sup> This form of advertisement targets those at home by giving them a tangible idea of what their loved ones at the front were experiencing. A large part of war propaganda was aimed at keeping those at home connected to the war. Photography acted as a bridge to the war experience for the public. Foote used visual narrative and careful composition to appeal to the patriotism of Winnipeg citizens, while simultaneously using photography to create empathy and a connection to the Western Front to stimulate recruitment.

The First World War was characterized by an ever-increasing need for recruits. But as the war wore on, people in Canada became more aware of the terrible conditions at the front. Most families had been touched by the war in some way, and recruits became increasingly hard to find. Declining recruitment forced the government to adapt its fundraising and recruitment drives in the hope of driving up numbers. In July 1915, the Canadian government attempted to address these issues. It engaged three advertising agencies to poll Canadians, asking the question “what’s wrong with our recruiting system and how can we fix it?”<sup>52</sup> The reply came back that the problem facing Canadians was “a lack of sufficiently deep realization of Canada’s interest and stake in the war.”<sup>53</sup> It is not insignificant that the government turned to advertising agencies to develop a new recruitment strategy. At the highest political levels, the “crowd” was beginning to be recognized as a powerful force that could change the trajectory of Canada’s participation in the war. As a result, visual resources were engaged to create an idealized collective

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 191.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>52</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg’s Great War*, 45.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

memory to which upper and middle class Canadians could relate and accept. This highlights the importance of visual records within this new political landscape.

When the parades and early enthusiasm of 1914 waned, the government moved to create new initiatives to attempt to appeal to the public. Foote was able to co-opt this new aggressive spirit that began increasingly to focus on the perceived authentic experience of the soldiers on the front lines. Throughout this period the CWRO frequently criticized war diaries for their lack of description, maps and sketches.<sup>54</sup> This would mark the beginning of the CWRO's deliberate attempt to manufacture an impression of the front for the public. This was also the beginning of Foote's deliberate use of emotional appeals in his work.

The use of photography was far more present and immediate during the First World War than it had been during prior wars. The advances in communication technologies meant that this was the first modern war waged with photography, moving film and cohesive propaganda departments.<sup>55</sup> Due to the increased efficiency of communication generally, Winnipeggers knew quickly the outcomes of battles and the fates of family members wounded or killed, as well as some of the heroic deeds touted by the CWRO in London. Soldiers who were seen as courageous and as positive reflections of Canada as a nation were heralded in the media across the country. Winnipeg was no exception in its focus on idealized forms of valor over the harsh realities of the conflict. Men who had served in ways that had distinguished Winnipeg would become key speakers at recruitment meetings.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> McIntosh, "The Great War," 7.

<sup>55</sup> David Williams, *Media, Memory, and the First World War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>56</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War*, 105.

In Figures 3 and 4, the images of the most prominent figures in the photographs are of the soldiers themselves. We can see their faces and the image invites the viewer in, to relate to the soldiers and their struggles as individuals. One man is assuming the role of an injured soldier with bandages wrapped around his head, while presumably his friend and comrade assists him. Providing aid and highlighting the role of assistance aligns itself well with the Canadian values of duty and morality emphasized throughout the war. This emphasis placed by the government on Canada's duty to provide assistance to England seen in many visuals of the period was also central to Canadian identity at the time. It was Manitoba's Premier Roblin himself who stated that "Great Britain is at war and when the motherland is at war, Canada is at war."<sup>57</sup>

Winnipeg was merely demonstrating a larger trend within Canadian society that conceptualized the nation's part in the war effort as that of a son or daughter coming to the aid of the imperial parent. Figures three and four can be seen as a part of a greater canon of images that attempts to provide a model to which all potential soldiers could aspire. As a form of advertising, its success lies in its ability to present within a matter of seconds the "reality" of war and what qualities Canada brought to the conflict. Emphasizing Winnipeg's participation in the war was an effective tool for recruitment. "These sources sold people on the battle as adventurous...[and] the seeds for everlasting glory."<sup>58</sup> Citizenship and identity were carefully constructed, and visual images and visual literacy were used as a conduit for this emerging Winnipeg identity. Visual images that engage the audience are a powerful means of communication. Harnessing that power during political turmoil and war is an effective means of advancing an agenda.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), x.

Using a digital exhibition to examine some of the motives and constructions of narrative surrounding the First World War would let archival audiences see Foote and archival documents in this new way.

Deliberate censorship of information was also used to create an imagined idea of the war to elicit support at home. It was *this* war which has been archived and turned into public memory in the Foote collection. Figures 3 and 4 are all the more powerful in their demonstration of how Canadians related to the war, and those who fought for Canada. Winnipeg recruiters were unwilling to present images from the front to aid in recruitment. Because of this, live-action reenactments were common across Canada, presenting a vision of warfare that was considered inspirational but not too controversial.<sup>59</sup> The reenactments photographed by Foote were almost certainly related to those staged in Kensington Gardens in London, connecting Manitoba to the symbols and practices of the British Empire.<sup>60</sup> American Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner's "The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter" photograph -- from the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg -- was found to be as staged as Foote's Recruitment Drive images but for entirely different reasons.<sup>61</sup> Gardner exaggerated the horror of war rather than completely composed his image for commercial or advertising purposes like Foote. However both images help to unpack the idea of constructing narrative within archival photographs that can and should be examined within digital exhibits.

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<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 150.

<sup>60</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 192.

<sup>61</sup> The U.S Archives and Records Administration, "The true story of the Gettysburg sharpshooter" <http://blogs.archives.gov/prologue/?p=12345> (Accessed July 28, 2015) and Library of Congress, "The Case of the Moved Body" <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/does-the-camera-ever-lie/the-case-of-the-moved-body/> (Accessed July 28, 2015)

The Foote First World War images speak to the importance of understanding what information was given to the public, and in what form. The Foote photographs are powerful individually as well as providing us with excellent examples of larger historical context. They also emphasize the way that wartime narrative has been used, shaped, and enshrined when it enters the archive. Without questioning the content of these photographs we limit our exhibitions to superficial slideshows showcasing historical photographs.

**Figure 5 Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914, Foote 2280**



Figure 5 “Soldier in farewell embrace-1914” is one of the best examples from the Foote fonds of how photography can be harnessed for war propaganda, thereby becoming an institutionalized form of memory.<sup>62</sup> By the very act of choosing photography to render

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<sup>62</sup> Figure 5- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914,” Foote 2280, N2954.

the image, Foote co-opted the embedded concepts of science, objectivity, and inherent truth associated with photography of the period.<sup>63</sup> As a medium, photography is often able to appeal directly to the public without being open to questions of authenticity, artistic license, or the motives of the photographer himself. While there is no evidence that Foote was hired by the CWRO or any other federal government entities this work exhibits a sense of what Keshen calls the “pre-war imperialist, romantic and racialist philosophy.”<sup>64</sup> It was this ideology that was espoused through “privately-controlled propaganda avenues such a newspapers editorials, books, advertisements, movies, songs, church sermons and classroom lessons.”<sup>65</sup> It is within this world of privately controlled propaganda that Foote’s work would circulate regularly and implicate him in furthering these ideals over the course of the war.

The imposition of categories on photographs by the archives, an area often left unexplored in archival exhibitions, can easily and silently shift the intended meaning of the image. In fact, there are two titles for this image in the archives. One located in the older card catalogue and one on the label applied to the access copy kept in the archives reading room. The card catalogue title of “soldier saying farewell to his [mother]” given to the image by the archives can present a radically different perception of wartime Winnipeg. The caption “A soldier in embrace” found on the older reference image label explains what the male subject is doing but gives no reference to the woman in the photograph. This leaves the photograph devoid of the intended meaning embodied in its creation. The caption “Soldier saying farewell to his [mother]” elicits a far different response from the viewer. The image has become personal rather than a conventional

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<sup>63</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, x.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



stock shot. What at first seems like an uninteresting photograph has been changed by putting the soldier in an emotional context familiar to many. Appealing to the personal can be a powerful and effective means of advertising, as it creates an easily understandable and relatable image that elicits an emotional response from the audience.<sup>66</sup> Foote realized early in his career that sentiment sells. The ability to capture romance can determine the success of a wedding photographer and defines his or her commercial career.<sup>67</sup> Foote, while not in the business of wedding photography particularly, rode the wave of Winnipeg's business boom to support his career, and it was therefore of great importance for him to be able to connect with an audience to sell his work.

The role of women and gender within the archive is not just beneath the surface, it has been built into the creation of the archive itself. Archives have selected, appraised and highlighted specific records within archival collections in ways that shape the creation of a gendered version of history. This is reflected in the focus of Figure 5 on the soldier, as that word is dominant in the label of the photograph, emphasizing the masculinity and dominance of the male role in the war effort. The man is in the physically dominant position in the photograph, emphasizing his bravery and willingness to go to war. Visuals from the period prioritize the mother/son relationship as the mother's strength was vital in the role of molding a good soldier.<sup>68</sup> Images and ideals of women as private mourners for the dead were popular in many forms of commemoration in the period as was the idea of women taking on the role of the conscience of the

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<sup>66</sup> Barthes, *Images-Music-Text*, 152.

<sup>67</sup> Bezner, "Wedding Photography," 4.

<sup>68</sup> Pearl James, ed., *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); for the Canadian context see Williams, *Media, Memory, and the First World War*.

nation.<sup>69</sup> The mother as martyr, sending sons to war for the greater good and urging others to stand and fight is a typical trope during the period.<sup>70</sup> The emphasis on language such as “we gave”, comes up again and again in wartime literature, publications and slogans. Phrases such as “We gave our boys to Win the War” were used to emphasize that the role of the parent was sometimes that of someone who gives up what they love most for the greater good.<sup>71</sup> Creating a culture of loyalty evolved by establishing connections to war and emphasizing citizens’ relationships to active soldiers. Foote used these already established messages to his advantage in Winnipeg.

By understanding information provided in archives, the viewer can begin to question and engage archival photographs in new ways. The date of a photograph invites investigation into the historical context of an image. Foote’s images from the start of the war differ greatly in content and tone from those at the end. The First World War accelerated the creation of a new militant maternalism that became increasingly influential in the public realm.<sup>72</sup> The creation of voluntary organizations and nursing units, the rise of the women’s suffrage movement, and increasing support for conscription would have a profound effect on the lives of middle class women in Winnipeg. Many of these women were photographed by Foote and illustrate an extension of the politics and artistic style and composition that inform his official military portraits.<sup>73</sup> In the initial stages of the First World War women were photographed by Foote in traditional ways that emphasized themes such as the mother who gave her sons for the nation. It is

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<sup>69</sup> Gillis, ed., *Commemorations*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 148.

<sup>71</sup> Archives of Manitoba, MG 14b 25 ½, Manitoba Great War Next of Kin Association. “We Gave to Win Vote for the Union Candidate” (poster).

<sup>72</sup> Suzanne Evans, *Mothers as Martyrs, Mothers of Heroes: World War I and the Politics of Grief*, (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>73</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “Women Volunteers at the YMCA ‘red triangle hut’ Main St and Notre Dame (Pioneer) 1915,” Foote 842, N2442.

therefore not coincidental that Figure 5 is dated as either 1914 or 1915.<sup>74</sup> This was early in the war, and at the beginning of requests for troops, when recruitment drives had been established to appeal to soldiers to do their duty for Canada and mother England and foster the “idealistic enthusiasm” Canadians displayed at the beginning of the war.<sup>75</sup> The change in tone of Foote’s work over the course of the war is an interesting and important matter that should be represented in any potential Foote exhibition.

