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Sustaining popular music's material culture in community archives and museums

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This article examines the challenges of sustainability faced by community archives and museums that are concerned with the preservation and display of the material culture of popular music's recent past. The sustainability of grassroots sites of popular music heritage is of great concern due to their role in making accessible cultural artefacts that have limited representation in the collections of more prestigious institutions. Drawing on three sites that have ceased operation – Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg, Mutant Sounds and Holy Warbles – the article highlights difficulties faced by the founders and volunteers of physical and online archives in sustaining their 'do-it-yourself' heritage practices in the medium- to long-term.

Keywords: popular music; cultural heritage; community archives and museums; sustainability

Introduction

The proliferation of sites dedicated to the preservation of popular music's histories in physical and online environments points to an increasing interest in the cultural value of popular music's material past by a broad array of individuals, communities and the heritage industries. This growth in popular music heritage is now being reflected in scholarly considerations of the collection, preservation, display and public access to the artefacts of its material culture (see for example Baker et al. 2015; Cohen et al. 2015). The archiving of popular music is generally concerned with musical genres and forms in which production, distribution and consumption are underpinned by, or in relationship to, the commercial logic of the music and recording industries (Frith 1983). The commercial logic behind popular music's material culture has posed a challenge to a mainstream heritage sector not equipped to deal with the mass-produced ephemera of the cultural industries.

A major challenge for the archiving and exhibiting of popular music is the vast array of artefacts that make up this cultural form. Leonard (2007) identifies the full range of material that can constitute a popular music collection, incorporating published and unpublished sound recordings in all formats as well as other items that are part of the broader commodity logic of popular music production and consumption such as promotional concert flyers, ticket stubs, stage costumes, instruments, and every possible form of merchandise and ephemera. The enormity of available

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material poses a range of collection-related challenges for archives and museums that specialise in popular music, as well as for those which seek to include popular music artefacts in a broader collection. In many prestigious institutions, acquisition policies necessarily emphasise a representative collection rather than a comprehensive one. The endless problem of selection and deselection is becoming increasingly acute as national and regional governments ask cultural institutions to hone their profiles and relevance, often with accompanying budgetary constraints (Baker, Doyle, and Homan 2015). The development of representative collections tends to result in the selection of popular music sounds and artefacts that follow established narratives in written and oral histories, reinforcing existing canons (Baker and Huber 2013b; Baker, Doyle, and Homan 2015).

Concerns over gaps in the representative collections of national archives and other prestigious cultural institutions have led to the establishment of a burgeoning number of grassroots popular music archives and museums run by enthusiasts who have no experience as archivists, curators or heritage managers. These community-based archives are important epistemologically because the parameters of their collections are determined by volunteers and enthusiasts and based on their vernacular knowledge and expertise. This enables a diverse archival record of popular music's material past to be created that ultimately 'contribut[es] to a national archive that exists beyond the National Archives' (Flinn 2010, n.p.). These grassroots archives and museums of popular music emphasise the need for comprehensive collection policies that are inclusive, tasteless and based on an indiscriminate desire to retain a full material record of popular music's historical past.

Whilst the existence of most formal 'representative' collections have assured long-term futures given their role as national institutions (for example, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia is a statutory authority covered by an act of government), the continued existence of grassroots institutions is fragile in the short- to medium-term. The sustainability of these grassroots sites of popular music heritage is of great concern because of the important role they undertake in preserving and making accessible the material cultures of popular music that would otherwise be lost or remain hidden. This is not simply in regard to archival holdings. As Leonard (2015) argues, the content of community archives is sometimes 'secondary to what the existence of the archive itself represented' in that these archives and museums have 'produced each respective music culture in a way that made it (within the bounds of the archive) knowable and quantifiable'. The objects contained within these archives are what Leonard (2015) calls the 'material anchor' for the diverse practices, processes and networks that constitute popular music culture. The endeavours of community archives of popular music therefore uncover rich research materials for scholars, cultural and popular music historians and those with an interest in popular music in general. Moreover, it is not only the physical and digital objects in these collections that we should be concerned about. Also at risk is the accumulated vernacular knowledge and expertise held within the communities that form and are sustained by these practices (see Baker and Huber 2012; Collins 2015).

The focus of this article is on the challenge of sustainability for do-it-yourself (DIY) physical and online communities of popular music preservation. In the context of this article, sustainability of archives refers to the continued ability to exist in a way that meets the aims and objectives originally set out by the institution, organisation or community. The three archives we draw on in this article – Jazz Museum

Bix Eiben Hamburg, Mutant Sounds and Holy Warbles – all proved to be unsustainable in the long term and have now ceased operation.

It is important to note that grassroots institutions and sites of popular music heritage may not be considered as, or consider themselves to be, 'archives' in the traditional sense. By traditional archives, we mean local and national record offices, museums and libraries that have a statutory, regulatory and systematic approach to the collection, preservation and exhibition of their materials. Although organised along the same principles of traditional archives and museums, grassroots institutions are often created by individuals or small groups who share a particular interest or hold personal collections. Without recourse to funds or expertise across a range of professional archival and curatorial duties, these practices often develop in an ad hoc manner. Yet many also seek to operate according to professional archival and museum standards, and so, there is a blurring of the boundaries between 'traditional' and 'grassroots' archive practices and processes in these places. Whilst we focus on popular music archives in this article, the issues and challenges we describe here will be applicable to a wider set of popular cultural forms and will resonate with the vast number of community archive, history and heritage practitioners and groups that have emerged since the late twentieth century.

A framework of popular music preservation sites

This article draws together two discrete though related projects focussing on popular music heritage, specifically, the grass roots archiving of popular music's material culture. In Baker's research, the sites under investigation are physical archives, museums and halls of fame (see Baker and Huber 2013a), whilst in Collins's study, the heritage sites are online (see Collins and Long 2015). In both projects, under investigation were the ways in which enthusiasts play a role in how popular music and its culture are remembered and the contribution they make to the preservation of the artefacts of popular music's material past. As part of their research, the authors have brought together their interests in physical and online community archives of popular music to develop a database that logs popular music archives and museums from around the world. This database acts as a shared resource for the two independent projects and, at the time of writing, the 350 entries it contained highlight the extent of popular music preservation and related heritage activities taking place globally. The database aims to capture all levels of popular music heritage, documenting preservation activities in the broadest sense, but roughly encompassing two distinct types of practice – physical collections housed in physical locations (which we further divide into the categories of 'physical – authorised' and 'physical – do-it-yourself') and digital and online collections (characterised as 'online – institutional' and 'online – community').

Physical – authorised

In terms of the physical collections, some archives and museums in the database are classed as 'authorised' collections in line with the critical and analytical framework for music heritage practice put forward by Roberts and Cohen (2014). This framework seeks to avoid the official/unofficial binary by highlighting three types of interrelated discourse about popular music heritage: *officially authorised*, *self-authorised* and *unauthorised*. Authorised popular music heritage tends to be that which is

sanctioned by and/or substantially sponsored by government bodies. Physical – authorised archives and museums are those housed in purpose built or adapted buildings, staffed through a paid workforce and with multiple income streams that aid revenue generation.

Physical – do-it-yourself (DIY)

Other physical sites are categorised as do-it-yourself (DIY) collections, housed in physical locations that are often 'make do and mend' buildings which are run by volunteers. Such archives are often in a continual struggle for their ongoing existence, with issues of sustainability relating to financial, spatial and/or human resources. These are 'self-authorised' archives and museums in Roberts and Cohen's (2014, 248) terminology in that they have limited government support and an absence of the 'gilt-edged symbolic capital' that is attached to more prominent institutions. They do, however, often make claims regarding their significance and status, and many seek to achieve professional standards. Archives and museums in this category are 'DIY institutions', a term coined by Baker and Huber (2013a) in order to identify collectively a group of popular music archives, museums and halls of fame that were founded by enthusiasts, run largely by volunteers, and existed outside the frame of authorised projects of national collecting and display. The founders of these heritage sites did, quite literally, 'do it themselves,' by establishing their own self-managed archival and museum facilities after identifying the need for a repository for the vast collections of popular music artefacts in their communities.