Appealing to feelings of protection, and investing in the image of empire, inform the ways wartime photographs are structured. Studies of photography positioned within nineteenth-century imperialism have focused primarily on the blatantly racialized aspects of empire.<sup>76</sup> Although Figure 5 does not directly engage with the concept of race, it is deliberately constructing a national identity and public memory based on an empire that is white, middle class, and that conforms with specific gender norms. Images aimed at enlisting support engage the rhetoric of the personal, appealing to very strong feelings of protection and of keeping the home front safe.<sup>77</sup> Rumors of the atrocities of the German army, starving Belgians and the crucified Canadian, while not visually represented, inform the experience of the viewer but go unarticulated in the archives.<sup>78</sup> Foote’s contemporaries are understood to have a certain amount of war knowledge that they will use to interpret “Soldier in farewell embrace 1914”. Contemporary culture and political climate are influential in the ways that an audience accepts and responds to visual records. The appeal to certain sensibilities using visual references was therefore not just

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<sup>74</sup> Figure 5- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914,” Foote 2280, N2954.

<sup>75</sup> Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, x.

<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, “Negotiating Spaces: Some Photographic Incidents in the Western Pacific, 1883-84,” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, 261-281.

<sup>77</sup> Michele J Shover, “Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda,” *Politics & Society*, 5 no. 4 (1975): 477.

<sup>78</sup> Evans, *Mothers as Martyrs*, 49.

a practice limited to the CWRO, but one that was taken up by Foote and many other photographers in Canada who were using the tools of propaganda to make their own distinct mark on the war effort.

Figure 5 stands as an example of the language of propaganda as it was refined and used in a Winnipeg context. Representations of war are greatly influenced by the relationship between the audience and the subject matter portrayed, and there has been considerable thought devoted to wartime propaganda, but it has not always been directed at photographs and particularly photographs from the home front. Figure 5 illustrates the way Foote engaged recognizable symbols in photography to co-opt and shape a collective memory of the First World War. The gendered norms embedded in both history and archival classification systems would lead the viewer to believe that the focus is on the soldier, when in fact the photograph is deliberately using the woman to exploit the feelings of protection, or the mother as a martyr.

The background of the image indicates the professionalism of the photographer, as this image is not likely one within the technical capability of an ordinary photographer. Amateur photographers also do not typically attempt a photograph devoid of material possessions or important locations. We structure our lives and our visual representations around symbolic materials or sites of importance. It is probable that Figure 5 was taken as a studio shot with the intention of technically inserting the material significance associated with portraiture at a later date or upon the request of the person who commissioned the portrait. A common practice used by commercial photographers of the period.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Dixon, "Spotting the Fake: C. E. W. Bean, Frank Hurley and the Making of the 1923 *Photographic Record of the War*," in *History of Photography* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 168. Dixon makes

Despite the possibly misleading subject labels from the archives “Soldier in farewell embrace” was not intended for personal or family use. The photograph does not conform to other examples of how soldiers would like to be visually represented. The soldier is not named, he is not with his comrades, nor is he illustrated with any material possessions of significance. With only the figures in focus, the photo has the potential to appeal to a larger audience. It could be read as being representative of every soldier who was leaving home at the beginning of the First World War. The stance of the figures appears posed despite the title’s insinuation that this was an intimate and private moment captured on film. The lack of background in the photograph therefore indicates the skillful use of manipulation with photographic technologies to shape an image into a propaganda tool, appealing to a mass audience. Again the lack of information we have on the Foote collection can initially be a barrier to those scholars, users and archivists interested in using the Foote photographs. A lack of background when compared to some of the more formal portraits in the Foote collection illustrate the ways images are being constructed within the Foote collection and how these images interact with each other.

Portraits have a long history of expressing how the sitter wanted to be seen by the world.<sup>80</sup> The photographic portrait is therefore “a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity.”<sup>81</sup> To have “one’s portrait done” for many of the soldiers portrayed in Foote’s images was a symbolic way to make their social ascent visible both to themselves and the world around them.<sup>82</sup>

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate how Foote’s imagery conforms to these preexisting notions of

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mention of photographic manipulation in relation to official war photographers and their struggle after the war with historians and other commentators seeing this work as “fake.”

<sup>80</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 51.

<sup>81</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

material and social significance.<sup>83</sup> As John Tagg notes, portraits “summoned up complex historical iconography and elaborate codes of pose and posture readily understood within societies in which such portrait images had currency.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Figure 6- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915,” Foote 2210.  
Figure 7- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915,” Foote 2211.

<sup>84</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 35.

**Figure 6 adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915, Foote 2210**



**Figure 7 adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915, Foote 2211**



Captain Still, portrayed in both photographs, demonstrates how darkroom techniques could be employed to create a finished portrait. Figure 6 shows what many images of soldiers looked like before darkroom work added the required trappings of significance.<sup>85</sup> The stance of the soldier is substantially the same, showing that without the backdrop, the two images are essentially the same photograph. Both portraits connect to the iconography that had long been accepted in oil painting, with the focus on dignity and ceremony. There is no informality portrayed in the captain's expression and he has been posed in three-quarter stance harkening back to aristocratic portraits -- the direct frontal view had been associated since the daguerreotype with amateur photographs and middle class mechanized production.<sup>86</sup> Both images show the captain dressed in full uniform, with grave countenances, underscoring their stature within his community of reference. There seems to be a significant understanding by the subject of the image (an officer) on what aspects of his character should thus be showcased in the portrait.

These photographs reflect the image of masculinity men wanted to project, and in turn visually reinforced the social norms surrounding masculinity and the military in Winnipeg and throughout the Empire. The clear manipulation of specific versions of this image also confirms the important role Foote played as a photographer in creating Winnipeg's and individual Winnipeggers' identities. Without examining the entire Foote collection, a user might not encounter the photographs that reveal the technical manipulations of the photographer. Within the archival reading room these images are within the same folder but are not brought together, nor is it indicated in any way that they are a 'before and after' set of photographs. When archival collections are set up as

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<sup>85</sup> Figure 6- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915," Foote 2210. Figure 7- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915, " Foote 2211.

<sup>86</sup> Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 36.



image libraries they become disconnected from information that can provide valuable insight into visual records. Putting these two images together within a digital exhibition would allow them to interact with each other in a way that has been denied in the physical setting of the archive.

One of the standards of past thought on archival photographs has been to define the negative as the truest form or the “original.” This has led to the assumption that the negative is the most fundamentally archival or unaltered form of the photograph.<sup>87</sup> Archival negatives are an important aspect of photographic collections, providing insightful context and materiality, forcing archivists to see beyond the media. But archivists treating their photographic collections as art, and putting value on the originality of the records, neglect the functions of photographs. In most cases, photographs were meant to be reproducible.<sup>88</sup> The intended and subsequent use of an image is an interesting and important line of inquiry when viewing the Foote fonds, as Foote worked as a commercial photographer throughout his career. His edits and the structure of his photographs show his own biases and beliefs, and what he thought the intended audience wanted to see.

The obvious darkroom work or manipulations evident in the Foote fonds makes the images more interesting than they would be if they were simply the only copy of an image from a historical period. Manipulating images to better fit a particular ideal is a part of the long running debate among scholars of visual communication about truth and representation. Different aspects of archives appeal to different users. When creating an archival exhibit that examines photographic agency, consideration of editing and function

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<sup>87</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools our tools make us,’ ” 46.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

can allow archivists to create better exhibitions. Focusing on archives as authoritative keepers of an immutable truth has led to the practice of simply and uncritically mounting new content, of essentially declaring that ‘we have a new photograph for viewing’.<sup>89</sup> The thrill of discovery can be exciting and fun for new and even the most experienced archival user, but it does not invite any introspective or deeper interactions with archival collections. It creates an exhibit that can be passed by pleasantly, but will seldom draw the viewer in. By creating exhibitions that attempt to move beyond a slideshow model, we also have an opportunity to teach an archival user more about the archives themselves, and the ways that archives are structured, and through that, can tell the viewer more about the image itself.

In consideration of the types of information that can be gleaned from a rich archival collection like the Foote fonds, it is important to address the ways that archivists have shaped the narrative of this collection. Separating the photographs from other contextual information in the collections has led the photographs to be divided by imposed ideas about subject matter. It was not until the creation of the photographic division of the then Public Archives of Canada or PAC (now Library and Archives Canada) that the theoretical implications of separating photographs underwent any significant investigation. As early as 1925 the PAC published *Catalogue of pictures including paintings, drawings and prints in the Public Archives of Canada*, which clearly illustrates the practice, already common by that time, of organizing photographs with other artistic records and divorcing them from

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<sup>89</sup> Kathleen Roe, “Let’s Give Them Something to Talk About: Advocating for Archives,” *Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists* 28, no. 1 (2010).

the context of their creation.<sup>90</sup> The practice would become common across Canada and is one example of how the Foote photographs demonstrate how some national archival trends have done a disservice to those who attempt to create exhibits.

Names imposed on photographs by archives commonly support a subject-based classification system, rather than a more archival provenance arrangement. Archives have struggled to deal with photographs in aggregate rather than individually:

Traditional item-level description of photographs, indexed by subject and credited to the photographer, but without adequate contextual information about their functional origins and provenance, or clear links to such contextual information, transforms photographic archives into stock photo libraries, reducing photographs to their visible elements, conflating photographic content and photographic meaning.<sup>91</sup>

As seen in the Foote fonds, archival photographs can be decontextualized and re-contextualized, and can assume new functions and acquire new meanings through their use over time.<sup>92</sup> Schwartz argues that their archival value lies in this process. I would argue that this process should also be expressed in an exhibition. The power of archives has always been their ability to shape historical narrative, a common failure of archivists has been a refusal on their part to acknowledge or even express how much the archival process and the archivist have come to affect historical narrative. The exhibition, as a space to negotiate that relationship, also allows the archivist to both curate and express these complex issues in interesting visual means that are often not available to them within other archival processes and spaces.

Exhibits can be an excellent if underutilized venue to address the silences within archival collections. In many First World War collections there are obvious gaps created

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<sup>90</sup> James F Kenney, *Catalogue of pictures including paintings, drawings and prints in the Public Archives of Canada*, (Ottawa: The Mortimer Company Ltd, 1925).

<sup>91</sup> Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs," 157.

<sup>92</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our Tools and our tools make us,' " 50.

by censoring records, records destruction, and the absence of certain types of records such as oral histories that were not given credence until much later in historical and archival thought. Consistent themes of empire, citizenship, and the manufacturing of ideologies are regularly present within the Foote collection. However, considering what is not included in Foote fonds demonstrates more about the period than some of what has been represented by Foote.

Foote's version of Winnipeg and the war is clearly underwritten by his representation of what it meant to be Canadian. Foote would regularly emphasize the Scottish heritage of many of the citizens of Winnipeg. The Queen's Own Cameron Highlander Regiment was always a public favourite due to Winnipeg's historical connection to Scottish settlement and cultural diaspora.<sup>93</sup> The mass appeal of the Camerons is highlighted in the central role they played in the first public parades and recruiting demonstrations of wartime Winnipeg. The importance placed on their Scottish heritage by many citizens is exemplified by the desire by governing bodies to align themselves with a popular incarnation of citizenship, emphasizing these as desirable qualities for future recruits. This idealization of Scottish heritage does not reference the attitudes displayed by prominent middle-class citizens towards other cultural groups.

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<sup>93</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War*, 17.

**Figure 8 Group of enlisted men, St. Boniface – 13 August 1914, Foote 2186**



The myth of the Great War, according to historian Jonathan Vance, is one of a new pan-Canadian nationalism built upon a collective memory of the war. Rather than exposing the flaws of imperialism, this myth merely confirmed the beliefs of the pre-existing social hierarchy.<sup>94</sup> The myth's weakness lay in the fact that the realities of peacetime would quickly contradict the ideas of a homogenous Canadian society. The diversity of Winnipeg's population and the harshness of the war would crumble the idealized view of a unified front during the war. At face value Figure 8 depicts new French-Canadian recruits in St. Boniface, presenting them as loyal to the new conception of a single Canadian nation within the British imperial social structure.<sup>95</sup> The viewer can easily see the mixture of French and Canadian flags, but the image does not place the

<sup>94</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 263.