Online – institutional

The digital and online collections in the database include institutional collections and archive holdings that can be understood as authorised practices as we have described above. As such, they can also be conceptualised as 'intentional' archives in that they have a systematic and ordered approach to the preservation, cataloguing and exhibiting of their digitised artefacts. These organisations will often develop formal policies specifically around their physical holdings that they seek to digitise in order to make them more accessible to their users and also to attract new audiences. Others are linked to the economic activities of record labels or, particularly in the United States, are housed in the archives or special collections of universities. Core challenges for online institutional collections concern sustaining and justifying appropriate levels of funding for digitisation, copyright compliance and increasing accessibility and interaction for users with their archive materials. A further key concern facing such archives is that of 'future' archiving, that is, ensuring the availability of appropriate hardware and software to read digital material and contending with rapid advances in technology and platforms.

Online – community

In contrast to online – institutional sites, online – community archives are driven by activist archivists who seek to preserve and share popular music culture. These are often ad hoc and either seek to digitise and make available material they collect or come across, or they deal only in digital items. They are also characterised by issues of sustainability through lack of finance and human resources and issues of

ownership and copyright. These sites often fall into the third category in Roberts and Cohen's (2014) framework – *unauthorised*. This is a variant of heritage practice that does not seek authorisation and in which the emphasis is on everyday practice, cultural bricolage, anti-heritage, and individual and collective memory. As such, many sites in this category might be considered to be unintentional archives, in that they are run by individuals or collectives who do not conceive of their practice as archiving. This is particularly true in the case of the thousands of Facebook group pages that exist which harvest hundreds of digitised photographs, flyers, posters, fanzines and memories from group members (Long 2015).

It is important to emphasise that we do not conceive of these four categories – physical – authorised, physical – DIY, online – institutional, online – community – as being rigid in character, and there are a multitude of examples of physical archives which have an online component and vice versa. Rather, the categories are suggestive of a wide spectrum of collecting and preservation activity. The purpose of such a framework is to move beyond understandings of heritage activity that rest on familiar binaries such as official/unofficial, expert/amateur, professional/unprofessional and even physical/online. Rather, we seek to recognise that the practice of archiving and curating popular music's material past in archives and museums can be located on a continuum that registers levels of intentionality and professionalism, that recognises the role of vernacular knowledge and skills in the preservation of popular music heritage, and that accounts for important acts of collection and display that occurs outside the realm of mainstream heritage institutions.

The fluidity of the four categories we propose here can be seen in the movement of archives and museums along the continuum. Archives which were initially characterised as *physical – do-it-yourself*, for example, may overtime amass a level of authority and broader public acceptance which would reclassify them as *physical – authorised*. Our interest here, however, is in the capacity of community archives and museums, that is, those sites that are characterised as *physical – do-it-yourself* and *online – community*, to remain sustainable as community archives without being subsumed into already existing prestigious institutions.

Succession planning: the case of Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg

Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg, a non-profit organisation housed in a converted factory owned by the Eiben family, was devoted to the collection of 'Old Jazz'. Baker had anticipated visiting the museum in the second half of 2013 as part of her study of DIY Institutions, however on contacting the museum in July 2013 she learned of the museum's closure. As the website explained on a page titled 'What you should know' (July 2013), the museum was run by volunteers who 'work for the museum as a hobby' and who were motivated by 'the love for all the musicians whose music should be conserved in order not to be forgotten'. The website reported the museum's collections to be substantial and in November 2011 included 95,000 Shellac 78s, 75,000 33 rpm records, 7000 Jazz-CDs, 6500 Tapes, 1000 big radio vinyl records, 1000 45s, several hundred old thick Edison records from 1910 to 1920, a complete collection of 1600 magnetic tapes and CDs of 30 years of the American radio show 'Jazz-Revisited', 500 obscure, bootleg recordings from a US donator recorded without the knowledge of the musicians or hosts, in addition to other materials related to old jazz such as follows: piano rolls, books, framed pictures, photos, brochures, magazines, movies, old phonographs, announcements,

notifications, sheet music and letters. In July 2013, the museum's website included a list of future plans for Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg, including 'consolidation and confirming our position as a museum' and 'planning a new building'. However, the sustainability of the museum was clearly on the volunteers' minds as 'future plans' also involved 'thinking about a success[or] in case the founder might suffer under severe health problems'.