<sup>95</sup> Figure 8- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "Group of enlisted men, St. Boniface – 13 August 1914," Foote 2186, N2911.

subjects in their historical context nor accurately represent the lived experience of many Francophone Manitobans.

Despite the celebratory tone of Figure eight, the members of Winnipeg's French-speaking community did not in fact receive fair treatment in Manitoba schools, nor from the Canadian or Manitoba governments for most of the twentieth century. The myth of the new Canada was not intended to further social change, it was predicated on the idea that people would return to their "proper" places in the social hierarchy once the war was won.<sup>96</sup> French-Canadian soldiers were useful at the start of the war as they were able to speak to the allies in France but, during the war French-speaking soldiers from Winnipeg were not placed in separate French units that might have adequately provided training and better communication at the front.<sup>97</sup> Discussions of French-Canadian reactions to the First World War have generally been limited to those in Quebec and the negative reaction to conscription.<sup>98</sup> The Foote photographs provide another perspective by illustrating the unique experiences of Manitoba's French community providing a greater context for First World War experience in Canada.

Comparing Foote's images of the French-Canadian recruits to some of the many images of the Camerons foregrounds differences in their position in the social hierarchy of Manitoba. Most of the English-speaking troops were shown at the Osborne Barracks and the Minto Armory in full dress, emphasizing a greater engagement with the ideals of visual presentation. Several of the men pictured have adopted grave expressions to represent the seriousness of their position and their new role in the military. In Figure 8 most of the men represented are in informal poses: one with a trumpet, one looking down

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>97</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War*, 22-23.

<sup>98</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 263.

the edge of another instrument, many with smiles and a casual natural exuberance.<sup>99</sup> One of Foote's gifts seems to have been an ability to put his subjects at ease. Yet this image seems to call into question whether this informality was captured or constructed by Foote. It is significant that while Scottish heritage was emphasized and idealized, the French-speaking community is being used to represent new and untrained recruits. Of the multitude of photographs of the Cameron Highlanders in the Foote collection there are no images of new recruits and even the youthful Cameron cadets are shown in formal dress with grave expressions and their senior officers. This seems a deliberate attempt to construct the French-speaking community with a different tone from the dominant Anglo-Canadian one represented by its soldiers. This photograph also validates the work of the Canadian government by demonstrating the willingness of Winnipeg's French-speaking community to support England and Empire. While the images may separate that community from the contentious Quebec/Canada relationship, they do not outwardly address the motivations of the men pictured. Defending Canada may have been a factor in their decision, but defending France and an imagined French linguistic identity may have been the stronger motivation for many of the men pictured. Still, they are expressing their concern in a way that is relatable to a Winnipeg audience and is acceptable to the dominant ideology of the period. They are acting through existing social hierarchies by enlisting and perpetuating the idea of saving an imperial ally.

There are several other images from this period that demonstrate Foote's deliberate creation and manipulation of imperialist ideology. While he uses photography to support the war effort, he also uses his images to craft a particular narrative. To better

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<sup>99</sup> Figure 8- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "Group of enlisted men, St. Boniface – 13 August 1914," Foote 2186, N2911.

understand this, it is equally important to note what issues -- political or racial -- that Foote does not represent. Of the many photographs of volunteers, new recruits and regiments Foote took over the course of the war, none of his photographs depict Winnipeg's significant Ukrainian population. Foote would photograph French, Polish, Scottish and many other soldiers and regiments but the Ukrainian community remains absent. The lack of representation in Foote's photography from this period is a deliberate silence. Many members of Ukrainian communities were interned near Brandon throughout the First World War based on their real or perceived association with socialist parties.<sup>100</sup> This silence, the absence of any Ukrainian subjects, is significant in Foote's work and deserves to be addressed. But the silences in Foote's records are mirrored in the archives; the silences in Foote's work have been taken in by the archives and uncritically given authority through this. Without acknowledging these silences in some way we do not allow our collections and their meanings to grow and change over time.

How do we acknowledge these silences within the exhibition? Sometimes the information withheld is just as significant as that which is represented. But the function or intended use of a photograph can illustrate some of these omissions and deeper relationships between archival records and history. Intended function is also connected to the greater issue of archival authority that requires archivists to reexamine our role in providing access to collections. If we question the supposed truths contained in the archives and begin to demonstrate the rich context of creation and function of archival photographs, it will allow future archival exhibitions to be dynamic both within the archives and in the new digital realm. A potential approach to reexamining the silences

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<sup>100</sup> Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War*, 26.



within archival collections can be seen in Jeff Thomas's long running exhibit *Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools*.<sup>101</sup> The exhibit came into being after Thomas's archival work with Library and Archives Canada's photographic collection. Thomas's treatment of language and narrative within the archive, where an Indigenous woman could be labeled a "squaw woman", challenges the old order by going back to rename photographs and use the archive as a site for change.<sup>102</sup> Digital exhibits have the opportunity to be critical, subversive and challenging to accepted forms of knowledge and established archival practices. How might a curator go back to the Foote fonds to begin to engage with the ways that Foote has shaped his photographs and the ways that his images have come to create an imagined reality of First World War Winnipeg?

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<sup>101</sup> Jeff Thomas, "Where are the Children?" <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/exhibition/> (accessed July 28, 2015)

<sup>102</sup> Carol Payne and Jeffrey Thomas, "Aboriginal Interventions into Photographic archives: A Dialogue between Carol Payne and Jeffrey Thomas," *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation* 18, no.2 (2002): 133.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### NEW TOOLS FOR DIGITAL EXHIBITIONS

“Enthusiastic as you may be about a proposed exhibit, do not underestimate the difficulty of creating an audience for it.”<sup>1</sup>

Online platforms are influential in the creation of digital archival exhibitions; the platform an archives chooses to use or adapt to display records affects the character of the exhibition. To create an effective and robust online exhibit, the archival profession must draw upon a solid theoretical foundation. To date, a noticeable lack of attention to the application of archival theory in the creation of online archival exhibitions has reduced the capacity of archives to evaluate their online exhibitions, both from a public programming and from a design perspective. To create effective online display both in the present and in the future, archives must be able to know what metrics define success. They must evaluate what structures helped to communicate their message and how well the contextuality and functionality engaged were received or understood by the user.

Exhibition as a vehicle of communication about and by the archive and about history itself requires a better understanding of the ways that digital tools can best express, change or annotate that message. There are many silences within archival collections that need to be addressed, but one of the most significant is the silence of archival users. Few archival users will stay and view the work of the archivist in detail, and even fewer will leave a comment or give direction in analogue form as to how they are accessing and using the archive's records. If analogue tools are the only ones

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<sup>1</sup> Gail Farr Casterline, *Archives and Manuscripts: Exhibits* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1980), 9.

available to the archives, they often offer few opportunities for professional insight into the user experience.

To remedy this situation, an archivist may look to social media interaction such as “favouriting,” “liking,” or “re-blogging” as well as web analytics data to identify more of what users are engaging with or, as may be more often the case, not engaging with. Web analytics are defined as “the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of web data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage”.<sup>2</sup> Web analytics are not just a tool for measuring web traffic, they have already been adapted by businesses for market research and to assess and improve the effectiveness of a website. They have not been widely adopted by archives as a valuable tool. Even so, web analytics functions are now built into many tools used to display archival records, or can be accessed for little to no cost to archival institutions. If harnessed correctly, they can help bring the voice of the user into the creation of digital exhibitions.

Today, the concept of the exhibition is rapidly evolving as new avenues for digital presentation appear. Exhibitions are no longer restricted to images or documents in frames on a display wall or inside glass cabinets. Taking them online allows archives to expand the concept of the exhibition, as well its content. To take advantage of these new opportunities, archivists do not need to reinvent the digital wheel. There are many existing online tools that allow archives to upload high-resolution images with a high degree of interoperability at relatively low cost to the institution. Even a basic blog will

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard J. Jansen, *Understanding User-Web Interactions via Web Analytics: Synthesis Lectures on Information Concepts, Retrieval, and Services* (Morgan and Claypool Publishers, 2009), 1.

allow the user to upload images, create searchable tags and accommodate a high degree of zoom.<sup>3</sup>

Many popular Web 2.0 tools such as Tumblr, WordPress and Pinterest allow users to curate digital images without significantly altering the original. They can then add the image to their own personal archive, effectively creating their online persona. Additional features that come bundled with many of these applications allow the user to “favourite,” and add “tags” or “links,” or use text to add context and, most significantly, make the records they have selected accessible to their friends and followers online.<sup>4</sup> At present, many people who use archives curate and build online personas every day in their own online images galleries. Given this trend, it is important to ask: what, then, is the role of the archives and the archivist when selecting and curating their institution’s online exhibits? By deliberately and thoughtfully bringing the archives into these conceptions, archives can engage users more effectively and maintain an important digital presence in a dynamically changing time.

Archivists can use analytics not only to understand and evaluate their websites and online databases but they can leverage the information from analytics to create exhibitions. Building better exhibits through a more thorough knowledge of content and user activity is one way to bring digital exhibitions to play a more central role in archival practice. Using analytics from archival websites would be a way to take the information

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<sup>3</sup> This thesis uses the term “uploading” when referring to tools that allow digital surrogates of images to be made and added as content to an online platform. The term “searchable tags” is used in reference to the feature that allows users and administrators to provide digital links to facilitate easier access to digital materials and highlight specific blog posts. The term “zoom” is understood and used as digital magnification that allows the user to magnify or make larger digitized images in the blog format.

<sup>4</sup> This thesis uses the terms “favourite” in relation to popular online tools that allow users to star or tag images or posts as liked or favoured thus providing metadata to the administrator and curator as well as creating their own online profile. The term “link” is used in relation to the imbedded data reference that allows user to follow by clicking particularly hyperlinks.

that can provide insight on which images have the least amount of views or the most often used and how many people tagged, favourited or request a high resolution copy of a particular image. A potential Foote exhibit would be much better served by a knowledge of which images have been used extensively and which have yet to cultivate more interest or use outside the archival reading room. As seen in Chapter Two the potential for multiple online arrangements of Foote's work are possible when examining the complex content in the Foote fonds. An archivist creating a Foote exhibit could make an exhibit solely of Foote's greatest hits or most popular images and ask why those images have become the most popular or well known with archival users? Robust analytics from online activities could also illustrate the underused images that perhaps the archives would like to highlight. The possibilities for analytics in archival exhibitions are twofold: they allow archivists to better assess their online structures and user experience but also provide an opportunity to begin to build more complex digital exhibits.

While the tools of digital exhibition are new and developing, in many ways the success of an exhibition can still be analyzed based on criteria that span the analogue and digital. Did the exhibit provide a connection to the greater context of the collection and the period's history? Has the exhibit tried to engage with the public in specific ways? What is the aesthetic appeal of the exhibit and does it demonstrate the collection's function and materiality? Has the exhibit provided the viewer any new information about the archives or the collection as a whole? Exhibit success can be defined simply by the head count metric. Did the user lose interest in the exhibit? If so, at what point? How do we measure success beyond marketability? What new narrative possibilities can be identified? Are there silences in the collection and, if so, how were they addressed?

Christopher Prom's study using web analytics and the burgeoning literature on web analytics offer important ways forward in the evolution of archival exhibits, allowing archives to examine their work in ways that can affect how we think about exhibits.<sup>5</sup>

Prom has identified one critique of archival reference service evaluations that hinders the way archivists view and create exhibitions. He says that the evaluations do not "discuss the specific ways that users interact with online archival resources and services, and even fewer employ a rigorous methodology based upon stated evaluation criteria."<sup>6</sup> If archives do not approach their online tools with better evaluation criteria they will be unable to maintain or grow digital services including exhibitions. In the current economic climate it would be difficult to begin any project without justification and a clear plan. For archivists creating digital exhibitions the evaluation criteria and responses can be used to build more intuitive exhibitions in the future.