According to Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd (2009, 79–80) a challenge for community archives is sustaining the archive 'beyond the participation of the key founding individuals', given that the running of these endeavours depends on 'immense dedication, enthusiasm and personal energy' which volunteers may not be able to sustain once the 'original driving force moves away or passes on'. Succession planning is a common concern for the archives in Baker's research. Many of the 125 founders and volunteers she interviewed in twenty-four archives, museums and halls of fame between 2010 and 2015 are over the age of 65 and in their interviews they speak of the 'ageing workforce' being an issue to be addressed if these community archives are to have long-term futures. The advancing age of founders and volunteers make succession planning a real challenge. In the case of the Victorian Jazz Archive (VJA), for example, a volunteer explained during an interview in 2011:

> I guess the challenge – because there are a lot of elderly folk here – their health's not going to continue for the next ten, twenty years, so I'm thinking the challenge is, how do we get younger folk, like a 62 year old, or more 50 year olds in, and maybe some musicians in, who will want to be interested enough to keep it proceeding in the right way, and to be able to earn enough money to keep it viable. (personal communication, July 2011)

But, as another VJA volunteer suggested, a DIY archive's founder(s) can only 'lay the groundwork' and it is then up to younger generations to 'step up when the time comes' and make these archives ongoing concerns (personal communication, June 2012). Places like the VJA run a range of outreach activities for young people which, it is hoped, will generate interest in jazz and subsequently the archiving of jazz. 'We're hoping that the youth that are coming through the place will be the archivists of tomorrow', explained another volunteer at the VJA before observing that the succession question 'is a real worry, and we'd be kidding ourselves if we didn't acknowledge it' (personal communication, July 2011). Interviewees from the VJA express great anxiety about achieving the generational change that will be necessary to ensure the continuing success of this archival enterprise (see Baker and Huber 2012, 276–279).

In regard to Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg, the founder, Wilke-Jan Eiben, had been collecting old jazz for over 60 years having 'inherited his love of jazz from his father, who managed to listen to the quintessentially American music even when it was forbidden in Nazi Germany' (*Ann Arbour Observer*, June 2009). The founder's retirement was dedicated to developing the museum as a leading repository of early jazz recordings and artefacts and for scholars of jazz it proved an 'invaluable' resource (see for example Tackley 2012). At the time of writing, it was unclear what exactly led to the closure of the museum, but correspondence with volunteers indicates that, other than the shellacs which have been retained by the founder, the museum's various collections have now been distributed to a range of interested parties. In line with the VJA's emphasis on a need for generational change, one

volunteer from Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg indicated in response to the museum's closure, 'Now it's time for a younger generation to take on the collections' (personal communication, 13 July 2013). It will be interesting to see what becomes of those collections, and whether they will again be made publicly accessible in the future.

Online – community archives and the spectre of sustainability

The impact of digital technologies on the music industries has been well documented (Wikstrom 2009). However, and in spite of the much-vaunted promise of the 'Long-Tail' model for making available for sale the entirety of digitised music catalogues (Anderson 2006), an enormous amount of recordings still remain unavailable in this or any form. Much of this material does not look likely ever to become available. As Lawrence Lessig noted on his blog in 2003, significant amounts of works in copyright are likely to disappear before they ever enter the public domain. In response to this situation, unauthorised archive sites that make recordings available without permission have become legion. Despite the proliferation of online sites dealing with music histories and heritages, as with their physical counterparts, such sites face challenges to their long-term futures; the spectre of sustainability looms large. The closure of the sites Mutant Sounds and Holy Warble serve to demonstrate this.

Mutant sounds – http://mutant-sounds.blogspot.co.uk

Mutant Sounds, cofounded by Eric and Jim, was a collaborative blog that launched on 13 January 2007 and was 'dedicated to the obscure, unknown and underrated musiK'.[1] The closure of the blog on 29 May 2013 was announced by the following post from Eric:

> ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS
>
> Due to some very serious personal and family-related issues that I've been confronting, Mutant Sounds will now be placed on hold for the time being. All the older texts and all links attached to the new and authorized files from the last few months' posts will remain, but Mutant in its current incarnation will cease operations …
>
> Until then, thanks to all of you for all the years of support and patronage.