By approaching an online exhibition with a modified form of the criteria which have played a significant role in shaping traditional physical exhibits (such as that advocated by archivist Catherine Nichols) archivists may begin to reach a foundational theory that better expresses where archival exhibitions can go in the future. Methods of exhibition evaluation have traditionally used the more managerial style that rose to popularity in the 1980s. This approach, which focuses on head counts or sign-ins, does not directly address the quality of the experience the viewer has had.<sup>7</sup> This approach has also offered little guidance for creating exhibits in the digital world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher J. Prom, "Using Web Analytics to Improve Online Access to Archival Resources," *The American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer, 2011): 158-184.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholls, "Exhibiting Evidence," 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Describing the rapid changes in how archival users have interacted with archival materials over the past twenty years, Prom writes that “Online archival databases, image repositories, and other electronic sources open our archives to new audiences and provide traditional users a way to access, use and repurpose materials without an archivist’s mediation.”<sup>9</sup> That is not to say that there is no mediation of the archivists in these digital interactions, simply that the mediation taking place is seemingly invisible and all the more powerful as it has been removed from the traditional reading room space. Prom’s study focuses on the University of Illinois’ attempt to obtain a better understanding of their users’ responses to their archival databases and website. Prom focuses on how the institution made its records available, but his insights have important implications for online exhibitions as well. For this reason, it is important to unpack the implications of his work if applied to exhibitions.

Many archival users have had some form of exposure to archival materials. Sometimes this exposure is intentional while at other times users may not be aware that the material they have interacted with came from an archives, especially when the material is presented to them online. The mediation of the archivist is now done predominantly in an online environment.<sup>10</sup> The public will not see the work that archivists have put into creating the structures, both archival and digital, that have allowed it to access and engage with the records.

In Canada, archivists have not mounted any great effort to explain what they do, or to highlight the effect they have had on the records. Archivists’ impact on the records in their care has been profound – to resist acknowledging this only hinders future archival

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<sup>9</sup> Prom, “Using Web Analytics,” 160.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

endeavors in the digital sphere. Increasingly, new archival users are digital natives and expect to interact with institutions and their services digitally. Without a web presence archival institutions will suffer increasingly in all areas of their work, and especially in their relationships with new archival users. A physical, in-person experience in the archives is a wonderful opportunity; many would argue that the mainstay of archives has been the opportunity they offer for the user to interact with original documents, an interaction that is necessarily very directly mediated by the archivist.<sup>11</sup> But today, many users discover archival websites and more particularly descriptions of archival records through outside search engines, not through direct contact with archivists.<sup>12</sup> The community of archival users is no longer those who are able to visit the archives. This community now includes people from all over the world who bring their own experiences and histories to interact with online images and tools.<sup>13</sup> In the online environment, the archivist may not appear to be present but archival systems of organization, classification, and description as well as the archivist's work as curator inform the exhibits that populate the digital realm. It is therefore of the greatest importance that archivists use online exhibits to explain the varied forms of the mediation of the past in order to bring to light the complexity of the interesting content present in their holdings. Online exhibits that tell these stories -- that live inside the archives -- can be especially educational.

Archives have not always been the most accessible of institutions. As Elizabeth Yakel writes, "the archivist's role was to protect the records, and one way to do this was

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<sup>11</sup> Joanna Sassoon, "Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction," in Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (Abingdon: Routledge Ltd, 2004). 186-202. Joanna Sassoon, "Beyond Chip Monks and Paper Tigers: Towards a New Culture of Archival Format Specialists," *Archival Science* (June 2007). With the advent of large scale digitalization projects there have been fierce debates within the archival community over the pros and cons of digitizing archival documents, given the loss of the experience of the materiality of the original.

<sup>12</sup> Prom, "Using Web Analytics," 170.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholls, "Exhibiting Evidence," 35.



to limit access to the records.”<sup>14</sup> Since the 1960s there has been a great “opening” of archives, the public is welcomed by the archives as never before.<sup>15</sup> Today, a growing body of literature on archives in the context of Web 2.0 demonstrates the ways that archives have begun to embrace the new technologies available to them. But this transition has required the archivist give up some of the authority the profession has spent a century cultivating, a transition that is still in progress.

Creating digital exhibitions comes with new approaches, expectations and opportunities for archivists who hope to engage with users in an online setting. Photographs presented in an online digital exhibition are available to a much larger potential audience than they would be in a physical exhibit. As historian Elizabeth Edwards notes, “digitization can enliven photographs, moving them into new spaces.”<sup>16</sup> To enliven and gain new understandings of First World War photographs archivists will need to recognize the power of online environments to bring about new understandings of records. The “loss of institutional authority could mean being facilitator rather than figures of authority, an openness to popular culture, the recognition of multiple meanings”. This is an alternative way to frame the new way archivists might think about digitized collections.<sup>17</sup> There is a much higher likelihood that users come into the digital archival space with some experience in digital curation. In some cases, archival users have even curated their own digital scrapbooks. Many facets of Web 2.0 technology, which is a term coined to describe the proliferation of social media user-generated

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, “Balancing Archival Authority with Encouraging Authentic Voices to Engage with Records,” in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and our Users*, ed. Kate Theimer (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs and History: Emotions and Materiality,” in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London, 2010), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Conway and Ricardo Punzalan, “Fields of Vision: Toward a New Theory of Visual Literacy for Digitized Archival Photographs,” *Archivaria* 71 (Spring, 2011): 71.

content in an online environment, have some element of digital curation for a user.<sup>18</sup>

While that may not be how they recognize it, there is a sophisticated level of visual understanding brought about by social media that changes how potential audiences experience an online exhibition.

How, then, as Prom asks, “might we as archivists make archival information accessible to new users? How do we best explain the rich content and context that constitute our holdings? Are we providing online users with what they really want?”<sup>19</sup> Prom goes on to note that much of a user’s interaction with the archives can take place without the knowledge of the archives or archivist. The better knowledge the archival community has of this interaction, the better the chance of designing more effective online structures that will increase user satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> The environment of the exhibit can help to find answers to Prom’s questions, if archives incorporate clearer analysis and perhaps, most importantly, a flexibility that allows archivists and their online exhibits to evolve with the theory and the technology rather than become too rooted in one methodology. The one-size-fits-all exhibition and exhibition methodology cannot adequately reflect the uniqueness and diversity of archival collections. By using web analytics archives may endeavor to understand more about the users who visit online archival environments and craft content best suited to the archives’ mandate and goals.

Why is information acquired through web analytics particularly important for online exhibits? In Prom’s case study at the University of Illinois, the university’s internal servers were able to provide a quantitative measure of website hits, but no information about how long the user remained on the page or if any other pages were

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<sup>18</sup> Kate Theimer, “Preface,” in *A Different Kind of Web*, xi.

<sup>19</sup> Prom, “Using Web Analytics,” 160.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

visited by the same user.<sup>21</sup> These results are equivalent to the guest books or logbooks used in many archives to record in-person archival visits. They measure who entered the archive, and when, but little about the records they used or their experience using the archives. These inadequacies are only heightened in the online realm, as there is rarely any opportunity for the archivist to interact directly with the user.

The ways that archives interact with archival users can and should influence the way archives structure their online databases and digital exhibits. The patterns of use that a more robust approach to web analytics offers can allow a much-needed window into the mind of an archival user, allowing the archives to better use the exhibition to connect with its users. As many scholars have noted, there are many “modes of seeing” digitized photographs,<sup>22</sup> as images, pictures, and as archives themselves.<sup>23</sup> Paul Conway and Ricardo Punzalan’s user study of digitized archival photographs begins to assess how users are approaching visual research.<sup>24</sup>

Analytics allow the archivist to customize the type of data they want to track, to best facilitate the goals of their institution. Web Analytics provide information on which websites referred users to the site, how long users stayed on particular pages, and how many pages they viewed during a visit.<sup>25</sup> To exploit the potential these new technologies have to offer, archivists need to know more about the user/website interaction. As Prom’s study shows, “analytics software can also help an archivist understand how a particular resource type is being used.”<sup>26</sup> Analytics can offer insight into user participation and

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>22</sup> Conway and Punzalan, “Fields of Vision,” 72.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>25</sup> Prom, “Using Web Analytics,” 163.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

interest that can help better define the ideal characteristics of an exhibition. In the case of the L.B. Foote records, his photographs of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike are some of the most highly recognizable and highly reproduced in his vast collection.<sup>27</sup>

Understanding how users have related to different parts of the Foote fonds could be invaluable information when creating a potential exhibit. Leveraging information from analytics could lead to better design, or better choices of which online software an archivist might choose to best represent the stories they want to tell, and finally, this information could make the best use of a well-used collection.

In Prom's own study, users were on the site "for an average of 1 minute 9 seconds before leaving."<sup>28</sup> Prom's example serves to highlight the brief period of time archivists may have to communicate their message and engage the user with the archive's collections in the digital sphere. If the archival community utilized web analytics and other marketing tools such as bounce rates they would better incorporate the user experience into their exhibitions.<sup>29</sup> Bounce rates can be used to help determine "the performance of the website's point of entry and how effective an entry page is at generating the interest of visitors."<sup>30</sup> Bounce rates could contribute to a better understanding of the effectiveness of their online exhibitions. The archives and archival community could then tailor their websites to their goals.<sup>31</sup> The time spent on the page is most likely linked to the types of information the user is looking for, but it is also a reminder that the initial impact of the website, and in this case the online exhibits, must

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<sup>27</sup> Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, viii.

<sup>28</sup> Prom, "Using Web Analytics," 171.

<sup>29</sup> The understanding of the term "bounce rate" for this thesis is the percentage of users who enter the site (sometimes through linked content) on one page but do not progress any further into the website or exhibition

<sup>30</sup> Wikipedia, "Bounce rate definition" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bounce\\_rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bounce_rate) (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

be effective if users are to remain on the site. With the subjective nature of images it is important for archivists to make the most of the digital tools that allow them to interact and understand archival users in new ways.

One of the ways archives can cultivate an environment that encourages users to remain and engage is to include visual materials. Prom speaks to the lack of “visual interest” on particular pages of his website that was causing users to abandon the site.<sup>32</sup> Elisabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin have also written about the lack of visual literacy among archivists.<sup>33</sup> This lack seeps into the design and creation of online structures. If the importance of access to visual materials is emphasized in analytics it will provide an argument for the inclusion of more visual records on archival websites and for the need to create more effective online archival exhibits.

It is telling that in Prom’s example one of the first changes the University of Illinois made to its website after receiving the analytics data was to increase the amount of digital material provided directly online. In this case the focus was placed primarily on providing more photographs. There were multiple reasons for increasing access to archival photographs online in this example, but Prom’s work speaks to the importance of creating a solid foundation of knowledge around archival exhibition theory and how an archives must plan how it wants to use its photographic collection before it can start to conceive of which online software is best suited to the task.

Prom’s study is also a cautionary tale for archivists who fail to recognize the value of the power of third party references from search engines such as Google in directing traffic to a site or exhibit. These search engines use a weighted ranking system

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<sup>32</sup> Prom, “Using Web Analytics,” 173.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan and Mifflin, “Mind and Sight: Visual Literacy and the Archivist,” 108.

that can greatly influence the ability of users to find archival pages or specific information located on them.<sup>34</sup> Paid advertising often causes certain search results to come up as higher in the relevance cue of the user. Prioritizing links to archival exhibits can be a visually appealing way to provide access to digital materials from archives and build an interested following. It is paramount that archives investigate the software that houses the exhibit as much as the content they put up so that they may make choices that best facilitate interactions with collections and a new and more nuanced theory of exhibiting archival records.

Archivists undertaking the task of constructing an exhibition are faced with making the documents in their care accessible in ways that will appeal and hopefully enlighten the viewer. But measuring this enlightenment can be elusive, as the “visual experience cannot always be articulated verbally, and this makes it more difficult to discuss, to share to understand.”<sup>35</sup> Curator Hooper Greenhill states that “the gut response to colour, the physical reaction to mass, and the engagement with the visual is both embodied and cerebral and remains mysterious.”<sup>36</sup> By incorporating web analytics into web exhibits, archivists may have a better chance to obtain such information.

The First World War was a transnational phenomenon and its records come in multiple formats, which presents a significant challenge in creating digital exhibitions. As the digital can be transnational, multilingual and range from basic blog curation to complex web development, it is becoming increasingly complex, requiring archivists to create a more enhanced theoretical foundation upon which to build their exhibits.

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 141.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>36</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 4.

Previous studies of exhibits – even in their physical incarnations – have focused on the increasing use of multimedia records such as photographs, letters, film and oral history tapes/documents.<sup>37</sup> How can archives take such a multitude of documents and document types and put them online in a meaningful and appealing way?

An overwhelming part of the viewer's response to an exhibit is subjective. Viewers bring their own experience and history to the material, and then interact with it. The archivist's hope is that the viewer will leave with a new understanding of the exhibit's content and an overall positive experience. The subjectivity of the exhibit is perhaps what frightens archivists most. There is no single way to approach the creation of a narrative or exhibition design, nor one "right" way to structure an exhibit – design is inherently open to interpretation. It is therefore important for any archivist and archival institution attempting to create an exhibition to approach the work with clarity and a thorough understanding of their designated user group, their own values and goals, a strong evaluation process and apply strong design and presentation skills.<sup>38</sup> Many archivists have advocated for public programming materials that are "attractive and evoke interest and participation."<sup>39</sup> However, without an understanding of user response we do not have a satisfactory way to judge attractiveness, interest or ways in which we have fostered participation. For all of these reasons, web analytics becomes an invaluable and necessary part of building online exhibits for the future and helping us "...determine which content should be provided on the website and will also help us optimally structure the means of making the content available."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nicholls, "Exhibiting Evidence," 28.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>40</sup> Prom, "Using Web Analytics," 181.

Choosing ways to exhibit records should be based on what best suits the records on display and goals of an institution. Analytics provides a much-needed tool for more complex evaluations that could allow the archival exhibit to become more intuitive, but they also have merit beyond evaluation. Analytics, combined with the ideas of photographic archivists and visual literacy theory, provide a window into the subjective world of design for archivists who struggle to think visually. Not only would this help the interoperability of our online structures but perhaps it could also improve their aesthetic. The lack of a strong archival presence in the creation of many online digital curation tools can lead to the archivist creating an exhibition using the least complex option. If the archival profession remains silent about its needs for online exhibition tools, the character of the work we produce for the future will be affected. There are many proprietary services that archives can purchase to display their records or add on to their existing website. There are also a growing number of open source content management systems, as well as Web 2.0 platforms, that allow archivists to exhibit their knowledge and their collection's records in ways that speak to the users.

While larger archival institutions such as that in Prom's study can host their collections themselves, and can use Google Analytics to learn more about their users, many smaller archival institutions will be unable to host such large-scale content. However, many will still be able to make use of free services such as Google Analytics to begin to understand their users. Free content management systems such as Flickr, Omeka and WordPress offer some of the better options for customizing online exhibits and are attainable for a smaller archival institution. WordPress is a content management system that focuses on blogging and is therefore an excellent option for archivists who would



like to integrate more text and original narrative into their digital exhibitions. Flickr is a content management system that deals with high-resolution photographs and provides one of the most comprehensive analytics schemes for archivists dealing with archival photographs. Omeka is an open-source content management system designed for heritage institutions that provides built-in exhibition capabilities but does have some hidden costs for upgrades and plug-ins.<sup>41</sup> All of these cloud-based services offer some form of analytics for account holders but they still lack the depth of data that can be obtained by services such as Google Analytics.

WordPress is one of the most commonly used blog platforms that can be customized and used by individuals or heritage institutions. The WordPress blog can be adapted and used within an existing website or act as a basic website for personal interest projects or smaller institutions. WordPress allows a user to share their posts on multiple platforms to get information out in multiple formats. WordPress also allows users to tag, comment, follow and provide categories, as well as the ability to upgrade to different layouts with a high degree of customization for a fee. WordPress provides general analytics for administrators that show the creators a graph displaying statistics such as the bounce rate, the clicks per page, the average session length (such as in Prom's example) and the geographic location of the visitor.

At first much of this information could feel overwhelming to archivists who are unfamiliar with analytics, but learning how to use the results can be accomplished fairly quickly as they are being provided by popular content management systems that are designed to be user friendly. The information provided is easy to read and sometimes

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<sup>41</sup> See Omeka homepage, <http://omeka.org/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

includes visual components such as maps and charts, as well as easy to read tables that allow administrators of all skill sets to access information on their users and the engagement with their sites. The diverse functionality of the blog format, which enables it to interact with other social media platforms, allows the administrator to view how a user has come to their site. Referrals from a Facebook page or other outside sources illustrate the ways that users receive their information and offer a way of thinking about curating the information provided by archives. The analytics provided by WordPress can show the administrator the statistics for the year, month or for specific followers of one's blog as well as recording the comments users have made.

Several archives have made use of WordPress or the blog format more generally. In the *A View to Hugh Blog* from the University of North Carolina, the archivists have used the more textual blog format to foreground archival processing, a function that is often hidden from view.<sup>42</sup> *The Lost Foote* blog created by the University of Manitoba Press to support the release of its book of Foote images follows a traditional blog format, guest-posted by individuals from different fields of study or interest who identify and discuss their favourite Foote image.<sup>43</sup> Posts are written as mini-essays, which require a higher level of interest from the engaged user, but do provide a strong example of users from a range of professions, with different degrees of historical knowledge and diverse interests, accessing and interacting with archival documents and creating their own narrative of the experience.

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen J. Fletcher, "A View to Hugh: Reflections on the Creation of a Processing Blog," in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and our Users*, 22. See also the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Archives, "View to Hugh Blog," <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/morton/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>43</sup> University of Manitoba Press, "Lost Foote Photos," <http://lostfootephotos.blogspot.ca/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

How does Flickr mediate information? Flickr, as an image rather than text-focused content management system provides functionalities that allow multiple voices to interact with archival records through commentary, tagging and favouriting, and visual features such as maps and geo-tagging photographs.<sup>44</sup> Looking at the individual photos on Flickr also shows the viewer the number of views the photograph has had, how many people have favourited it and the number of comments. Allowing the viewer to see the basic analytics of online interaction with an image could be an interesting way to show how much other users' opinions influence which documents users choose to view.

One of the most significant aspects of Flickr is its ability to provide high-resolution photographs. It allows administrators to make their images available in high-resolution for viewing and most importantly for download. Sites such as Facebook and Instagram require the use of compressed, poorer quality image formats such as jpeg and do not facilitate downloading images. Flickr provides an *Exchangeable Image File Format* (EXIF), a standard that specifies which file formats and resolutions have been used by digital cameras and scanners.<sup>45</sup>

Flickr's functionalities are intended to appeal more to professional photographers and heritage institutions that work with higher resolution images and require some information on the resolution of their images as part of their work. This information unfortunately does not include the original metadata about the photograph or the camera that it could have been taken with, but it does represent the technology of photography better than other content management sites. For example, one of the most prominent Foote Flickr accounts allows an interested viewer to know that the photograph was

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, "Balancing Archival Authority," 77.

<sup>45</sup> Wikipedia, "Exchangeable image file format," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exchangeable\\_image\\_file\\_format](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exchangeable_image_file_format) (Accessed March 28, 2015)

scanned in at 300dpi but it makes no reference to the fact that it was originally created on a glass negative.<sup>46</sup> Many of the settings on Flickr appear to be tailored to the vast number of commercial photographers and photographic enthusiasts that currently use the site.

One of the most popular Foote Flickr feeds is run by an avocational historian, and perhaps because of this, some of the contextual information that could be useful and would better facilitate specifically archival education is missing.<sup>47</sup> Several of the heritage institutions including Library and Archives Canada that are active on Flickr make their records accessible via a compressed archival description as well as the unique archival identifiers and links to the collection.<sup>48</sup> This allows an interested user to access the document through the archives, suggesting that even on a popular platform the archives can assert some agency to illustrate the structure and content that it feels is valuable to its users.

The PhotosNormandie project on Flickr is a French-driven project that began as a website created by the Regional Council of Lower Normandy to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Normandy.<sup>49</sup> The creators took the project to Flickr to access the platform's valuable functionalities, particularly the ability of users to annotate and edit captions, creating a new collective of interested users. The project has been extremely popular since it launched in 2007 with (as of 2011) five million visits to the site, an average of 300 per week that could safely be assumed to far exceed the visits to

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<sup>46</sup> Flickr, Foote Flickr feed, <https://www.flickr.com/search/?q=L.B%20Foote> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Flickr, Library and Archives Canada feed, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/16270016571/in/contacts/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Peccatte, "Liberating Archival Images: The PhotosNormandie Project of Flickr," in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and our Users*, 148.

many archival institutions.<sup>50</sup> However the headcount metric should not be the sole method of determining the success of an online exhibition. The number of visitors should be measured in direct relation to the information, metadata and future user involved rather than simple numbers of people who access the exhibit. This project represents a well-used example of crowdsourcing to deal with inaccuracies in historical information and identification. Like many of the online First World War exhibits, this investigation and identification has driven many online projects and yielded more metadata and new information about archival records.<sup>51</sup>

A strategy such as that of the PhotosNormandie project, while valuable, does have its limitations. What happens when the majority of the identification has occurred in a crowdsourcing project? What other principles of archival exhibition theory has the online project helped to evolve? Content identification of individual images can also lead to isolating the photographs from their greater historical and archival contexts. Without realizing how the photographs interact with one another and placing them in a structure that speaks to their functionality, they will always continue to be seen as items rather than part of an archival collection. Peccatte observes that 2763 photos in the public domain used on the project came from the U. S. National Archives and Library and Archives Canada.<sup>52</sup> The intended messages and meanings behind those images may differ widely from other images on the PhotosNormandie Flickr feed. Keeping the connection to the greater context even within an exhibition space is paramount in creating an exhibition

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<sup>50</sup> Peccatte, "Liberating Archival Images," 152.

<sup>51</sup> In the Canadian context Project Naming at Library and Archives Canada has since 2004 been the most successful and long lasting similar effort -- in this case to ask Canadian Indigenous peoples to help identify people in archival photographs held at the national archival institution. The project has striven to connect elders and youth from northern communities as well as gain valuable metadata on images for the archives. The project is provided in English, French and Inuktitut. Library and Archives Canada, "Introduction to Project Naming" <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/index-e.html> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>52</sup> Peccatte, "Liberating Archival Images," 148.

theory that respects and illustrates the work of the archives. But still, utilizing popular platforms such as Flickr allows unprecedented access to archival documents and helps to create an interested community of followers. Creating a designated community of users allows the project to flourish and enables its creators to adapt their methodologies based on their own conception of the project, previous tests and user input.

The perceived egalitarianism of the online world can itself present a barrier to creating digital exhibitions. While anyone can speak the language of images, and English is a commonly used language online, the descriptions on the PhotosNormandie project are in French. It is interesting to note that the popularity of the feed has not diminished despite the lack of linguistic diversity and could be related to the availability of free services such as Google translate. It could be extrapolated that users are primarily concerned with digital images and less so about the descriptions or metadata associated with them. However, the creators of the PhotosNormandie project have identified the need for additional languages as a new goal to drive the project forward.<sup>53</sup> This information, while technically basic, is important when conceptualizing exhibitions. How can archives create meaningful exhibitions using text and images in ways that achieve a balance that still captivates the viewer?

The PhotosNormandie project also created a Flickr group to be able to view and discuss multiple images at one time rather than having all of the comments restricted to an individual photograph.<sup>54</sup> The project creators recognized Flickr's limitations as a digital exhibition space and that the website's inability to allow discussion on multiple images at a time could hinder the project's identification goals. Seeing the functions and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 151.

uses of the photographs can bring images together where they had been intellectually separated in the digital realm.