During its six years of publication, Mutant Sounds posted and made available a prodigious amount of rips of obscure and out of print experimental and avant garde music, psychedelic prog rock, Japanese erotica and all manner of music drawn from the very outer fringes of popular music culture. Alongside the rips, Mutant Sounds posted high-resolution pictures of the album sleeves accompanied by an informed analysis of the music and artist.

In a post dated January 2013, it was revealed that blog cofounder Jim had undergone surgery and, whilst it was hoped he would recover, he was having to take an extended absence from the site. It was in May of the same year that Eric announced the closure of the blog via the Endings and Beginnings post. Both announcements were met with get well wishes and appreciations of their work in preserving and making available the music they sought out and posted. Typical of these comments was this post on the blog from strzgr:

> Mutant Sounds is not just a blog, it's music library that should have been supported (not only by its visitors if u know what i mean) and presented as a cultural offering, an archive of the deleted the rare and the obscure, i feel grateful for all the great posts and the things i've learned here, i sincerely thank u very much and i wish u all the best!

The example of Mutant Sounds highlights that online – community archives face similar challenges to their physical counterparts regarding a reliance on the continued health of enthusiastic founders in keeping sites open. Despite an avid following, as indicated by the comments posted in response to the rips provided on the site, this did not translate into other enthusiasts taking over the blog once it became clear that Eric and Jim were unable to continue.

Holy warbles – http://holywarbles.blogspot.com

Holy Warbles is another example of a music blog archive site that has ceased to exist. Caught up in the slipstream of the United States Department of Justice enforced closure of the online file hosting company Megaupload in 2012, scores of sites were also closed as servers were taken down or links to downloads of material were broken and rendered unusable. Holy Warbles was a site set up by blogger øwlqæda to post out of print eccentric and ethnographic albums. There were a substantial number of albums ripped and made available for download on the site as well as scans of sleeves, liner notes and reviews of the music and a celebrated series of mixes produced by øwlqæda. Alongside this, the community formed around the site posted comments giving thanks for øwlqæda's work; entering into discussion, critique and analysis about the music.

Following Holy Warbles' closure in 2012, there was considerable reaction posted across a wide range of music sites, such as this by Flash on the site Flash Strap:

> These blogs are libraries of cultural treasures. 'Piracy' doesn't even apply, really- blogs like Holy Warbles aren't black ships on the rogue sea, carrying stolen items- they're wizard archives tucked away in the wasteland, preserving the priceless and forgotten, the hard or impossible to find (for no profit). They make it possible to exist outside the horror of cultural homogeny, to find enlightenment in music, in art, beyond the popular mandate or the rigorously selected histories of previous generations.

In the post, Flash references another blog, Bodega Pop, whose founder Gary had posted a response to the loss of Holy Warble under the title 'Guilty until proven innocent?' In this post, Gary is highly critical of the actions leading to the closure of Megaupload and the knock-on effect this had on 'the loss of countless music blogs, the loss of the communities they fostered, the loss of the evidence of otherwise forgotten expressive culture(s) that they brought to the surface and shared'. These sites, Gary argued, are akin to libraries – repositories of knowledge holding rare, obscure, out of print music that in his words are 'expressive cultural artefacts'. But it is, he says, 'not just the music, mind you, which is lovely. But artefacts that are now once again unavailable for, say, anyone studying the region and period'.

Efforts to track the Holy Warbles site on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine failed to produce any cached pages of the blog. However, members of the community, for whom the music has primarily personal and collective meaning as a cultural, rather than an economic object, have sought to keep the spirit of Holy Warble alive despite its complete disappearance from the World Wide Web. The blog site Melómano Variopinto, for example, has uploaded all the mixes created on Holy

Warble and has been proactive in advertising their availability on a wide range of music archive sites.

The challenge of sustainability

There is considerable investment of labour involved in populating and curating physical – DIY and online – community archives, manifest in the collections themselves and the creation and sustaining of community. The issues of continuation and sustainability of online archives like Holy Warbles and Mutant Sounds is a major concern for founders and the community that forms around them, as it is for those involved in physical – DIY archives. In their endeavours, online – community archivists share the same concerns as practitioners in physical – DIY archives, like Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg and the VJA.