Managing photographs at an item level promotes user engagement, as the viewer begins to identify with image creators and subjects, but it also supports the illusion of the photographs as an unmediated representation of the past. Figures 6 and 7 from the Foote fonds illustrate the power of the before-and-after-style image, and can quickly and easily show the value of looking at a whole collection rather than only looking at photographs as individual items.<sup>55</sup> When viewed together, these images provide information on Foote's photographic process and the relationship between the subject and the photographer, as well as illustrating how the subject wished to be represented in the context of the period. The ability to view the images side by side is an essential and relatively simple design feature that provides maximum impact for the viewer.

Figure 6 and 7 "adjt Captain F. M Still, ca-1915," Foote 2210, 2211



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<sup>55</sup> Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote fonds, P7392

However, applications such as Flickr or other social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr do not permit the creation of collage-style images or provide image manipulation tools that would allow archivists to display multiple images horizontally, as seen above. The lack of this feature again divorces records from their context and minimizes their impact when creating exhibitions. An archivist working with the Foote collection must ask whether the platform they have chosen is able to display records in a way that will add to their narrative or simply become an online slide show. Does it add to a better understanding of Foote's photography and his subjects' understanding of themselves throughout the First World War?

The hallmark of the design process is that it involves an element of change and manipulation. Images are cropped and text is enlarged for legibility, materiality or emphasis. The documents have been changed and have taken away what an archivist might say is the very thing that makes them archival: their originality. As we have seen Schwartz and others argue, there is no "original" for the photograph in most archives as the media is one that is inherently intended to be produced, reinterpreted and reproduced.<sup>56</sup>

The exhibit is a major part of this process of reinterpretation and reproduction. In the case of many of the images from the Foote fonds, displaying part of the image can change the type of information that a user receives, as well as creating a heightened visual impact. Online tools can allow us to see the image as it would ideally be displayed in the archives, although they cannot, of course, account for the experience of touch and smell that are so much a part of experiencing the archival documents in person. Online

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<sup>56</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 46.



tools do, however, allow the viewer to zoom in or discover details that could have gone unnoticed in a physical viewing without the assistance of specialized equipment. Many open-source digital curation tools allow archivists to provide digital downloads of high-resolution images that facilitate a larger access to archival photographs than ever before and have therefore provided new opportunities for digital exhibitions.

The Australian War Memorial's (AWM) exhibit "Remember me: the lost diggers of Vignacourt" combines old and new exhibit concepts. The curators have created a physical exhibit of 74 images of the 800 images in the Louis and Antoinette Thuillier Collection.<sup>57</sup> The exhibit consists of the Thuillier family's side business in France of taking portraits of soldiers to send home as postcards. The images from the glass-plated negatives have been selected and reproduced in the physical exhibit and the whole collection of images held by the War Memorial has been put online. This exhibit has toured Australia for several years, and incorporates some interesting digital components and online options, as well as an active social media presence.<sup>58</sup> This multi-pronged strategy is possible because the exhibit is sponsored by a national heritage institution and supported and sustained through substantial contributions from outside funders. It is interesting to consider what choices the curators have made in regard to integrating digital components into the exhibition, and how they have used these components to cultivate user emotion and participation.

The "Lost Digger" exhibition is, first and foremost, a physical exhibition. But it is also the result of a massive digitization project sponsored by an interested individual

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<sup>57</sup> Australian War Memorial, "Lost Diggers of Vignacourt"  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/remember-me/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. For further investigation of the exhibit's social media presence please see the Facebook page for the exhibit <https://www.facebook.com/lostdiggers?fref=ts> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

donor, Kerry Stoakes, rather than the archive itself. The content of the “Lost Digger” exhibition is about the Western Front, but at times it can be strikingly similar to the Foote images with its group portraits and attempts at constructing the character of the soldiers. Images in the exhibit were hand-printed in the War Memorial’s darkroom from the original glass plate negatives and then digitized.<sup>59</sup> The AWM also scanned the glass plate negatives to create several high-resolution images for users interested in the materiality of the collection, and produced several videos describing the preservation and process of caring for records.<sup>60</sup> The exhibit has made a priority of highlighting the archival function of preservation. The digital space is not as limited as the physical space, and with technological advances the online exhibition could potentially accommodate all 800 images rather than just a particular selection out of the collection. The ability of digital technologies to deal with the high volume of archival photographs is one of their most underutilized abilities, with implications for exhibition theory. Should more be displayed simply because more can be? How much is enough?

The images in the “Lost Diggers” exhibition reveal remarkable similarities in form to that of Foote’s portraiture work in Manitoba during the First World War. Despite the regional and experiential differences between the two collections, both illustrate how the subjects of the photographs assert their agency to create First World War portraits. Both collections illustrate an understanding of photographic iconography by both the subjects and the photographers, and both show how much the work of commercial photographers is dictated by having to create an acceptable marketable visual narrative. Due to the similarity of some of the content, should the structures that we use to display

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<sup>59</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Lost Diggers of Vignacourt”.

<sup>60</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Lost Diggers of Vignacourt” exhibit conservation tutorial <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ8Ptd6-2-A&feature=youtu.be> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

the images be similar? The “Lost Diggers” exhibit provides high-resolution copies of the images and has made them available on a touch screen television in the physical exhibit and online on the collections page, encouraging viewers to begin to read the images in different ways from how they would the framed prints.<sup>61</sup> Suddenly users are encouraged to touch in the exhibition space. They are able to view the images in a way that is similar to online structures that many people are now more familiar with. By changing the ways a user interacts with the records within the physical space, the curators have encouraged viewers to continue their exploration of the records in the digital space, inviting a different type of user interaction.

The online catalogue is limited from an exhibition standpoint as it does not permit users to add their own tags or metadata to the digital object, but it does at least encourage interaction with archival records. By building these functions into the online exhibit, even the casual user is able to add to the provenance of the records. If the archival community finds these functions important they should advocate to have them integrated into the online exhibition functions. In the case of the Foote fonds, the catalogue provides an interesting option when determining what kind of information can be crowd-sourced and read by those who are not considered experts in the field. If viewers were able to see the Foote images scanned at a high resolution, more of the details that support Foote’s vision of Winnipeg could be made accessible and used to encourage conversations about the ways that Foote has shaped the narrative of Winnipeg’s collective memory of the First World War. The popularity of the Foote fonds is well known, but has not been capitalized on in ways that create exhibitions that facilitate user

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<sup>61</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Lost Diggers of Vignacourt”.

participation. Foote's images of new recruits are packed with interesting details, not least of which is that the people in the photographs are unnamed. Following the example of many current First World War exhibitions, an online exhibit could facilitate a naming project.<sup>62</sup> But there are other details that could be emphasized within the online exhibit that have gone unnoticed in the physical access copies. However it is important for any archivists attempting to use Foote's work to create a naming project that it should not be done uncritically. A Foote naming project should not simply extend Foote's image crafting but allow for a discussion of the silences within his collection. Naming projects provide a space to identify and humanize the archive that can also allow for dissenting voices to be heard in previously untouched areas of the archive. Library and Archives Canada's Project Naming began with naming the Inuit peoples portrayed in photographs in LAC's extensive photographic collection.<sup>63</sup> As a long running and successful project it shifted the relationship of Indigenous communities to archival photographs. Participating community members were seen as knowledge keepers rather than subjects and used photographs to connect to Indigenous elders to younger generations participating in the project.

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<sup>62</sup> See Library and Archives Canada, "Introduction to Project Naming" <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/index-e.html> (Accessed March 28, 2015) There have yet to be any such projects undertaken on First World War images at the national level in Canada.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 9 Unidentified military group, ca.1915, Foote 2280**



The above image of an unidentified military group from 1915 is an excellent example of the type of image that could benefit from inclusion in a digital exhibition.<sup>64</sup> Details such as the flags on the upper-right-hand wall, the type of nurse in the back row, as well as the uniforms are all information that researchers could use to assist the archives in compiling more accurate metadata. Foote's work has not always enjoyed sustained interest or benefited from consistent engagement from archival users, which would help to increase the visual literacy of users and archivists alike. Details of the photos can tell us more about their intended function, and as the images could be displayed at an item level they could play an important role in encouraging a user's spirit of investigation and research at the single item level. Encouraging a spirit of investigation invites users to assist in the process of remembering. This spirit can be a way to bring users to the archive

<sup>64</sup> Figure 9- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, "Unidentified military group, ca.1915," Foote 2280.

and allows archivists the opportunity to build new and more complex exhibitions for the designated community and more engaged relationships with stakeholder communities.

As art historian and cultural theorist John Berger so eloquently notes in relation to art, “reproduction isolates a detail of a painting from the whole. The detail is transformed. An allegorical figure becomes a portrait of a girl.”<sup>65</sup> In the case of Foote, under close examination the soldiers become people rather than simply illustrations of a far-off time. The ability to examine minute details within an archival exhibition can bring about a change in the viewer response as it can humanize the subject and provide new insights into the intended use of the photograph. In “Soldier in Farewell Embrace,” the ability to zoom in on the image allows the viewer to notice details that give clues to Foote’s creation of narrative, such as the fact that the soldier in question is wearing a kilt, providing yet another visual example of Foote's manufacturing of a Scottish Winnipeg identity.<sup>66</sup>

Figure 5 Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914, Foote 2280



<sup>65</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Figure 5- Archives of Manitoba, L. B. Foote fonds, “Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914,” Foote 2280, N2954.

Often seen as an affront to the originality of the archival record, the issue of manipulation has always been a contentious one.<sup>67</sup> How much manipulation is too much when it comes to an archival exhibit? Archives have long been the guardians of a perceived objective historical truth, but in fact the ways that archives collect, appraise and inscribe their materials has changed the way that we view the past. While Adobe Photoshop Suite is only 25 years old, the digitizing process even at a basic level involves some manipulation of the images as most archives upload scans through Photoshop. Archivists have the ability to alter the colour and tone, and to crop, highlight and annotate records before they are ever uploaded and seen by the public. While an archivist is not necessarily a designer, visual appeal is an inherent part of creating an exhibit. What are the rules for altering or post processing archival documents within the exhibit? How do we find a balance?

“Remember me: the lost diggers of Vignacourt” is one of the few exhibitions that has attempted to fully realize Schwartz’s conception of a functional context within the exhibit. The exhibit attempts to illustrate how the Thullier family set up a photography studio to make a living in the midst of occupied France, and how the images they took were used as postcards to be sent home to family and friends in Australia. The curators were able to emphasize several interesting themes using the content of their images including friendship, diversity within the army, and personal relationships with local communities. But the element that sets this exhibition apart is its focus on the intended

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<sup>67</sup> See Joanna Sassoon, “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction” and her “Beyond Chip Monks and Paper Tigers”. See also Ala Rekrut “Material Literacy: Reading Records as Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005). This is only a sample of articles that speak to the vast archival literature on digitization and materiality.

use of the photograph, the method of its creation and how the desire to send photographs home would shape the content of the images.

The postcard as a vehicle for sending images and quick messages home to loved ones led the subjects and photographers to choose to present a more dignified, positive or even humorous interpretation of their wartime experience over depicting the grim reality of the Western Front. The AWM supported this line of inquiry with the addition of artifacts from the institution's vast collection such as original glass negatives and cameras from the period. The focus on the technical method of creation and the materiality of the records, combined with an examination of the form of the images, augments the physical aspects of the exhibition and invites the viewer to think about photography and the experience of the soldiers themselves. This helps to illustrate the importance of the research of Schwartz and other visual theorists. The functional nature of the photographs has not carried over to the online presence of the exhibit. If the archival community intends to provide access to its collections through more robust digital exhibitions, focus must be placed on the functional and material contexts of images in the digital realm.

The digital elements of this particular exhibit focus on the identification of the men in the images rather than on trying to recreate some of the elements from the physical exhibit. Not unlike the Foote fonds the language used in the title of the exhibition is very telling; "Remember me" and "Lost Diggers" focuses the viewer on the soldiers as people, and this in turn evokes a more emotional response from users. The project was instigated by a news outlet rather than a heritage institution and relied heavily on social media to create interest and generate users for the exhibit. This strategy has been wildly successful in terms of visibility and facilitating user participation in the



exhibition, however it also extends the biases of the archive. It provides a reminder to archivists creating exhibitions about the way they approach language within the exhibition and the importance of the accessibility and emotiveness of the language they use to display archival records.

Subject identification has clearly been made a top priority for the “Lost Diggers” exhibit and provides an excellent model for the Foote fonds. The journalistic bent of uncovering the “lost” digger images was integrated into the social media strategy of sponsoring agency Channel 7 news and has great parallels to the Foote fonds close relationship with the *Winnipeg Free Press* archive. Many of the photographs in the digger exhibit are quite similar to Foote’s focus on portraiture, and they have also suffered from a lack of access. The similarities provide some of the possibilities available to archivists working with the Foote fonds. Taking history out of the archive and partnering with the public, together with the heavy use of social media and a focus on identification could be one way to encourage users to engage with the Foote collection. Incorporating a crowd-sourcing element in a potential Foote exhibition could allow the archives to cultivate new and deeper interest in the collection despite its lack of metadata and contextual information on the subjects within the images and allow the public to feel a part of the archival process. Using naming projects to identify individuals or events opens up the possibilities to people or cultural groups that have not always had positive experience with the subjects of archival photographs or often the archives itself to voice their knowledge and opinions. Those dissenting voices that challenge some of the ideas held by the archive are necessary to expressing some of the complex issues such as propaganda, gender, and ethnicity contained within the Foote fonds. The original

photographs may have had a particular intent but a new context can arise using crowdsourcing and then in turn be reabsorbed by the archives.

The “Lost Digger” exhibit was successful in highlighting the photographic process using the original glass negatives, the postcard format, and digitized prints. It is, however, the focus the exhibit puts on creating prints using older darkroom techniques, then digitizing the results that provide the most subtle but lasting impressions for a user. Using the original glass negatives to make new prints and then using digital technology to enhance the images encourages users to assist in discovering the identity of the image subjects. Borrowing from both the physical and digital worlds has helped the “Lost Digger” exhibit encourage a more complex approach to exhibitions. Trying to simulate the visceral relationship of a viewer to the original image adds to the historical feeling of the exhibit. While the relationship to the original has been highlighted within the physical exhibition by promoting the glass negative and traditional darkroom production of the prints, it has not been fully expressed in the transition to digital except for a quick reference on the exhibitions webpage.<sup>68</sup> Following this model in a Foote exhibit could be valuable for the data that could be collected on the mostly unnamed subjects of Foote’s work, but it would require the archive to be able to support a more robust online presence.

One important aspect of the “Lost Diggers” exhibit was the inclusion of the backdrop that was used for portraits of the soldiers, and the trunk this backdrop was kept in in France. Having the physical backdrop included in the exhibition creates a significant tie to the material aspects of creating the images. The “Lost Diggers” images

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<sup>68</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Lost Diggers of Vignacourt”.

were slightly less formal than Foote's as they were taken in a politically less stable area, but they were constructed with similar iconographic tropes, including the use of a background to convey appropriate significance to those paying for the portrait. Seeing how the sitter can dictate the composition of a photograph and photographers construct a particular narrative using material culture as well as technical means is something that can and should be explored further using digital technology.

The aspects of material culture present in the physical exhibit are not as strong in the digital exhibit, except for the Australian War Museum's attempt at capturing the public's attention by allowing the attendees to take their own photographs with props and a replica backdrop.<sup>69</sup> Through this process, the user is literally inserted into a historical record through re-creation. Historical reenactments have been very popular in the past but using digital technology to do a lower scale reenactment to stimulate user interest and further engagement redefines this type of commemoration for the digital world and makes good use of social media.

The "Lost Foote Photos" blog has some similarity to the work done by the "Lost Diggers" exhibit.<sup>70</sup> One of the most striking examples is the use of the word "lost" in both exhibitions. The word brings forth a spirit of discovery, of presenting the viewer with new or never-before-seen material, despite the fact that, in both cases, the material has had a long residence in the archives. The user becoming the investigator highlights the ways that users interact with archival collections online. Allowing an exhibit to be curated by multiple authors and to focus on different aspects of a particular collection foregrounds the ability of digital initiatives to provide a space for users to share their own

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<sup>69</sup> Australian War Memorial, "The Lost Diggers" (facebook page) [https://www.facebook.com/lostdiggers/photos\\_stream?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/lostdiggers/photos_stream?ref=page_internal) (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>70</sup> University of Manitoba Press, "Lost Foote Photos".

thoughts and participate in the exhibit, to gain a connection to the exhibit and through the exhibit to the archives, rather than remain passive viewers in the exhibition process.

Archival exhibitions should create active and engaged archival users, and this idea should be included in the digital exhibitions produced by archives in the future. The inclusion of a naming portion or crowdsourcing initiative in a digital exhibition not only serves the archives but assists in creating user engagement, helping to create new archival users who have a knowledge and desire to participate in the archival process.

The “Mapping our Anzacs” project begun by the National Archives of Australia in 2004 is another exhibition that grew out of a massive effort to digitize all of the war records of Australian soldiers in the First World War.<sup>71</sup> The project had many innovative aspects that have been incorporated into contemporary digital thinking, and most importantly, the exhibit drove the project that allowed the creators to experiment with previously unexplored Web 2.0 technology.<sup>72</sup> The National Archives of Australia used maps and geo-tagging to place the records of soldiers in the region where they came from or where they enlisted, making them more accessible to these communities.<sup>73</sup> The concept of promoting accessibility by allowing users to create scrapbooks and tributes encourages a sense of regional engagement and allows users from particular regions to interact with archival records in new and interesting ways.

Similar to the “Lost Diggers” exhibit, the creators of “Mapping our Anzacs” also used language that personalizes the archives for the viewer. This exhibit is not presented as an academic exercise but as a way to see the people represented in the documents. The

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<sup>71</sup> Tim Sherratt, “Bringing Life to Records: ‘Mapping our Anzacs’ at the National Archives of Australia,” in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and our Users*, 129.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

ability to connect with personal experience also ties the project to many archival users' interest in genealogy. It is telling that the project creators were inspired by a local historical society's creation of a site to commemorate their community's war effort rather than a traditional art gallery or museum model.<sup>74</sup> This inspiration seems to set the tone for the language and functionality used over the course of the "Mapping our Anzacs" project. The project "Mapping our Anzacs" creates a regional investment in the history and the collection. The project allowed users to create tributes or scrapbooks, not metadata or descriptions. Rejecting traditional archival language in an effort to make the digital space welcoming to users is one of the most underutilized opportunities of digital exhibitions and one that can assist in cultivating new and engaged archival users.

The scrapbook model used by the "Mapping our Anzacs" exhibit was hosted by Tumblr, an adapted micro-blogging platform that allows the user to post shorter content with multimedia. The archives adapted Tumblr's Application Programming Interface (API), thus part of the website's functionality became dependent on an outside source.<sup>75</sup> The use of Tumblr's API creates some risk for making material accessible and can provide technical issues for the archives, but from an exhibition standpoint it illustrates the value of archival engagement with tools that users are already familiar with to allow them to curate digital materials. The scrapbooks from this project would go on to be one of the most successful aspects of the "Mapping our Anzacs" project.<sup>76</sup> Allowing users to upload their own documents as well as to make comments yielded powerful examples of family photographs, material items like dog tags and personal comments such as "you were the best dad" added to what was previously a largely government-created record

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>75</sup> Sherratt, "Bringing Life to Records," 131.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 132.

collection.<sup>77</sup> Appealing to the personal can be an effective way to make archival documents more relatable for archival users. A comment made not about the image but about the relationship of the user to his/her parent, the life of the subject has been prioritized. The Foote fonds has the potential to be just as introspective and connected with users. Incorporating this level of Web 2.0 functionality may not be feasible for all institutions but it is helpful when considering which functions should be prioritized when approaching digital exhibits.

One of the most interesting aspects of the now long-running “Mapping our Anzacs” project is that it has grown into the “Discovering Anzacs” project.<sup>78</sup> Many of the components first used in the “Mapping our Anzacs” project have made an interesting progression in both technology and ideas into the “Discovering Anzacs” project. The project has expanded to incorporate recently digitized records from New Zealand's role in the First World War as well as records from Australia and New Zealand's involvement in the Boer War.<sup>79</sup> The maps that were such an integral part of the “Mapping our Anzacs” project are still used to highlight the place of birth or enlistment, but the curators have added in the larger geographical region, as well as a timeline of Australian wartime history. One of the most striking changes is that “Discovering Anzacs” has built upon the information that was received from users involved in the previous project. Annotations from the “Mapping our Anzacs” project provide contextual history and metadata for the images and artifacts in the care of the archives and some of the information provided by

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> National Archives of Australia, “Discovering our Anzacs” <http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/home/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

family members in the early scrapbooks is presented in the new gallery.<sup>80</sup> Information has been used to continue the emotive tone of “Mapping our Anzacs” to appeal to the user; one example is an image of a young girl. The image is identified as being found on the body of a soldier when he died in France in 1917.<sup>81</sup> The girl has been identified as the youngest sister of the soldier as well as “my great-grandmother Catherine Anne Richmond,” an annotation added by a current family member who was involved in “Mapping our Anzacs”. The act of naming and providing oral history is an important and interesting aspect that archivists can facilitate, but what is fascinating about this project is that what could have been used as a crowdsourcing project has evolved into an exhibit space and has helped to define the tone of the digital exhibit. The ultimate value of crowdsourcing for archives lies in its potential to function alongside digital exhibits and then significantly add to the character and make up of online exhibitions.

The “Mapping our Anzacs” and “Discovering Anzacs” projects may seem unique, but they sit within the larger context of the attention that First World War records have begun to receive during the war's centennial. Like all archival collections they will continually be reinvented and reimagined for new audiences. Thus it is important to build upon the work of previous projects and formulate better methods to display such records. These projects also speak to the sustained public interest in First World War records that behooves archivists to invest more time in analyzing past efforts when creating new digital initiatives. How records are used after they have come to the archives is an area of archival work that needs to be better formulated within exhibition theory. The Footage fonds has at times suffered due to a lack of sustained attention from the public, and

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

without a better understanding of how the Foote images have been used, the archives could lose the chance to take advantage of the gap to begin new digital exhibits.

What best serves First World War records? Exploiting the personal connection to the past of people interested in genealogy is a growing facet of many current First World War exhibitions. Most people, if they have some understanding of or interest in family history or their own local or regional history, can find a personal connection to the First World War. Through tributes and collages the “Mapping our Anzacs” project has created space for user participation. In addition, the emphasis placed on grounding their project in local communities highlights the importance of regional participation as a component that could be capitalized on in a new Foote exhibition. The approach taken by the “Mapping our Anzacs” project could be put to good use in this endeavor. Prioritizing the interests of avocational historians and those interested in genealogy creates a methodology for archivists to create digital First World exhibitions. The “Mapping our Anzacs” project was presumably well funded and undertaken by a national heritage institution, which may mean that the scale of the project is too challenging to be undertaken by single smaller archival institutions.

However, there are open source applications available such as Historypin whereby archives can take some of the methodological aspects of the “Mapping our Anzacs” project without requiring the funding or technical capabilities called for to integrate them into their own websites. Such applications often have the added bonus of offering mobile applications. Historypin allows users to upload images over maps, as well as to create scrapbooks, curate projects and stories, and take virtual tours of



historical periods based on compilations of photographs by region.<sup>82</sup> Historypin provides many of the functionalities of the “Mapping our Anzacs” project that have cultivated a wide interest for First World War centenary projects. One such project is even endorsed and supported by the National Archives of the United Kingdom and provides a space for interested user communities.<sup>83</sup>

The tools available on the website and the mobile application that allow the user to layer images over street views and merge the past with the present could be highly valuable to the Foote collection, allowing archivists or even users to illustrate where many of the First World War images were taken.<sup>84</sup> Placing the viewer in history will help break down some of the distance between archives and their users and stimulate regional interest in archival collections. There is vast educational potential in the use of such applications that would help local communities in Winnipeg engage with their own past, and provide access to images in the context of their creation. Such an approach could offer different areas and communities the opportunity to connect with the photographs and with their own neighbourhood. It would be interesting to see the results of focusing on Winnipeg’s role in the First World War through Foote’s images and explore what the user response would be.