The closure of Jazz Museum Bix Eiben Hamburg raises questions about the sustainability of physical – do-it-yourself popular music archives and museums once those involved with their founding are unable to continue (due to ill health, for example), move on or pass away. Some places, like the South Australian Jazz Archive (SAJA), have established contingency plans that involve depositing the collection in 'authorised' heritage institutions like the State Library of South Australia in the event that there is no one to continue running the archive as a DIY concern. However, this too has its problems with the SAJA President indicating that such prestigious institutions are notorious for breaking up collections (personal communication, July 2013) or, as the founder of Vienna's SR-Archiv österreichischer Popularmusik noted, burying collections in basements never to be seen again (personal communication, 12 August 2010). These are concerns held in the community archive sector more broadly, where it is feared collections will be 'subsumed under larger institutional repositories, where they could be undervalued, get lost in the shuffle or misinterpreted' (Caswell and Mallick 2014, 75). Given that the impetus for the establishment of so many DIY archives, both physical and online, is to save popular musics material culture from this very fate (see Baker and Huber 2015), what happens to collections is of genuine concern to those working in such archives and some volunteers describe a sense of 'urgency' in finding real, lasting, sustainable solutions.

The sustainability of popular music heritage institutions is not just a concern of community-based, do-it-yourself practitioners. Even authorised sites of popular music heritage face pressing issues around such things as funding cuts, staffing, limited space, public outreach, impacts of evolving digital technologies, and copyright law. Whilst most manage to navigate these issues, or their existence is more secure due to their connections with (or being housed within) institutions of national significance like a national library, archive or museum, other large scale initiatives have failed to survive. In the United Kingdom, the National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield which operated from March 1999 to June 2000 and the British Music Experience which opened in March 2009, closing in March 2014, are high profile examples of such places. The closure of the National Centre was arguably due to 'a lack of public support, both local and national, an inability of bureaucratic infrastructure to construct a facility that captured popular music's function in the community and incorporate appropriate long term strategies to combat short term recalcitrance' and a location not conducive to sustained visitor numbers (Brabazon and Mallinder 2006, 102). According to the Museums Association blog, the British

Music Experience was forced to close after a funding agreement with the owners of the building in which it was housed, the O2 Centre in London, came to an end, leaving its collection of artefacts in the care of trustees until a new home can be found in the future. Challenging political and economic climates also place public funded, government supported institutions under threat, as was the case with Muziek Centrum Nederlands. Funding for this Dutch archive and information centre ceased at the end of 2012, with the archive now housed in the Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam (Brandellero and Janssen 2014).

Whilst we therefore recognise sustainability is of concern to all popular music heritage institutions, we argue it is felt particularly acutely by practitioners in both physical – DIY and online – community archives and museums. These are amateurs in archiving and curating who are learning about running a heritage institution 'on the job'. That a number of community archives of popular music have survived for so long under difficult conditions is testament to the hard work of these volunteer conservationists and their dedication to the role they have undertaken as custodians of popular music heritage against all odds. The VJA, for example, will celebrate its 20th year in 2016. Yet now, more perhaps than ever, sustainability is at the forefront of the VJA's future planning. The VJA has identified a series of key challenges that will need to be addressed as they move forward, with these challenges relating to continued relevance to the jazz fraternity; recognition that the current location is isolated and a presence in the centre of Melbourne is required to increase public access; provision of more flexible opening hours; upskilling of volunteers; managing technological advances; and expanding funding opportunities (Sutton 2015). Meeting these challenges is part of the implementation of a strategy and associated business plan that seeks to 'respect the past', 'enjoy the present' but also to 'plan and take action for the future to ensure the long-term viability' of the VJA (Sutton 2015). The development of such a strategy will assist greatly in future-proofing this DIY institution, yet a central challenge to its sustainability still remains – that of the gradual loss of the founding members and volunteers with vernacular knowledge whose commitment to their role of 'custodians of Australian jazz' currently sustains the operation in the face of ongoing concerns around limited resources (Baker and Huber 2012). For now at least, the VJA is defying Newman's (2011, 41) findings that 'fully voluntary archives may be essentially unsustainable'. However, for the majority of physical – DIY archives, museums and halls of fame in Baker's research it is evident that without clear succession plans, broad community support, and collaboration with public institutions there is a real danger that the materials these community archives have saved from being discarded as rubbish in the short term will end up on the tip in the longer term.

In the case of online archives, there is a lot to unpick in the activities of individuals and communities who post historical musical resources on social media sites. Questions of access and sustainability will be critical in developing more robust online music archive sites along with a better appreciation of the motives of these citizen and community archivists. Social media platforms have expanded opportunities for enthusiasts to engage in heritage practices around popular music and have assisted greatly in the formation of communities of interest not bound by geographic location (an issue for some physical – DIY archives). However, the examples of Mutant Sounds and Holy Warbles highlight that the World Wide Web, whilst highly effective as a site for the 'dissemination of community memories' (Flinn 2007, 158–159) around the cultural practices of popular music production and consumption,

struggles to provide a secure site for long term, effective archiving of music's material past. As Seamus Ross pointed out some years ago, 'after years of research into digital curation and preservation, we still face theoretical, methodological, and technological challenges to sustaining material held in digital libraries' (cited in Manoff 2010, 395). With the rapid evolution of technology and new platforms and services appearing, there is a real risk of current popular music archiving practices becoming redundant, placing hundreds of thousands of popular music artefacts and the communities that sustain them in danger of being lost forever.

One aspect of the challenge to sustainability highlighted in this article is the ways in which online – community archives deal with copyright of the material in their collections. As demonstrated in the case of Holy Warbles, copyright law is not only a major barrier to the dissemination of the materials of popular music's recorded past but also to its associated materials and the vernacular knowledge of the communities that form around such sites. The community outcry over the enforced closure of Holy Warbles underscores the extent to which the materials posted on that site were valued by the online community for their rarity, cultural significance and historical interest. There is clearly a need for online – community archives to be aware of the legalities of posting copyright protected material online, given the veracity of the music industry to pursue infringements, if these sites are to establish themselves as a more stable presence for the archiving of popular music heritage online. This is no easy task given that although at the point of their closure these online sites are referred to by community members as being 'music libraries' (Mutant Sounds), 'archives' (Holy Warbles) and 'repositories of knowledge' (Bodega Pop), at the time of their founding their status as archive is largely unintentional. This has implications for the types of resources and support that might otherwise be accessed to ensure the long-term digital preservation of materials that are posted on these sites.

Concluding thoughts

Our research has revealed that although they take different approaches to the collection, archiving and preservation of popular music heritage, physical – DIY and online – community archives share, and are affected by, similar issues of sustainability in the medium- to long-term. These issues, we would argue, are not unique to collections relating to popular music. Flinn (2011) and colleagues (Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009) have observed that community archives concerned with a broad range of topics are equally challenged by the issue of sustainability. As Flinn (2011, 13–14) argues 'At the heart of these challenges lies the question of access to resources (financial, human, physical, skills, and expertise) and how a lack of resources hinders the archive's growth and ability to develop in the future'. In physical – DIY archives, for example, this is manifested in lack of funding, not enough volunteers to carry out the jobs of cataloguing and preservation, a lack of space to house the sheer quantity of artefacts donated and insufficient training in archival practices and processes.

Achieving medium- to long-term sustainability for community archives and museums in ways that are positive, equitable and non-prescriptive will be important if there is to be a comprehensive record of popular music's material past as it was lived and experienced. These institutions are of great value because they 'set out to collect and document popular music culture in Williams's (1989) sense of its

ordinariness' (Baker and Huber 2013a, 518). Whereas mainstream heritage institutions create memorial canons of great works and artists, the community archives of our study have holdings that arise from within communities of consumption and which materialise the cultural memory of popular music for those communities. As such, these are sites that encompass much more than the archiving of remnants of popular music's commodity economy for the future. They are equally concerned with memory practices of the present. It is in their provision of a space for the community to enact memory that the medium- to long-term sustainability of physical – DIY and online – community archives and museums may lie as the community supports, replenishes and sustains popular music's material past for the present as much as for the future.

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Note

1. Quotes are reproduced verbatim from source with all errors intact.

Notes on contributors

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