The challenge of many digital exhibitions is the integration of text and images and striking a balance between the two forms of communication. How does the online tool integrate text? Should it and if so what should that text say? As historian Esyllt Jones notes in relation to Foote “the process of making history with both text and image has

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<sup>82</sup> See Historypin home page, <https://www.historypin.org/> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>83</sup> Historypin, “First World War Centenary” <http://www.historypin.org/en/explore/first-world-war-centenary/geo/54.42697,-2.310991,6/bounds/50.002499,-8.485307,58.42046,3.863325/paging/1> (Accessed March 28, 2015)

<sup>84</sup> See Historypin home page.

rendered [Foote's] strike photos iconic."<sup>85</sup> Foote's images have captivated audiences for almost a century, but their iconic status has grown not only due to the rarity of the images, but also because of the way that they have been written about and how that text has been used to stir emotion. So many of Foote's images create an emotional impact. Other First World War exhibits have used text to humanize and personalize the archive. The "Lost Diggers" exhibition, "Mapping our Anzacs," and to a lesser extent Flickr use text outside of the archival hierarchy. They lack academic language and are generally more accessible, and for these reasons they encourage people to engage with archival documents more so than technical and sometimes obscure archival description. The WordPress blog format allows for more text and is used by the "Lost Foote Photos" blog and others as a way for archivists or users to tell more in-depth stories about archival records.<sup>86</sup>

Considerations of format should be examined with a more advanced knowledge of the interplay between image and text. As John Berger has shown, putting two images beside one another or adding text can drastically change the way the user may view an archival collection.<sup>87</sup> For example, if you know an image is the last work that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself, how does this knowledge change the nature of the painting for the viewer? For Berger "it's hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence."<sup>88</sup> Adding text, whether it is provided by users or from archival descriptions, can have a dramatic effect on the way an archive presents their First World War photographs.

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<sup>85</sup> Jones, *Imagining Winnipeg*, xviii.

<sup>86</sup> University of Manitoba Press, "Lost Foote Photos."

<sup>87</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Barthes, *Images-Music-Text*, 153.

**Figure 3 “Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca. 1916,” Foote 2309**



One of the most obvious examples from the Foote fonds is the recruitment drive images that portray soldiers in the trenches.<sup>89</sup> Ignoring the billboards or Winnipeg architecture in the background, the nature of the images changes with the knowledge that the trenches were dug at Main Street, not at the front. Knowing that the trenches were dug for a recruitment drive makes the viewer ask different questions when interrogating the record.

<sup>89</sup> Figure 3- Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote fonds, “Recruiting drive, Trenches at Main St. and Water Ave, ca. 1916,” Foote 2309, N2971.

**Figure 5 “Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914,” Foote 2280**



The inconsistencies of the titling for “Soldier in Embrace” (see Chapter Two) provide one of the more evocative examples from the Foote fonds of the interaction between image, text and the archive.<sup>90</sup> Three different titles have been used for this single image over time within the archive: the original “1914, Soldier says farewell to his [mother],” followed by “A soldier in embrace, 1914” and the current title on the access copy and keystone database, “Soldier in Farewell embrace 1914”. The “1914, Soldier says farewell to his [mother]” evokes a more emotive tone, and as we have seen, is inconsistent with the photograph’s original intended use. The evolution of the relationship of photographs to text, specifically to their titles, could be explored within a Foote exhibit. As the archive imposes titles upon photographs, it helps to create an historical narrative that could be explored within the exhibition.

<sup>90</sup> Figure 5- Archives of Manitoba, L.B. Foote fonds, “Soldier in Farewell Embrace, ca. 1914,” Foote 2280, N2954

The Foote fonds is a rich archival collection that has significant potential for digital exhibitions. Many of the aspects of the fonds can be brought together in ways that reflect the profound effect Foote has had on the creation of Winnipeg's narrative throughout the First World War. His work demonstrates the archive's power to cement particular forms of narrative and illustrate how Foote's work can be used to construct particular versions of history. The fonds has suffered from a lack of attention in the digital sphere, leaving a blank canvas for the archivist to reimagine a Foote exhibition. To think about this, archives can look to projects such as "Mapping our Anzacs" and "Remember Me: The Lost Diggers of Vignacourt" to consider strategies that best gauge and express how users are engaging with digital exhibitions. The importance of facilitating user participation through crowdsourcing elements, and the use of accessible and more emotive language are all aspects that need to be integrated into a Foote exhibition. Highlighting region and community and different ways of knowing and interacting with history could serve the Foote fonds well, by encouraging a better understanding of archival photographs both in the archival community and the public in general.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored some of the intersections between history, curatorial theory, photographic theory, digital curatorship and web analytics to attempt to fill a gap in archival thought and practice about exhibits. The exhibition, while central to providing users access to archival documents, has been largely left unattended in the archival work and thought. And as a result, exhibitions created by archives are often being prepared by outside professionals. Joan Schwartz's ideas on the function and intended use of photographs have guided the way this thesis has read and analyzed the Foote fonds. Her work has guided the conception of what makes an exhibit archival and what features best express those ideas.

Archivists currently stand at an exciting moment when the opportunities for creating digital exhibitions seem open-ended. This has also presented a challenge to rethink the very character of the archival exhibition in line with recent developments in archival theory and digital technologies. Traditional archival theory held that the archives is not and should not shape the records and knowledge they contain. Archives should for the most part guard and preserve records. Public outreach was often a lower priority and one that could trespass across the line of guardianship. Traditional analogue exhibitions tended to reflect those assumptions -- they tended to present a straightforward narrative about some historical subject based on the information contents of the records. The conventional literature on exhibits focused on the technical and aesthetic matters related to proper display of analogue records. More recent archival thinking has emphasized how records creators, archivists, and the users of archives play a key role in

determining the information about the past that archives convey. A potential Foote exhibition ought to incorporate greater understanding of this process than archival exhibits ever have before. The versatility of digital technologies now available enable archives to do so. As a result, the archival profession can redefine its role in providing access through exhibitions. Archivists are in a key position to convey the unique and important aspects of archival work to create a distinctly archival exhibition theory that embraces the new insights into how the past is constructed through archiving. First World War exhibits offer a very timely means of communicating this point. From a Winnipeg perspective, and given the already considerable local awareness of them, the Foote First World War home front photographs offer an especially interesting body of records with which to explore this new approach.

Over the course of his career as a commercial photographer L.B Foote was able to illustrate how much the agency of photographers influences the type of history conveyed by the archive. Foote represents many subjects throughout the course of his career but his First World War images provide a window into the world he created with complex points of analysis for the archivist. The messages Foote would construct of ethnicity, loyalty and empire provide rich resources to create an archival exhibition that would help to broaden our understanding of the First World War. By challenging the perceived neutrality of the photograph we can begin to move beyond the idea that photographs are simply pictures of “this or that”.<sup>1</sup> Seen through this lens, Foote’s work takes on new meanings and can be used in multiple ways within a digital exhibit.

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<sup>1</sup> Schwartz, “ ‘We make our tools and our tools make us,’ ” 58.

As seen in Chapter Two, too often photographs such as Foote's are separated or isolated from the context of their creation, leaving the viewer with only a small portion of the narrative. The digital realm allows archivists to arrange and recontextualize documents in multiple ways. One of the most exciting aspects of digital exhibitions is the ability to highlight the intended functions as well as unpack the ways the photographs have been used in the past that have led to a viewer's understanding of history.<sup>2</sup> Foote's First World War photographs demonstrate the integral role photographs play in knowledge production, nation-building and the creation of social memory and how digital exhibits are well placed to interrogate these issues within the archive.

Focusing on the functions of photographs speaks to the purposes for which the images were created, what they were meant to convey and to whom, on what they succeeded in communicating and how.<sup>3</sup> Analyzing Foote's work not simply as individual images but as a collection shows how they were used and how Foote's deliberate construction of narrative and wartime iconography would be internalized by the archive. It would be easy to label Foote as unique or exceptional given the breadth and substance of his work when in fact he was a part of a larger community of commercial photographers that used photography to create a visual iconography to support the project of empire. Placing Foote in a greater historical context within the exhibition allows for comparisons that go beyond Winnipeg history.

The ways in which the archives have come to affect the Foote collection through imposed subject titles, organization and the ways they have facilitated or created access

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<sup>2</sup> Joan Schwartz, "Oh! What a Parade: Context and Materiality in the British Library Exhibition 'Points of View: Capturing the Nineteenth Century in Photographs'," *Photography and Culture* 3, no. 2 (July 2010): 199.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.



to the records, have yet to be articulated in a digital exhibit. The role that Foote would play in archiving his own career and mythologizing his version of Winnipeg history have also gone unexplored and provide interesting vantage points to create an exhibition on the First World War. Foote's legacy has been preserved in the archives but rarely questioned or deconstructed, which provides an opening for its discussion in future archival exhibitions.

The complexity of archival collections have only begun to be questioned using exhibitions, particularly, the silences within the archives. The version of Winnipeg Foote presented was white, middle-class and Anglo-Canadian. His photographs represent his own ideals and constructions rather than a simplistic "sepia-tinged view of the past."<sup>4</sup> Archives preserve what society deems worthy of remembrance.<sup>5</sup> Digital exhibitions can assist in communicating the complexity of war records as well as placing Foote within a larger literature on war photography. Using crowdsourcing, analytics and other digital tools dissenting voices, critiques of historical narrative and of archival practice can coexist and challenge constructed ideas of history.

Chapter Three's discussion of web analytics has demonstrated the potential for analytical data to improve on how archival users are interacting with the digital tools archivists use to display records. Exhibiting photographs online can allow the archivist new freedom to contextualize and recontextualize archival records, but should not be done without taking the user into consideration. Web analytics can be used to guide exhibition design to be more accessible for archival users. Using analytics data to see

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<sup>4</sup> Winter, *Remembering the War*, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Schwartz, " 'We make our tools our tools make us,' " 62.

common user interaction with archival content can assist in creating more refined methodologies for creating archival exhibitions.

Taking the knowledge of photographs demonstrated by Schwartz and other archival scholars to digital exhibitions requires an understanding of the tools available to the archivist in the digital world. Examining studies that have utilized popular online platforms for displaying archival content allows archivists to begin to formulate better ways to display First World War records. The use of text and image in these exhibitions has begun to create an evolution of thought that helps recontextualize Foote's images. If archivists begin to think visually they can use the intersections of text and image to examine the role the archive has played in creating narrative as we have seen with the Foote image's many titles. Thinking visually will allow archivists to see more of the nuance present in archival collections but how to more accurately read these photographs to bring about online spaces to interrogate archival photographs.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis archival exhibitions have the potential to entertain and educate as well as cultivate user-generated metadata that enriches understandings of history and archival records. Using crowdsourcing and community based models that allow users to generate metadata helps to add new context to First World War records. Partnering with the public allows archivists to incorporate different ways of knowing into their exhibits and by extension adding more to the archival records themselves. Interest in genealogy, photography, and discovery can all be integrated into archival digital exhibitions. If archivists use the information garnered from exhibitions they can provide greater societal provenance for their records and begin to cultivate new and desperately needed relationships with users that take user interactions beyond the

established paradigm. This thesis hopes to stimulate further study of the Foote fonds at the Archives of Manitoba and the creation of new meaningful and innovative ways to engage with archival photography in the future.

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